



Once Upon a Time in the West: The Corrib Gas Controversy

Lorna Siggins

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'All I want is to stay where I am . . . My heart and soul are in this place.'


(Willie Corduff, one of The Rossport Five)

In a remote, beautiful part of the west of Ireland, a David and Goliath struggle rages between multinational oil company, Shell, and some of the local community of Rossport, County Mayo.

In 1996, Enterprise Oil, subsequently bought by Shell, found a major source of valuable gas offshore in the Corrib gas field. In the attempt to build an onshore pipeline and refinery the oil giant has come into conflict with a small group of locals who, anxious about the safety of their families, the environmental impact of the project and the future of their community, are resisting Shell's plans. The eyes of the nation fell on this tiny community when, in 2005, five of the residents were jailed for refusing to allow Shell onto their land, in contempt of court orders. These men have become known as The Rossport Five.

Irish Times correspondent Lorna Siggins has been covering the controversy from the beginning. No one is better placed to unravel the twists and turns of this fascinating human drama and its political, cultural and environmental shockwaves.

In a new Ireland where economic logic goes largely unchallenged, the Corrib Gas pipeline controversy raises uncomfortable questions about the ways in which Ireland has changed.

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