

THE DAY I COLLECTED MY PENSION by Niall

I've just watched a video of a band I was in from 1989. We only played more gigs since that one and (sadly for me and probably no-one else) I haven't hit the stage since.

Back then my band tried to convey a message through the music. back then however the climate was to have a message. PC wasn't invented for Ireland so people weren't branded as aliens for speaking their minds. My band were very independent, we refused to play gigs that were more than £3 in. We put on our own gigs and never sat complaining waiting for others to "promote" us. At the gigs we gave out leaflets and generally encouraged activism in people. We only played with anyone who asked and asked everyone for a gig. The bigger challenge was to play with bands who listened to different music than we did. 'Win them over' if you please.

It was no big deal. It just seemed the normal thing to do. Looking back at it now a sense of history has evolved. Eventhough it didn't seem like it at the time but we were part of a community. Sure that community had its failings (and time has made those failings less harsh -abit like school. The longer you're out of it generally the better it seemed).

Dublin in 1989 was a lot different to 1997. Gigs somehow seem different now. I look back and remember that every second gig was a benefit. Money never seemed to play a big part in things. Being creative (however slightly) and feeling that you could achieve things was the important factor. Even putting a gig on was an achievement. The Attic wasn't around then, as it isn't now -it had an odd gig but was just a room. Like theres rooms in pubs all over Dublin.

One vivid memory I have from that era was the Merrell Dow campaign. Merrell Dow were a pharmaceutical company with a long long list of environmental atrocities before their name. They were planning to locate in Cork and move their factory there.

My band got involved in the campaign to stop Merrell Dow from coming into Ireland. We gave out specific leaflets at gigs, we wrote a song about them and other mutlinational corporations. We wrote about their general disdain for life where profit is concerned. We spoke about this at gigs. I was amazed when another band wrote a song on that topic. Of course, as I said earlier, the PC steamroller wasn't moving then.

In the end Merrell Dow didn't come to Ireland. We didn't claim the credit (no doubt they decided it was more profitable to move to a country where environmental policies aren't as strict). Our community seemed genuinely interested in what happened. Even if it was just at gigs.

I also remember a song we played called 'Boycott Unilever'. The lyrics comprised of brand names that came under the Unilever umbrella. When singing it we really believed that we could affect change. Some people took note of it, others simply couldn't be bothered. At least though we weren't cast aside though and branded as PC. The gigs themselves were far more than purely entertainments. The fun aspect, however, was not lost.

Of course there was the cynical ones who couldn't be bothered. The "we'll never change anything" brigade. Its interesting to note that these advocates no longer go to gigs. They're no longer motivated, even by the music. Their punk rock phase has passed, maybe "progressed" to the financial markets or somewhere else.

Having said all this little has changed on a global scale. Being part of certain things has made a positive difference. Whether you feel you're changing things directly even by being vegetarian, less meat will need to be produced eventually. Not buying Nestle products will eventually lead to a re-structure in their thinking. Maybe your one bar will make that difference.

There was the Martin Foran benefits, Linda Couch, ALF, Birmingham 6 awareness. Some have obviously been more successful than others. each are was appreciated by the recipients. £40 can pay for a lot of stamps, envelopes and

leaflets. £40 split between a couple of bands will pay for very little.

Before the Hope Collective resumed putting gigs on last year, admission prices were rising, attitudes were changing. The ultimate aim was not affect change but to make a living from music. The emphasis was placed more on a career through noise. If Green Day (or whomever) can do it then maybe we can too. The employment aspect became the no.1 factor. The PC element got priority

Gigs that the Hope Collective (or you) put on should have a sense of importance to them. The fact that theres stalls selling records should be acknowledged. People should be encouraged to do their own zines. Lets create the culture of self-empowerment, lets not wait for others to do the things we want

When someone hits you with the PC stick just bounce back. Its their words against your actions -neither of you can decide a winner but what do you think? Is being part of an alternative important to you? By reading this zine you are obviously aware that there is an alternative to solely music. Embrace that alternative, take what you like and affect change.

NOTE: As an aside if you think this whole thing is complete garbage write in to Loserdom. Don't just snipe at it. I'm not trying to say that the music or people in 1989 were better, it was just different. You can judge what you like from that!