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Abortion

It's every Womans Right to Choose

Patricia McCarthy

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Anarchists believe that every woman has the right to choose an abortion when faced with a crisis pregnancy irrespective of the reasons for the abortion. At least 4,000 Irish women have abortions in England every year at present. Women worldwide have always sought to control their fertility through abortion no matter how difficult it is for them to get access to abortion and they probably always will. This is because it is essential for women to be able to control their own fertility and not to be reduced to the level of their biological function as child-bearers only if they are to achieve true equality and liberation.

At present the Irish Constitution with the the Eight Amendment reduces women to being equal only to a completely dependent foetus and it tries to condemn women to become unwilling incubators. To compare an adult woman or teenage girl with responsibilities, social relationships, personal plans, and so on to a completely dependent foetus is unacceptable. The foetus has no independent existence without the woman and the decision about an abortion or a continuation of the pregnancy must be the woman's decision and no one else's.

Women choose to have abortions for all kinds of reasons: poverty, bad health, too many other children, because of rape or incest or simply because they do not want to have a child at that point in their lives. We believe that all these reasons are valid. Women should not have to answer to anyone, not the church, not the state or even to doctors for their decision. This raises the question of abortion on demand. We oppose any kind of decision making process involving ethics committees or doctors or other variations on this. A woman must have the right to abortion on demand.

The question of free access is a very important one. At present only those women who can afford both the travel costs and the operation costs can get an abortion. Abortion facilities must be made available here in Ireland and they must be free as all medical services should be.

Censorship of information on abortion is a totally insulting attack on women's most basic rights as thinking human beings to know what all the options are when they are faced with a crisis pregnancy. To deny women information, to take books out of libraries, censor magazines containing telephone numbers, all these actions treat women as irresponsible children whose moral decisions need to be policed by small groups of right wing bigots.

The hypocrisy of allowing women to go to England for abortions is no longer acceptable to many Irish people. Apart from all other considerations, having to raise the money for the travel and to go isolated and afraid to another country adds untold trauma to what should be a fairly simple medical procedure. Abortion facilities must be made available in Ireland free and without restricted access.

Anarchists believe that a woman's right to choose also means the right to choose to have a child and to have decent housing, child care and welfare facilities available in order to raise that child in a reasonable way and in order that her life is not totally given over to child care. At present with the

current housing crisis the almost total lack of free child care and the lousy welfare payments this is not a real choice.

We are opposed to all forms of forced fertility control, whether it is the state imposing limits on the number of children a woman can have as in China or the denial of proper contraceptive and abortion facilities as in this country. The right to choose means the right to choose not to have a child or to have a child in circumstances where that means that neither mother nor child suffer materially or socially for that decision.

Anti-abortionists say that abortion is murder. We reject this argument. The foetus is a potential life only — it is not comparable to the life of a person of any age or ability who interacts socially and functions independently. We don't deny that abortion takes the life of a potential human being. The right to choose means that it is the woman's right to choose whether to bring that potential life to full term or not given the circumstances of her life. As anarchists we demand that right and we will be active in the campaign for abortion rights in this country over the coming months.