

Secondary School Student Organizer's Manual.

Introduction.

This manual is being written to help build a campaign against a government which has failed us all. We all need to fight back, homeless people, university students, secondary students, workers and community groups. We need to mount a real resistance to this government. This manual was written to aid in the progression of the specific campaign against fees, but we hope that it will reach further than this one fight, further than the borders of Ireland itself, and continue to help student organizers in the future.

The purpose of this manual is to inspire secondary school organizers, by explaining the fundamentals of organizing a walkout, showing some of the actions that are possible for youth to engage in, and to explain the theory behind walkouts and other actions. And we'll try to do it with out completely boring you to death too!



How to Organise A School Walkout.

There are many different forms of protest. While letter writing campaigns demonstrate your anger, they can easily be binned. The method of letter writing has been tried by groups like the Union of Students Ireland for years, and its failure can be seen in the fact that the government is still going to reintroduce fees! A history has yet to be written of those who made their point respectably and went home. Silence got us here and action can get us out! In terms of protests organised by secondary students in other parts of the world, the walkout has proven to be the most effective.

Organizing a walkout is a straightforward operation. The basic idea is that you pick a date and time and explain your cause. Then you just have to make sure that as many students as possible know. If you let students know that a walkout is happening, then you can bet that they'll walkout.

At some schools the administration has more control over students than at others. But the conditions for walkouts seem to exist in almost every school. School does not address the real needs of students. It is often under-stimulating and there are many places students would rather be. Even if students aren't walking out for the specific political reasons organizers have planned, the action of walking out is inherently political, and should be encouraged for this reason.

Spreading the word.

Ask your friends how they feel about the threat of the re-introduction of fees. I'm sure they'll feel the same as you, it's not exactly a good thing, is it?! Get them involved in handing out leaflets and flyers around your school, these can be downloaded from the resource section of this website, or even better design your own. Learning new skills is essential if we're going to build a campaign that can win, you may as well start! Stick posters up in your school, sometimes teachers may rip them down. But explain why you're doing this, and they may even want to get involved and support you, their unions are op-

posed to fees too. But if they do continue to act the spa, stick posters up outside the school gates, very little they can do then!

Organise a meeting in your school, or outside if you've mates in other schools in the same town, why not organise a meeting with them somewhere in your area, that students from all schools can come to? Hotels, community centres and pubs are good bets for rooms to use. If they ask for money, which they will, don't panic! In a worst case scenario, if no one shows up, run out on them and don't pay! if people do show up, pass a hat around and get everyone to contribute to the cost of the room. Also stress the need for money to poster, and do more flyers, if everyone chips in you can get a lot done.

Remember to get as many people as possible involved in the actual organisation of the protest, be it designing, leafletting and postering. You can't do everything yourself, the more people do, the more their confidence builds and a feeling will grow that you can actually do this!

Use the meeting to discuss what you think you can do, be it, petitions, walkouts, occupations or whatever. Remember actions speak louder than words. Make sure everyone at the meeting gets to have a say, be democratic. Take some notes so those who missed it can be filled in on what happened if they want to get involved. Do an activist list, take people phone numbers so they can be texted and kept up to date on whets going on.

We've set up an email list which can be used to discuss what we can do to beat fees and to organise, join it and keep in touch with other students across the country, in secondary and third level, visit our website at www.freeeducation.cjb.net. Use it to organise your own protests and communicate with students across Ireland. It is vital we continue to get as many people as possible involved, so form networks and get people in other schools involved.

It's a democratic country, don't let anybody deny you your right to protest. If you get victimised by your school au-

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authorities, organise a petition against, threaten THEM with a protest! Stand up for yourself and fight their harassment.

To make sure a walkout happens, the most important thing is to publicize the fact that one is being planned. The most common way is handing out a leaflet or handbill with the time, date and possibly a rallying point. Even if the number of leaflets you hand out is a fraction of the total student population, you can be sure that the information will be spread by word of mouth. A buzz is often created to the point that everyone knows.

Some other ways of getting the word out range from putting up posters in and near the school, especially in the stalls of the bathrooms where they will stay up longer, to slipping leaflets and handbills into student lockers, to holding teach-ins in the days leading up to the walkout, or as one person did, getting up on a table in the cafeteria and giving a speech. To stop propaganda from being removed, the date and time of one walkout was scrawled on the bathroom mirror in lipstick. On the morning of the walkout, cover the blackboards in every room in the school with slogans and information.

There are tons of other very simple tactics you can employ. Once you've decided on what you want to do, let others know. Get the ball rolling, poster for it and flyer for it, spread word at break times, schools are small places and news spreads quickly. Tell the local media and national media by issuing a press release. Post information about walkouts on the desktop of all the computers in your school: labs, libraries, classrooms etc. If computers are hooked up to the Internet, make a 1-page website with walkout information and make it the homepage that loads every time someone opens their browser. Some schools host night school classes. This is an ideal time to do propaganda blitzes if you're worried about being caught. Just remember to be quiet.

Another more daring tactic is taking over the school intercom system, if your school has one and announcing the walkout. To pull this off in one school students barricaded themselves inside the room where the announcements were made.

One of the rewards of organizing in schools is that you are forced to talk to students you might otherwise never speak with. When spreading the word, speak to everyone, not just those whom you know.

The Time For Walkouts.

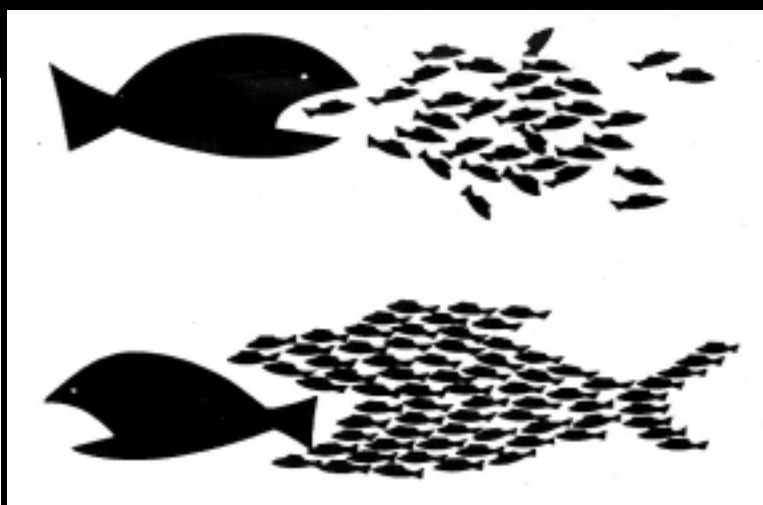
What time of day should you plan the walkout? The easiest time to hold a walkout is between classes or at lunch. If you call the walkout during class, you need to know that students are willing to be openly rebellious. Students have to get up and leave class right in front of their teacher with the faith that others will follow them. It is much harder to pull off this sort of walkout, but also that much more satisfying and disruptive to the functioning of the school.

One tactic to help build walkouts that take place during class time involves a team of kids running through the hallways, opening doors and announcing the walkout to each class. While requiring generous amounts of both stealth and speed, this is often an easy and effective way to get students right out of class.

Timing the walkout is also important if you plan to meet up with a demonstration or other event. You may need to leave yourself a large amount of time to get where you're going. Things always take longer than expected, and something always goes wrong. If there's an action to follow, it'll help determine what time you choose to plan the walkout for.

So once you walkout where do you go?

Once you walkout you are faced with the question of "what to do now?" This is often the toughest question facing organizers of walkouts. While the walkout is an action/protest in and of itself, most walkouts have a specific action/protest/rally for students to congregate at, after they have left school. This also heightens the political impact of the walkout, and legitimizes (in some sense) the exodus from school. Some walkouts are planned to co-ordinate with or compliment other events. For example, meeting up with a protest being organized by another group. In this case, the work is mostly done for you. You might also want to organize a rally or protest of your own with people in other schools or other groups. If you do organize your own rally, remember that students get bored listening to dry speakers, chanting tired slogans, or being at a lame, watered-down demonstration just like everyone else. Make sure to include elements of creativity and spontaneity, but be realistic in what is possible. Many rallies take place in a location away from the school, while others happen just outside of it. These are especially powerful when you're protesting problems that come right from within the school. At many suburban and rural schools there just isn't anywhere in walking distance to go to. The main strength of walkouts just to the front of the school, is that you don't lose any students who wouldn't have traveled far to go to



some rally. You've got the numbers there, so make use of them.

Try a walkout, shut your school down for the day, and protest with others in your area. Target your town hall, your local Fianna Fail or Progressive Democrat constituency office. If people are up for it, occupy them. A tactic used by students across the world is the blocking of roads during protests, if people are up for it, do it, but be careful. The police will threaten you, but there's strength in numbers, they can't arrest 300 of you!

Don't be afraid to be confrontational. If you're up against something that's pissed you off, to the point of organizing a walkout, don't let some foolish sense of respectability restrain you. Let it out, you have a right to be mad!

Don't get discouraged if only a fraction of the students who walked out actually came to a protest or rally, few usually do. Students are already bored and apathetic towards the standard methods of protest. Even if your action is totally awesome and exciting and students are still shying away from it, this isn't grounds to write them off.

Even the most apathetic student who walks out is exerting their political force. The sheer fact that school is often such a deadening place to spend one's day is reason enough for someone to walkout. Students are more than happy to leave school even if they have no idea what the political backing for the particular walkout is, because for the most part, students hate the institution of school itself. Don't dismay at those who leave school and head straight to the mall. Their act of walking out, under any and all terms, radically challenges the legitimacy of school in general. Come to terms with what you can expect from students, but always work for more.

What Students Do and How Schools Keep Control.

While students walking out of schools is disruptive, it doesn't have the same economic impact as workers occupying a factory, going on strike or walking off the job. The real impact of high school walkouts is often not the act itself, but what students do once they hit the streets. For example when the LA police force murdered Rodney King, a black youth, by beating him to death, during the riots and protests that followed the government decided to close high schools. Without the institution holding them back, angry youth flooded the streets and actively took part in looting and rioting.

When walkouts happened in solidarity with striking support staff in American schools, students gathered for a rally and then took over an intersection outside the provincial legislature. It was blockaded and held for a significant amount of time, by students. This bolstered media coverage, helping the union in their strike.

How discipline is kept at schools Schools are built on rules, they need rules! They need to control students and they do it through rules and grades. To run, schools need obedience, even if the rules are menial, dumb, degrading or completely opposed to the interests of students.

The way the authorities make sure their rules are followed is by singling out individuals who resist and punishing them; an example is set as a warning to others. To run a school "effectively", the administration consistently punishes the most disruptive students in order to keep others at bay.

The way that youth have some power to challenge the rules, is to act together, united. If many students act in unity, it becomes impossible for schools to hand out punishments to everyone. Imagine a school where over half the students were suspended on the same day. It would simply never happen.

This is how walkouts work. Everyone walks out and are able to protect each other since punishing everyone would be impossible. The same is true for other forms of protest like dress down days where everyone at a uniformed school refuses to wear their uniform. But this is not only true for protests.

The everyday functioning of the school is also run this way. If enough students refused to sing the national anthem everyday, the rule could never be enforced. The more people skip school each day, the less punishment will be dished out for doing so.

Students organize walkouts for all sorts of political reasons. For better portables, in support of extra curricular activities, to get classes taught in their own language, against laws which infringe on the rights of youth, or to protest in support of different causes around the world. But as well as the stated po-

litical reasons for walking out, walkouts are an example of students exercising their power. Walkouts demonstrate how little power the school administration has over us, and in a small way the balance of power is shifted.

Principals and vice principals move quickly to reassert control over the school. But an example is set. Each example of student power is threatening to the authorities, as students begin to realize how little power the administration actually has, and how much students have.

School administrations need to keep control. They will do what is in their power to stop walkouts. Sometimes they make announcements to the school that everyone who walks out will be punished. While they know that punishing everyone would be impossible, sometimes a threat is enough of a deterrent. The best way to avoid this is to educate each other on how walkouts work, and explain the strength in numbers.

Another way they try to prevent walkouts from spreading is by singling out and punishing the organizers, before or after a first walkout has occurred. They are unable to punish everyone, but if they punish organizers they may be able to scare anyone from organizing walkouts in the future.

There are ways that you can defend organizers. A simple way is by being discreet and covert, trying to not let the staff or administration know who is distributing all those leaflets. One way of being discreet is to flyer outside a friend's school while they flyer at yours.

Including as many students as possible in the planning stage is another idea. This makes leaders less and less important in disruptive processes, and not only that, it results in more effective and democratic actions. They are still able to target leaders, but it may make it harder for them.

If they attempt to expel an organizer you should contact a lawyer, a local legal clinic, or even a law student. The Campaign for Free Education can facilitate and help with this. It is not an actual legal proceeding but just the presence of a lawyer is often the difference between being expelled or not. Don't worry about that too much, it is unlikely they will expel someone for organizing a walkout.

If organizers are punished it can be helpful to launch a campaign to protect them, getting other more 'established' community or student groups involved, and pledging official support. Pass a petition around, get supportive school staff and parents to speak with the administration. If the authorities know they're going to be hassled to death by going through with an expulsion or punishment, it is likely they'll back down.

Other Tactics and Directions In School Organising.

Walkouts are a common form of political action taken by students, but there are many other sorts of actions that students have taken. This is obviously not a complete list, since there are countless anti-school actions that students engage in everyday, but hopefully this will be inspiring, and will serve to get the creative juices flowing.

Instead of calling walkouts some organizers have called "mitching days", where students take the whole day off. This is usually not coupled with any overt political message other than "youth would rather not be in school".

In the past, students have waged larger campaigns like student strikes, where schools are shutdown for an extended period of time. Some militant students have even taken over their school.

Another action common at schools with uniforms is dress-down days. On a chosen day no one wears their uniform. These can be organized in a similar way to walkouts, just spreading word throughout the school of the date of the "dress-down day".

One group of students in the United States had started a petition to try to get better cafeteria food, but their appeals to the principal went unanswered. They held a protest in their cafeteria about the horrible food they were being served, and before long a giant food fight had broken out. To stop the incident from spreading, the principal made an announcement the next morning that they would start serving better food in the cafeteria.

Another idea is creating your own school media: a zine, underground newspaper, or web site. When 3 American students decided to leave their school they wrote a letter explaining why they were leaving and suggested that other students do the same. It created a mass departure from the school (the ultimate walkout!). This idea can also be used to anonymously target teachers who are abusive, sexually harass students or are in other ways extremely heinous, and therefore unfit to teach.

The creeping involvement of corporations in schools is

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more heightened in America, with companies like Pizza Hut providing food in schools. When advertisements began infesting schools and using students to promote their products, angry students took action by starting a spontaneous graffiti campaign. They spray-painted and marked over the company advertising which was pasted all around their school, calling for advertisements to be banned from school settings. The reclaiming of space is an issue unto itself. Through public art attacks, students have taken back space in their school simply by painting all over it.

During a support staff strike, youth at various American schools took action through numerous tactics to show their soli-

arity (in obvious ways or otherwise). Many schools were "vandalized" with toilet paper being strung up along trees, garbage cans tipped over in the hallways, and graffiti covering anything and everything. This example of student restlessness as displayed in the media gave light to the necessity of having support staff in schools. On the morning of a proposed walkout to show solidarity with the strikers, students at one school found doors into the building locked with U-locks and chains, and keyholes filled with glue. Since no one could get into the school to open up on time, the walkout did not even need to happen, and classes for the day were cancelled. This approach calls for meticulous planning and the will to take a risk. Use it sparingly.

Case Study: Ontario High School Walkouts Against Cutbacks.

When the governor of Ontario in America was introducing Bill 160, which facilitated vast cutbacks in Education with a detrimental affect on school facilities, a vast amount of people including Indian nations, homeless, university students, workers and community groups hooked up to mount a real resistance to thier government. Here's what one of the students involved said about fighting back and how they did it

'There were 6 or 7 of us sitting in the room. We had just decided to hold a Toronto-wide high school walkout because of Mike Harris' plans to pass bill 160; a bill that would overhaul the education system, slash funding, and increase the divisions between students, teachers and the various board's of education. We brainstormed all the schools we could think of, that we or our friends attended, or even schools where we had acquaintances who we thought might want to organize walkouts. Our list had about 20 schools where we thought walkouts were really possible.

We made posters and handbills that gave information on what we were planning. We contacted friends and visited schools. We put up posters in the bathrooms, which stayed up for a long time. At other schools we handed out leaflets the morning of the walkouts. Both ways word spread and soon everybody knew. My high school was left completely barren. Everybody walked out. Walkouts took place in over 15 schools. Small groups from each school made their way to Queen's Park, where over 500 angry students held their protest.

Later, when teachers were on strike, we organized flying pickets to support them. We met early in the morning at one school, marched on the picket lines with those teachers for a while, then marched on to another school to support the teachers there. We boosted the spirits of teachers wherever we went. We made our way to the ministry of education, passing schools along the way, and encouraging students to join us. We met up with other students who were already holding a pro-



test at the ministry.

In the end, the union leadership backed down from their strike. Bill 160 got passed. Our actions ended essentially in failure. But even as it was being passed, students spontaneously walked out and protested outside Queen's Park. When the bill passed we blocked traffic on Queen's Park Circle, and disrupted the legislative reading of the bill.

While walkouts and student disruptions are no sure way to settle demands (let alone challenge things being passed by parliament), they are an important tactic of direct refusal to those things that threaten or qualitatively impoverish the lives of students. Even in overall failure, it is important to recognize the victories that were won. We radicalised an unknown amount of students, and forged massive links of solidarity in the process.'

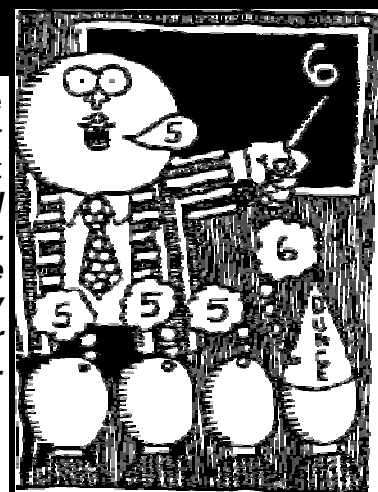
Conclusion.

Youth are robbed of their dignity. We are **bored and unstimulated** by school. They are not run in our best interest and they don't teach us some of the things we need most. We have little access to things we need to enrich our lives and better ourselves. We are viewed as criminals, penned up in schools and it makes us targets of harassment from the police and other authorities.

We need to struggle so all of us can live with dignity. We struggle to make our lives better. School can be a degrading place and we need to fight against that. Students have a lot of power. Just organizing walkouts and protest with that power is not enough. We need to find

ways to actually solve the problems we face in our lives. Walkouts can be a part of that, but **we need to find creative, bold and long-lasting solutions if we are serious about radically changing our schools, our education system and society as we know it.**

Fight to win!



An Introduction to Globalisation And Its Adverse Affects in Education.

The world's leaders have decided that it is business and not citizens which will dictate the future of public services. The World Trade Organization's General Agreement On Trade In Services (GATS) wants the government to surrender public services to a private sector where the sole concern is the creaming off of profit with scant regard for the needs of students and the tax payer.

The EU commission describes GATS as 'first and foremost an instrument for the benefit of business'. Business Lobbyists use the disturbing argument that 'schools will respond better to paying customers like any other business'. The US business lobby is highly critical of the 'culture of laziness which continues in the European education system...where students take liberties to pursue subjects not directly related to industry. Instead they are pursuing subjects which have no practical application'. The governments and the global business elite behind GATS want an education system intricately linked to the market and profit.

The removal of "barriers" to trade in education services will lead to massive cutbacks in Higher Education. The GATS negotiations aim to remove barriers to free trade in order to give foreign competitors equal access to the Irish education 'market'. Barriers cited by the WTO include "the existence of government monopolies and high subsidisation of local institutions". Free fees for undergraduates and the grant are 'discriminatory payments' and face the axe under GATS.

Here in Ireland we have already fallen victim to the first step in this process with the rolling back of free fees introduced in 1996 and a massive 69% hike in registration. A year ago only the obscure Skilbeck report carried out by the Government's 'Higher Educational Authority' hinted at the direction education here was being pushed in. Now in the space of a few months, public discourse has been pushed by the govern-



ment towards things that were previously unthinkable, the abolition of the grant, re-introduction of full tuition fees, increased links with industry and increased business funding of education. Creating a closed education system, and one totally geared to meeting the needs of big business. In schools, Public Private Partnerships (PPP) are already in action across Ireland, where taxpayers money is used to start up projects before handing them over to the private sector where profit is siphoned off. The end result of this would be a situation any public education that remained would be forced into constant competition with the private sector, leading to funding cutbacks and colleges about as accessible as Tony O'Reilly Hall is to UCD students. A building on campus where students are denied access all year despite cramped library conditions. We go there for a talk on our first day and get handed our degrees from there, but that's it!

In North America, especially in Canada, this neo-liberalism is being enthusiastically embraced by political elites as a panacea to the social ills of the country. Ontario in particular has slashed expenditure for health, education and social welfare, similar to the current Irish experience, all under the guise of fiscal discipline. The end result of this has been a dramatic increase in fees. Some estimates place the cost of attending college at an average 20%-25% of the average family income, it must also be remembered that at the same time the average family income has not increased, while the cost of basic educational materials like texts and so on has increased drastically. The inability of the family to subsidise education forces a majority of students to depend upon borrowed money particularly from government sponsored student loans. Students there now graduate not only with degrees but with an average \$30,000 debt, with few prospects for well paid employment forcing increasing numbers to declare personal bankruptcy as the only means to cope with the financial pressure. Now the affects of this corporate globalisation are being felt in Ireland.



An Introduction to Campaign For Free Education.

Last summer the government increased registration fees for students by 69%, this amounted to nothing more than an introduction of fees through the backdoor. It now plans to either introduce fees or student loans by September. Either way, the government plans for free third-level education to be a thing of the past from next September. This will mean thousands of students dropping out of college, poverty conditions for those remaining and thousands of young people being denied access to college. We cannot lie down and accept this attack on education. We have to be willing and able to take serious mass action against fees and demand free education for all.

The CFE has been one of the most formidable opponents of fees and cutbacks in education since the sum-

mer. It has organized numerous on-campus demonstrations in UCD making it a place of hostility to visiting government figures. The CFE has blockaded the Minister for Education in college buildings for hours; organized a successful occupations of the N11 motorway, the Departments of Finance, Education and Transport; carried out a successful sit-down protest outside Dail Eireann. All this brought invaluable media and public attention to educa-



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tional inequality and the danger of fees.

We believe education is a right and not a privilege. We believe in free and equal access for all, regardless of socio-economic status, to primary, secondary and third level education. We recognize that the present education system does not offer this and call on all students to secure your right to a free and accessible education of the highest standard. We must shift focus away from responding to the government's agenda, and force them to respond to ours, an agenda where educational opportunity is not mitigated by your economical and social background. Educational inequality is not something that magically appears in third level but is evident throughout the education system. The points system illustrates this. Where students with unequal resources and crap school facilities are pitted against those who can afford private tuition and attend exam factories on Leeson Street. Students are forced into a rat race for a limited number of college places because the government are unwilling to adequately fund the colleges.

The Campaign for Free Education is a network set

up last summer by students in UCD to fight the reintroduction of fees by getting students involved in collective mass action against the government. It is now essential that students, both in secondary and third level form an network to mobilise opposition against this government. The years of complacency, respectability and negotiation in the student movement must end, and action must begin.

We need to show the government how serious we are on this issue, through a campaign to mobilise students and involve students in actions such as blockades, mass occupations, school and college strikes and more, which directly affect and upset the government. If you want to get involved or set up a group in your school or college contact the Campaign for Free Education!

Student Activist Resources.

Campaign for Free Education (www.freeeducation.cjb.net) vibrant campaign against educational inequality, site is full of articles and resources like this booklet which we produced.

Union of Students Ireland (www.usi.ie) National Union Of Irish Students.

Education Is Not For Sale (www.education-is-not-for-sale.org) European Network Of Student activists.

Educationnet UK (www.educationnet.co.uk) based news from grass roots student activists.

Indymedia (www.indymedia.ie) Open publishing news service, anyone can post their news, use to publicise your protests.

Youth Against War (www.youthagainstawar.cjb.net) school students network against war.

Irish Anti War Movement (www.irishantiwar.org) umbrella group against war.

Struggle (www.struggle.ws) huge website, with radical history, news and more from an anarchist perspective.

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