

4th Raymond Crotty Annual Lecture 2013

Delivered by *Fergal Anderson*
Chair Joe Murray- Co-ordinator of Afri

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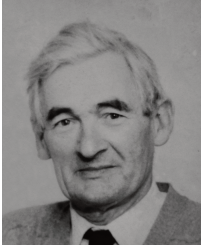
Bia Nua

Food Sovereignty in Ireland

Ireland Institute,

27 Pearse Street,
Dublin 2

Thursday
21st November
at 7.30 p.m.



Raymond Crotty (1925-94), farmer, economist, development theorist, historian and political activist, was one of the most original thinkers to come out of modern Ireland.

He made Irish constitutional history by his successful legal action in 1987 against the then Government's attempt to ratify the EU's Single European Act Treaty by simple majority vote in the Dail instead of by popular referendum.

Holding strong radical views, his advocacy of a land tax as a means of putting pressure on Irish landowners to use their land more productively pitted him against powerful local interests.

Irish Agricultural Production (1962), his first book, was described by Professor Joseph Lee of UCC as 'a monument of the Irish intellect'. It had a seminal influence on the study of 19th century Irish economic history.

His posthumously published book, *When Histories Collide: the Development and Impact of Individualistic Capitalism*, is his most important contribution to economic and historical thought. In it Crotty explored the role of Indo-European pastoralist peoples in the creation of the modern world. It has been welcomed as an important and original contribution to social science by leading international scholars but the fact that it has not even been reviewed in the main Irish academic publications is perhaps clearest testimony to the partisanship and parochialism of much of the Irish academic world.

Food Sovereignty

The topic of this year's annual Raymond Crotty lecture is still a new term in Irish political and social debate. Irish State policy is centred on an export economy as opposed to ensuring fair livelihoods for the majority of farmers. But recent years have exposed the fragility of this economic model. Over the winter of 2012-2013, numbers of farmers ran out of fodder for their animals, leading to the import of fodder from overseas. This unprecedented step exposed the very tight margins under which most farmers are working. In addition, the agri-export model still relies on high levels of imports of concentrated feeds from overseas in spite of Ireland's high capacity for grass-fed production. Farmers, particularly those involved in animal rearing, depend almost entirely on direct payments to reach an average industrial wage of just over €21,000 per year.

An alternative geared towards Food Sovereignty would mean important changes to the country's farming system towards quality production as opposed to quantity. There is huge scope to improve accessibility to locally produced food for the population, develop local and cooperative based markets for agricultural produce, while ensuring real sustainability without Ireland having to import concentrated feeds or fodder to feed its animals. Until this is achieved smallholders in particular will struggle to make ends meet.

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Fergal Anderson has been working on Food Sovereignty issues for many years, including three years working with the International peasant movement Via Campesina in their Brussels office. He is currently trying to build an Irish network for Food Sovereignty, while also developing the small vegetable farm he works on with his partner in the west of Ireland.

Joe Murray is Co-ordinator of Afri whose goal is the promotion of global justice and peace, and the reduction of poverty. Joe organises the Louisburgh 'Famine Walk' each May in Co. Mayo.

Organised by
The People's Movement
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For further details contact:
Frank Keohan 087 2308330
post@people.ie