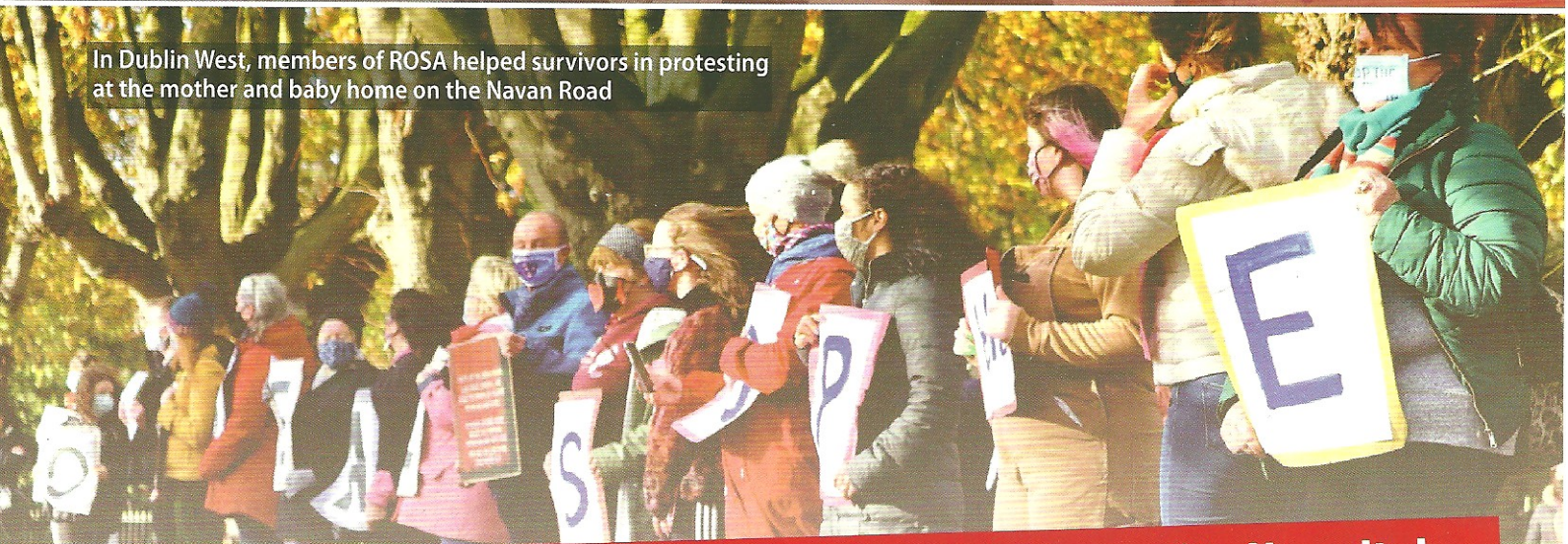


In Dublin West, members of ROSA helped survivors in protesting at the mother and baby home on the Navan Road



From mother & baby homes to National Maternity Hospital: Still a Sexist State

By Ruth Coppinger
(Ruth is a founder member of ROSA)

The Mother and Baby Homes Commission (which Green Party Minister Roderic O’Gorman is responsible for) issued a report that was a cover-up and cruel insult to victims of abuse. It was only when survivors and local communities protested that the government backtracked.

In quick succession the backwardness of the political establishment was exposed again with the outrageous allowing of the St Vincent’s Hospital Group (set up by the Sisters of Charity) to maintain ownership of the site for our National Maternity Hospital.

This isn’t just a memory lapse, where the government forgot about the misery inflicted on pregnant women and their children, it’s business as usual for the Irish establishment. Since its foundation the establishment relied on a close connection with the Catholic Church, resulting in a deeply rooted conservatism and misogyny

stitched into the core of the state.

Within that there is a particular contempt for working class women, their health, sexuality and lives that is still demonstrated today:

- Throughout Covid pregnant women were denied the support of partners during maternal care and birth.
- Gardai cancelled thousands of 999 calls for help from intimate partner or sexual violence -- but it barely made the news for a day!
- Failures continue in Cervical Check, even after tragic preventable deaths and illness of thousands of women.
- Women parenting alone, who make up 1 in 4 families and are disproportionately impacted by poverty, are harassed by state Welfare Officers.
- Victim blaming and humiliation are



normal practices in the courts. Women’s Aid reported a majority “would not or were unsure if they would go through the legal process again”.

The church has been dramatically weakened and rejected by ordinary people, yet every instinct of the state is to go along with it. That is why in 2021 we don’t even have proper sex education in schools! How long can we allow this?

Women, young, LGBT and working class people showed with marriage equality and repeal how social progress happens. The political elite won’t break this anti-women legacy unless we make them. We have to act if we want to be rid of this backward, sexist state.

Get active with ROSA to be part of the change we need. Find out more on the pages inside.

Women hit hardest by Covid but our voices aren't heard

The covid pandemic has sharpened every inequality in society. While covid affects everyone, working women are paying the highest price. The UN says 25 years of gains for women could be lost in 1 year — with “a real risk of reverting to 1950s gender stereotypes”.

- Women make up the majority of essential workers in health, education, retail and childcare -- but don't merit decent pay and work conditions.
- The triple burden of working from home, 'home schooling' and extra housework is taking a savage mental toll. We are the ones expected to multi-task, shoulder all responsibility, be the carers, make the medical appointments.
- Women workers are four times more likely to lose or give up jobs in Covid. And many in unofficial or

The UN says 25 years of gains for women could be lost in one year — with “a real risk of reverting to 1950s gender stereotypes”



Nurses on strike in 2019 proved once again just how vital they are

part time work don't benefit from PUP or covid supports.

- Shockingly, the government hasn't acted to tackle the 'shadow pandemic' of violence against women, with agencies operating on a shoestring.

The needs of women have come last in the pandemic. Everything from no

childcare and summer camps to no children's shoes on sale; from no birthing partners to no Breast Check for long periods. The government moved mountains to get hospitality open, but not to help our mental health and workload.

Nobody has been hearing the voices of working class women. ROSA wants to.

The women of Debenhams – fighting for all workers

For over a year, Debenhams workers waged a heroic battle for their livelihoods when sacked by their multinational employer. They were let down by government and ignored by the three local ministers here in Dublin West. The mainly women workforce had to organise themselves and rely on their own resources as the union leadership was so passive.

They were fighting for all workers in the pandemic. From workers who've had poverty conditions imposed, such as at Aer Lingus, to those who've lost their jobs. A jobs massacre has continued in retail. In Blanchardstown Centre: Oasis, Warehouse, Mothercare, Dorothy Perkins, Burton, Topman, Topshop, Sostrene & Greene have also closed, with Gap next.

The ex-Debenhams workers came up against a system stacked against them when they took on Debenhams bosses, KPMG, the government, legal system and Garda.

Ruth Coppinger assisted the workers in writing the lessons of the dispute for other workers who will inevitably face similar in the future. 'A Debenhams Workers' Declaration' can be viewed online at www.debenhamsdeclaration.org or contact us if you would like hard copy booklets for yourself or workmates. We would like to get these to as many workplaces as possible.



Debenhams picket in Blanchardstown. ignored by three government TDs

“We didn't achieve what we initially set out to, but we accomplished so much more. We have brought workers rights and the need for legislative changes back to the Dail. We have shown that ‘the system’ and the laws created by ‘the system’ simply back capitalism and big business with zero protections in place for working class people.”

- Amy Hourigan, ex Debenhams worker

WHAT IS ROSA?

ROSA is a socialist feminist group of women, working-class, young and LGBTQ people fighting for equality. ROSA played a vital role in winning repeal of the 8th through such direct actions as bringing safe but illegal abortion pills into the state; dressing as handmaids outside the Dáil; filling Liberty Hall for a rally for choice; engaging on the streets and in communities. ROSA has organised numerous marches on gender / sexual violence and victim blaming.

In Dublin West we've campaigned for resources for the Blanchardstown refuge, on state violence of mother and baby homes and supported workers in struggle. ROSA was initiated by women members of the Socialist Party.

The Case for Socialist Feminism

Abused, controlled, gaslit. Trapped by abusers in her family, the music industry and the state. Unable to control her own body and reproductive choices. When Britney Spears spoke out about the terms of her "conservatorship" — the legal arrangement the courts tie her to supposedly because of her mental health — it echoed with so many of our experiences: of gender violence, of objectification, of the sexism of the state. Britney's plight is a reminder if we needed one, of how we much we need feminism. But what kind?



music industry moguls. A system for the profits of the super-rich that has homelessness, low pay and exploitation everywhere. It is the enemy of freedom and equality. More women in the corridors of power under this brutal system is meaningless for the majority. We have to tear down all inequality and injustice — capitalism must go!



strong when we stand united with all the exploited and oppressed in a multi-gendered, multi-racial working-class movement of solidarity. That's how we can take on the political establishment and their big business friends.

A feminism from below, a feminism of STRUGGLE

From the right to vote, to equal pay, to repeal and abortion rights — every right we have come from trade union and feminist and lgbtq movements, strikes and struggle.

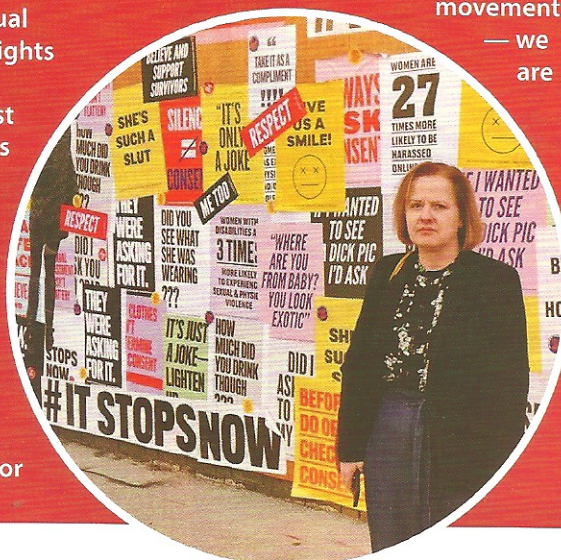
A feminism that's ANTI-CAPITALIST

Part of the sexism Britney Spears has experienced her whole life is by being objectified for mega-profits for

A feminism that's for SOLIDARITY

From repeal, to the water charges boycott victory, to the Debenhams and ESB worker pickets, to the global revolts led by women and young people against sexism and gender violence, to the

#BlackLivesMatter movement — we are



SOCIALIST feminism

This working-class feminism is socialist feminism — it's about building a movement to end the private ownership of wealth and resources. Public ownership of the key levers of the economy, under democratic control, would allow us to build a society based on solidarity that channels the enormous wealth, resources and human talent there is to cater for the needs of people and the environment, rather than the profits and whims of a sociopathic super-rich elite.

If a world without billionaires is something you could get behind, you may be a socialist feminist — find out more & get active today!



Violence against women and sexual violence is at epidemic levels, made worse during the pandemic: 19 women contacted SAFE Ireland every day during lockdown and 7 a day couldn't find a refuge place. The housing crisis is forcing a choice of staying in an abusive relationship or facing homelessness.

We need an active movement to challenge the backward sexist attitudes that perpetuate gender violence; from on-street and workplace sexual harassment to intimate partner violence and femicide.

After the tragic death of Sarah Everard, ROSA organised safe socially-distanced standouts calling for emergency action on gender violence. Incredibly, the response of Gardaí has been to fine activists -- even though Gardaí themselves have been 'cancelling' thousands of 999 domestic and sexual violence calls!

A Limerick member, Aislinn O'Keefe, is charged with being an "Event Organiser" under the Public Health Act, issued with a €500 fine and threat of criminal prosecution for what was a symbolic action by ten people!

As well as being an unacceptable attack on the right to protest, it speaks to the continued denigration of the seriousness of gender violence. ROSA activists are refusing to pay the fines on the grounds that violence against women is itself a public health issue requiring emergency action!

Can you help us to build a campaign against gender violence and to fight the fine?

Text "ROSA" to
087 6522145
to get involved

3,120 domestic
violence 999
calls ignored

ROSA
Socialist Feminist
Movement

ROSA needs to raise thousands of euro to successfully defend Aislinn and others; an online petition and GoFundMe has been launched.

See the campaign on ROSA
Facebook or Instagram

Title: From Mother & Baby Homes to National Maternity Hospital: Still a Sexist Country

Organisation: ROSA

Date: 2022

Downloaded from:

SNAPSHOTS OF POLITICAL ACTION

A project from Irish Election Literature and the Irish Left Archive.

irishelectionliterature.com
leftarchive.ie

Snapshots of Political Action is provided as a non-commercial historical resource, open to all, and has reproduced this document as an accessible digital reference. Copyright remains with its original authors. If used on other sites, we would appreciate a link back and reference to us, in addition to the original creators. For re-publication, commercial, or other uses, please contact the original owners. If documents provided to Snapshots of Political Action have been created for or added to other online archives, please inform us so sources can be credited.