

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry

- » Win equality on jobs, pay, homes
- » Curb police powers
- » Free movement; end NRPF
- » Teach the truth about history

RALLY LABOUR MOVEMENT AGAINST RACISM!



Black Lives Matter and the labour movement

Interviews, reports,
discussion, debate.

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Job cuts escalate

Make Labour speak out
for a shorter work week
and new public sector
jobs.

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Local Labour Parties
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politics. We must restore
democracy.

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Momentum elections: vote internationalist!

Poll for the National
Coordinating Group is
open and runs to 30 June.

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Poll scores won't save jobs

By Colin Foster

A survey – bit.ly/manufq2 – by manufacturing bosses' organisation Make UK published on 15 June indicates a big flood of job cuts in the next three months, July to September.

They report only 11.7% of firms operating at capacity; 81% vs 39% predicting further falls in output in the next three months; a quarter of firms already having decided on redundancies; and only one-third saying they won't make redundancies in the coming months.

This week, starting 15 June, is the last time for bosses to send out the "HR1" letters required by law for large-scale redundancies if they are to take effect before the government reduces its furlough pay-outs from 80% to 60% of full pay, in August.

The driving factor here is not the lockdown as such. There was no ban on factories continuing to work during the lockdown. Some did. Nor is it the difficulty of adapting work sites for covid-distancing and PPE. In many modern factories, that is easier than in offices.

It is a collapse of orders. Aviation is in steep decline, and ripples from that go down a long supply chain. A number of big construction and investment projects have been stalled.

Some have speculated that the pandemic may lead to a boom in robots. So far, anyway, however, the hardest-hit sectors in British manufacturing are the ones closest to high-technology: "machinery equipment", "electrical equipment", and "electronics".

Those sectors, so the managers report, have been hit by problems with supply of components as well as by weak order books.

Retail is now restarting after the lockdown. It may be

able to recover quicker than manufacturing, but it seems certain that many shops will go out of business.

Construction firms are also cutting jobs, again because of a decline in orders.

The giant food-wholesale multinational Bidfood is cutting jobs, in Australia and New Zealand at least as well as in Britain, because it was geared to supply cafés and the like.

The bosses are calling for a National Recovery Council, and the big unions in the affected sectors, such as Unite and GMB, are making almost indistinguishable calls.

The Labour front bench is saying almost nothing. Evidently Keir Starmer believes that studied moderation and letting the Tories discredit themselves is the answer.

In terms of immediate poll scores he may be right. On 12 June Ipsos Mori reported that Starmer has the best "net approval" rating (% approving minus % disapproving) of any Opposition leader since Blair in his "honeymoon" period in 1994.

But good opinion poll scores won't save jobs. Workers' Liberty activists in the unions and the Labour Party will be campaigning for:

- A shorter working week with no loss of pay. Shift to a standard working week of four days or 32 hours.
- Expand public service jobs: in health care, in social care, and elsewhere.
- Take the manufacturing and aviation giants declaring job cuts into public ownership, and reorganise their equipment and workforce skills towards green and socially-useful production. □

The rich pay lower tax rates

Up to £20 billion a year could be raised for public services just by taxing all income and capital gains at the same rate as earnings, argued a new report by Arun Advani of Warwick University and Andy Summer of LSE. An "Alternative Minimum Tax" (which already exists, in some form, in the USA) forcing everyone on more than £100,000 a year to pay at least a 35% tax rate on taxable income and gains would raise £11 billion.

The best-off appear to pay higher taxes than most – a 47% "headline" rate. A few do pay that. Most use deductions and reliefs, and "repackaging" of their income as capital gains, to pay a much lower rate. On average, people with total remuneration of £10 million a year pay an effective average tax rate of 21%, less than would be paid by someone on £30,000. The average effective rate starts declining above £250,000 a year. □

• bit.ly/tax-ineq

Marxism and Trade unions course

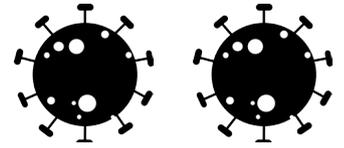
After a successful first online run of our course, 'Marxism and Trade Unions', Workers' Liberty trade unionists are [running the participatory course again](#).

It aims to provide a solid grounding in some fundamental ideas about what trade unions are, and the role of socialists in unions and workplaces. Fortnightly zoom meetings with material to consider in between. Saturdays 11am, starting 20 June. See workersliberty.org/c19-online □

The £6 billion gap

Stevenage's Labour council has threatened to declare bankruptcy. The Local Government Association (an umbrella body for councils) says councils need £6 billion extra from central government this year – if not the full £15 billion taken away from councils since 2010 – to keep basic services going after their extra spending and their loss of income in the pandemic. Labour activists are building a campaign for Labour councillors to unite with unions and communities to fight back. Check out the campaign online: <https://fightcouncilcuts.carrd.co/> □

Still an emergency



“” Editorial

The “Independent SAGE” group of scientists has dissected the government’s first set of figures from its test-trace operation: 8,117 individuals testing positive, 5,407 of them reached and asked for recent contacts, 26,985 asked to isolate.

The best guess is about 23,000 new symptomatic cases in that time period. Only a quarter of symptomatic cases were picked up. And there are no data on how many of the 26,985 actually have self-isolated.

We now know that in February-March is the government’s test-trace-isolate operation then was swamped. Only about half the people with Covid-19 symptoms self-isolated. Up to 12 March official figures showed fewer than 100 cases identified a day (as against over 1500 a day now), but in fact there were tens of thousands by mid-March.

The virus is almost surely with us for the long term, even if a vaccine is produced quickly. Long-term we have to find ways to live with it and balance risks. In Britain, now, more than that: the pandemic is still an emergency, because infections are still running high. The death rate from Covid-19 has been falling clearly and consistently since mid-April, indicating a decline in infections from early April. Things are not nearly as bad as they were. Yet by death rates and by confirmed new cases per day, Britain is now where Italy, Spain, and France were mid-May. The peak in Britain was a bit later than those countries, and the decline in infection since has been slower.

Solidarity is against rushed lockdown-easing, not all lockdown-easing. We want workers’ control over reopenings, not opposition to all reopenings. The lockdown brings its own toll, social and medical and even in deaths, and worse for the worst-off.

Most of the medical experts, with all their different emphases and slants, look to finding and testing newly-infected people, tracing their contacts, and organising quarantine (isolation) for them, for controlling infection as lockdowns are eased.

There are difficulties with that operation even in the best conditions.

In Britain, we need a *public-health* test-trace-isolate operation, run by local public-health officials with properly-employed public sector staff – not the current cheap-skate operation, contracted out to Serco for the tracing and Deloitte for the testing, and with tracers employed as casual labour for 12-week gigs on little more than minimum wage.

We need guarantees of full isolation pay for everyone who has Covid-19-like symptoms or tests positive, and for everyone asked to self-isolate by contact-tracers. Those guarantees do not yet exist even in care homes, let alone across industry. HC-One is the only big care-home chain

to do an isolation-pay deal with a union, and there the isolation pay is for those with a positive test. Not for those who have symptoms but then test negative, and not for contacts who don’t, or don’t yet, have symptoms, but have been asked to self-isolate. The GMB union is pressing on those issues.

We need the option of special temporary accommodation for people required to self-isolate who live in crowded conditions. But from the end of June the government is phasing out even schemes to house the homeless.

We need adequate supplies of PPE everywhere that work restarts, as well as in hospitals and care homes.

So far no lockdown-easing world-wide has reversed a previous downward trend of infections, with the possible exception of Iran’s and maybe Israel’s. Judging by that, the official reopening of shops in England from 15 June, following the gradual reopening of cafés and pubs for takeaway in recent weeks, will probably “work”.

But worldwide the pandemic is still spreading. World-wide deaths have fallen slowly since mid-April; but that trend may be an illusion produced by a lower rate of identifying deaths as Covid-19 in India, Chile, Brazil, etc. than in the previous epicentres, Europe and the USA.

We don’t know whether Britain now is in a lull before a “second wave”. In any case, now is an opportunity to build a workable pandemic-control system. The Tories are squandering that opportunity.

Make the labour movement indict the Tories now, demand requisitioning of industry for medical supplies, and demand full isolation pay for all!

The slow “return-to-work” which began in mid-April did not really accelerate despite Johnson’s 10 May announcement, not until the 15 June shop reopening.

Many bosses are not keen to restart. They have few orders. They prefer to continue with their workers furloughed, or, increasingly, to start sackings.

At the start of the lockdown, workers in many workplaces used legal rights to refuse unsafe working, and generally won improvements. We expected more such battles after 10 May. We’ve heard of none yet. There may have been some, but surely many fewer than after 23 March.

Partly because of the government’s spectacular floundering, partly because of lockdown-fatigue, covid-distancing has been visibly fading in patches on the streets, in the parks, in the supermarkets. (In some, not all, Black Lives Matter protests, too, but those weren’t the first or the main cases).

There is a converse tendency among some workers – some who have secure work-from-home or furlough, and comfortable and well-resourced homes, others too – to step up their anxiety.

Socialists must seek to unite both sections of the working class, with sober and informed discussion about relative risks, around demands for requisitioning, workers’ control, and isolation pay. □

Bringing in crucial issues

By Kas Witana

I put myself forward in the Forward Momentum primaries, and one of the key lessons I learnt was about democracy. Forward Momentum talks a good talk, and clearly it is better than Momentum as currently constituted and better than Momentum Renewal. But at least some of the leading people's approach to democracy has been to support it when it suits them.

Whether it's the omission of agreed policies from their "Plan", the banning of Ruth Cashman from standing in the primaries in London, or their response to the Stalinist witch-hunting of Workers' Liberty, their democratic commitment has less than clear and consistent.

Even in terms of democratising Momentum itself, there is a hesitancy about basic concepts of labour movement democracy, like having a decision-making conference. Quite a few in Forward Momentum seem to have bought the idea that such democratic structures and procedures are off-putting. But if we don't have them, we'll end up with an improved version of what we have in Momentum at the moment - consultation that is more or less real, not democracy. Without democracy, Momentum cannot be fundamentally changed.

You can see the logic feeding through in the fact that Forward Momentum is not really arguing for a sovereign Labour Party conference either, even though that is an absolutely essential demand.

In parallel, it's easy to talk about socialist politics, but the political debate so far has been very narrow. We've had the bizarre situation where people insist that we can't talk about Brexit, ignoring not only the reality of public opinion - which is far more progressive than most of the left - but also the huge issue staring us in the face, out in the real world.

Again, you can see the political logic feed through in the fact that a third of the Forward Momentum policy committee voted against campaigning for free movement - and even now they are not really talking about it. Back in reality, it's crucial.

The background is Labour's weak response in the Covid-crisis and its failure to raise a clear alternative. Momentum should be developing that alternative. Look at council cuts, which is about to become an even bigger issue, with huge cuts to their budgets. This is something where the Corbynite left fell down massively, arguing essentially to wait for a Labour government but not even making clear demands on what a Labour government would do.

This problem applies to so many issues - social care, the Black Lives Matter struggle, climate politics. It's easy to say the words Green New Deal, even Socialist Green New Deal, but what are the politics of that? How do we link it with workers' struggles - with a Lucas Plan in every workplace? How do we develop clear socialist demands?

Black Lives Matter is also a crucial issue to raise, not only because it's so glaring in the world, but because Labour has taken such a conservative position on the police - and

Momentum has tailed that, at best. More recently, under the pressure of the protests it has said some better things, but the result is all it's incredibly contradictory.

More broadly, that displays the incredible limitations of what they think socialism is all about - as if more police or more of anything the existing state does is socialist.

I'm standing to raise all these things. Someone in Forward Momentum asked me why are you standing against people with the same politics as you. But, functionally at least, the politics aren't the same. Myself and comrades like Ruth Cashman are standing to make arguments and raise issues that otherwise won't be raised in our regions.

Above all, we're standing to start a real political debate - about these issues and many others - among Momentum members. □

• Kas is an NHS worker, Unison member and Labour activist who is standing for Momentum National Coordinating Group in the "Northern, Scotland and Rest of World" region on the Momentum Internationalists platform (momentuminternationalists.org). Ruth Cashman and Ana Oppenheim (London region), Abbie Clark (Midlands and East), and Nadia Whittome ("elected officials" constituency) have also backed the platform. Momentum Internationalists is canvassing other candidates for their stance on the platform and on some specific pledges, and will make voting recommendations accordingly.

Responses to left pledges

The Uyghur Solidarity Campaign has produced a pledge for those standing for the Momentum and Open Labour national committees (uyghursolidarity-pledge20.carrd.co), now signed by 14 Momentum and 27 Open Labour candidates.

That's good, but it's 14 out of 57 Momentum candidates. Obviously the 24 candidates on the Stalinist-influenced Momentum Renewal slate are unlikely to sign - despite their attempts to smear Workers' Liberty as Islamophobic. Six Forward Momentum candidates have signed so far. The FM candidates who regard the AWL as Islamophobic have not signed.

The Labour Campaign for Free Movement has got 20 Momentum candidates and 30 Open Labour candidates signing (see twitter.com/labfreemovt)

The Open Selections campaign has got 47 Momentum candidates to sign its pledge (see bit.ly/ospledge1), including a narrow majority of Momentum Renewal candidates.

The Labour Campaign for Trans Rights has got 45 Momentum candidates to sign its pledge (see bit.ly/trans-pledge).

Labour for a Socialist Europe's three pledges on free movement, delaying Brexit and fighting nationalism had just been launched as we go to press (bit.ly/l4se-pledges) □

The two faces of Momentum Renewal

By Mohan Sen

In some ways online rally for the Momentum national co-ordinating group election held by the Momentum Renewal faction on 10 June gave a good impression. The speakers all sounded properly left-wing, there was talk of class struggle, socialist policies and transforming Momentum, and so on.

The first problem is that it was impossible to take any of it seriously.

The people running Momentum Renewal have run Momentum since the start of 2017. Funnily enough, they seem only to have discovered there are any problems in the organisation since they decided to run for election in it.

If they're in favour of democratising Momentum, as they claim, why haven't they done it before now? In fact, why did they work so energetically to destroy the organisation's democracy in 2016-17?

The same applied to pretty much everything that was said at the rally, about every issue. Talking fluently about

Will Forward Momentum continue?

By Mohan Sen

Early on in the creation of Momentum reform group Forward Momentum, its organisers made lot of it being a "time-limited campaign" that would dissolve when the Momentum NCG election was over. We have heard less of that recently, and the rumour is that the key people want the organisation to continue afterwards.

Forward Momentum continuing seems to us a double-edged sword.

On one hand, having a framework to hold newly elected FM-backed NCG members to account would be a good thing, and it's hard to see any organisation providing a comparable potential framework. After the election, when time is no longer such an urgent fact, it would be harder for the FM organisers to maintain the political ambiguity and lack of democracy in the organisation.

On the other hand, Forward Momentum contains people with opposing political viewpoints on a wide range of issues, including about the fundamental purpose of Momentum and what needs changing about it.

There is a risk that an ongoing organisation would work against the better, more democratic, more class struggle-oriented and more radical people organising on the basis of their politics, and seek to bind them the lowest-common-denominator of the Forward Momentum coalition.

Whatever happens we need urgent discussion about our demands for transforming Momentum, reviving the Labour left and pushing forward the class struggle - and a single consensual, not-properly-pluralist "Forward Momentum position" will not be a good thing. □

the history of the British labour movement doesn't equate to a class-struggle approach today - and Momentum's record to working-class struggle has been passive at best.

The other thing worth noting is what they said about Jeremy Corbyn. At least two of the four speakers argue that previously it was necessary to focus on supporting the leader, but now he was gone there could be a wider remit. One of them said, almost exactly: "Before it was about supporting Jeremy, but now there are loads and loads of really talented members who can become councillors".

To be "fair" to Momentum Renewal, the Forward Momentum nationally rally a week before was also extremely poor. However, Forward Momentum has had some other events since, including a Midlands Region meeting and a national Q&A with the FM candidates, sponsored by the Fire Brigades Union, which have been much better.

In addition, however, the problem with Momentum Renewal goes beyond political disingenuousness. Their key people, or many of them, are much worse than that.

In the days around the Momentum NCG election opening on 16 June, Momentum Renewal candidates and organisers launched a barrage of smears against Workers' Liberty, creating a special Twitter account (Momentum Against the AWL) so the shit cannot be directly attributed to MR.

This is not just a matter of misrepresenting our politics, but of accusations of child abuse and the like. In other words, they have returned to their disgusting form of the last three years. It's on the "Obama was born outside the USA" or "Hillary Clinton runs a child-abuse ring" level.

We are proud to be the political enemy of this project. But the lying, slander and harassment which their attacks on us typify are indications of what to expect if they win the Momentum election.

Forward Momentum's weakness (at best) in responding to such witch-hunting is also a problem. □

• For a debunking of some of the lies "Momentum Against the AWL" has promoted, see bit.ly/awlcontroversies

New audio!

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- [Solidarity 551 part 1](#) and [part 2](#), [550 part 1](#) and [part 2](#)
- [Lois Weiner: Where next for the US left?](#) George Floyd protests, Biden, more
- [Climate change and Covid-19](#) – opening speeches

See workersliberty.org/audio for links to the audio version. It can also be found through many podcast providers: search "Workers' Liberty" or "Solidarity & More". More information on subscribing and using podcasts at [the URL above](#). □

New coal power in Germany



Environment

By Zack Muddle

In the last days of May, 500 environmental protesters descended upon a [new coal power plant](#), Datteln 4, in Germany.

The plant opened on 30 May despite the German government's roadmap, announced this year, to have coal phased out by 2038 at the latest. And despite the average coal power plant globally having a [46 year](#) – not 18 year – lifespan.

Electorally, Germany has one of the strongest "Green Parties" in the world. But if anything, they have contributed to coal power use in Germany today.

In 2000 a SPD-Green coalition announced a plan to phase out nuclear energy, and it has happened progressively since. In 2007, construction on Datteln 4 began. In 2011 the Fukushima nuclear accident happened in Japan, and Germany's phase out of nuclear power was accelerated.

Net power generation, and power generation *capacity*, have both grown over that period. The fastest area of growth is [renewables](#). Coal power generation *has* decreased, although lignite or "brown coal", a particularly polluting type, less so than other coal. But nuclear has decreased faster. And gas has *increased*.

Had nuclear not been decreased, coal and other fossil-fuels would likely have decreased more rapidly – or at least could have been phased out more easily.

Nuclear does not drive global warming as fossil fuels do, and is safer.

The Fukushima disaster occurred because the power plant was built in an area vulnerable to earthquakes and tsunamis. There had been an estimated 2,202 disaster-related deaths in Fukushima, [the Financial Times estimated in March 2018](#), "from evacuation stress, interruption to medical care and suicide; so far, there has not been a single case of cancer linked to radiation from the plant." 60,000 people were evacuated as a result of the disaster, receiving inadequate support. The wider death toll from the earthquake and tsunami was estimated at 15,895.

In [September 2018](#) one former employee's death, by lung cancer, was attributed to radiation from the disaster. Eventual excess deaths due to radiation will likely be higher than one, but not huge.

“““ What we stand for

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty fights for socialist revolution, for the labour movement to militantly assert working-class interests.

See workersliberty.org/about – if you agree, join us! □

Almost five million people die every year from air pollution, much of it from fossil fuels – and the impacts of global warming will be orders of magnitude higher.

Coal power stations are significant financial investments, and will not be abandoned easily by the capitalists who hope to reap their profit from them.

Due to supposed environmental policies, they are increasingly converted into gas or biomass power stations. [Neither of these](#) is a genuinely environmental option. There are currently no comparatively straightforward or cheap ways to convert coal into low-carbon power stations.

They must be dismantled, at a serious loss, cutting against the logic of a private, for-profit, energy sector. Huge public investments into expanding renewable and low-carbon energy sources are necessary. □

CLP slammed for discussing politics

By Micheál MacEoin

Since late March, the Labour Party has been effectively "locked down", with no local constituency parties authorised to hold democratic decision-making meetings.

In early June, a letter from Labour's London Region to a CLP [Constituency Labour Party] which had held an Executive Committee (EC) meeting online surfaced on social media.

In the letter, the regional official stated that the Party does not permit CLPs to hold meetings remotely and all regular meetings had been cancelled during the pandemic "to protect members".

Since 25 March, "informal meetings" such as social events can be held. It was conceded that "in exceptional circumstances," ECs can "meet to agree urgent business".

London Region were quick to qualify this: "'urgent business' is limited to organisationally-critical decisions and is not an opportunity to pass political resolutions. For this reason the NEC [National Executive Committee] has requested Regional Offices approve all remote meetings before they take place".

This is a profound centralisation of political initiative in the hands of the party bureaucracy. In effect, Labour's grassroots democratic channels and structures have been closed off.

In the last couple of weeks, a few CLPs have had letters saying that they are being considered for a selective "trial" in restarting decision-making. No details yet.

We must support moves to "Wake Up Labour" and fight for the right of local party activists to meet, discuss and pass political resolutions. □

• Sign up here: bit.ly/w-u-l

Stand with trans people



Women's Fightback

By Katy Dollar

The government have leaked plans to drop changes to the Gender Recognition Act to the *Sunday Times* (14 June).

Changes drawn up under Theresa May's government would have streamlined the legal process of changing a birth certificate by removing some barriers like medical diagnosis and lengthy and intrusive evidence procedure. Consultation on the updated Gender Recognition Act (GRA) closed in 2018, but the government has since dragged its feet on implementing it following a spectacular and well-organised backlash from opponents.

The Labour leadership seems to be doing its best to avoid taking a position on the issue, raising concern that previous support for changes to the GRA have been dropped. Labour's shadow home secretary Nick Thomas-Symonds' criticism of the government was to say it was wrong to announce changes to an "extremely sensitive"

policy area by leaking them to a newspaper.

This is a terrible failure in solidarity for our trans comrades. We should campaign for changes to the GRA, and we must also go much further.

The labour movement should be looking to integrate fights against oppression and bigotry into the broader class struggle. We should support changes which make it easier, cheaper and less degrading to change our legal gender. Self-declaration helps trans people by removing some difficulties in social recognition of their identities, helping to counteract their marginalisation.

We must challenge misinformation and scaremongering about single-sex spaces. It is austerity and chronic underfunding that endanger domestic violence services and refuges, not trans women. We must campaign for better provision of holistic gender identity services and trans healthcare, which are currently seriously underfunded and inaccessible.

This should be provided in an NHS in public ownership, with adequate funding and under democratic control.

Unions, the Labour Party and the labour movement must organise to tackle transphobia, sexism and harassment at work and in wider society. □

90% of "red wall" says: block "no-deal" Brexit

By Sacha Ismail

Barring a miracle, the UK will not apply for an extension to the Brexit transition period before the 30 June deadline set by the Tory government itself.

So far, the Tories have been saved from a potentially very difficult situation – the combination of their Brexit disarray with the Covid-19 crisis – by two factors. The first is their self-imposed deadline. If it was straightforwardly possible to apply for an extension much nearer to the end of the transition period on 31 December, the pressure on them would undoubtedly have mounted steadily. Now they will claim the issue is closed.

The other negative factor has been the Labour Party. Keir Starmer and his lieutenants have broken their silence only to insist they will not call for an extension. They have presented capitulation to the Tory hard right as clever tactics to defeat them, and so failed to drive in the wedges made available by dissent in the Tories' parliamentary party and big business base.

The wider labour movement and left have, probably for a variety of reasons, tailed Starmer. Many unions and Labour MPs were loud in 2019 about opposing No Deal Brexit, but none is calling for an extension. At the "policy committee" of Momentum reform group Forward Momentum, many of whose leaders are former anti-Brexit campaigners, the call for extension was voted down 47-9.

The irony is that the general population is heavily in favour, including something approaching a majority of

Leavers. Far from the metropolitan elitist Starmer trying to impose an anti-Brexit position on the working class, it is closer to the other way around.

Almost 90% of voters in so-called "Red Wall" constituencies lost to the Tories last year regard avoiding a No Deal Brexit as "important" and 55% as "very important". 70% want close links with the EU, and only 20% close links with the US. (See bit.ly/newbfbpoll)

Labour for a Socialist Europe and others have been campaigning for an extension and will continue to so for the two weeks left.

After 30 June, as the threat of a No Deal or other variant of hard Brexit mounts, we should fight for the question of extension to be reopened. Under the pressure of events and struggle, rules can be changed.

We should argue that the labour movement has missed an opportunity and that there is no time to waste on turning things around. □

Workers' action in the pandemic: organising against and around the anti-union laws

Wednesday 24 June, 6.30-8.30pm. An [online forum organised by Free Our Unions](#). Speakers include: Alex Marshall, TDL courier and chair of the IWGB Couriers and Logistic Branch; Gregor Gall, industrial relations professor and labour movement activist. More tbc, including school workers and NEU activists. Chaired by Riccardo La Torre, firefighter and FBU activist. □

“George Floyd was the trigger, but there’s more to it”

Abdullah Mohamed organises with Sheffield Black Lives Matter. He spoke to Sacha Ismail.

We held a demonstration on 6 June – a peaceful protest with a range of speakers. We’re now doing broader work.

For instance, Sheffield has one of the highest school exclusion rates in England. Some of our activists have experience in organising around the curriculum in their universities and we are going to pursue that struggle in schools too.

We’re working with a few councillors to set up a Race Commission that will be independent of the council and push on these issues. On the council, there is only one councillor from an African or Caribbean background – and she’s a Green, so none from the Labour Party! In terms of what the council funds, we need to look at where the money goes and how it’s used. Not all organisations that say they’re working with and representing black communities really are.

We need an end to tickboxes and tokenism. Certain councillors had a plan for a statue commemorating a white 19th century anti-slavery activist, Mary Anne Rawson. We said there’s been no consultation with black communities about if they want another statue of a white person. But even if it was a black activist, a statute doesn’t achieve anything, it’s just performative.

In Sheffield, for sure, people are far more awake than they were four years ago. We had about 5,000 on our demonstration this time.

It’s obviously about the murder of black people but not just that. It’s about the fact that so many people’s lives are really difficult, about the situation after ten years of austerity under this government, about how they’ve dealt with Covid-19. George Floyd was the trigger point but there’s a lot more to it too.

In Sheffield we’re focusing on racial profiling by the police, particularly of young black men. We’re pushing for the council to create an official task force that will focus on that along with police violence and brutality, one with real teeth. Beyond that, I agree with defunding the police – all this money is going to the police when we lack youth centres, when we lack decent funding for the NHS, for social care, for education. We’re funding the police to stop and search young people rather than investing in young people’s futures.

We also need to fight for more resources generally. I’m involved in my Labour Party branch and we’re constantly hearing from the councillors about cuts to their funding – but I’ve not heard anything about a serious fight to get it back.

Sheffield TUC helped with organising and stewarding our protest and has been supportive. However, there’s a lot more the labour movement can do. Keir Starmer and Angela Rayner taking the knee on the floor of their office is all very well – but what are they doing about the bul-

lying and racism against Diane Abbott and Dawn Butler and other black and brown MPs? Is the party going to seriously investigate the racism that was revealed in the leaked report?

On a local level, labour movement organisations are often not very accessible spaces – you can go to a meeting and you’ll be the only young person there and the only black or brown person. This needs a lot of work.

Society needs to be educated. All kinds of different people in society face different problems and frustrations and racists work to find someone to blame. There’s an area of Sheffield called Page Hall with a big population of European migrants, Romanians and Slovaks, and they’re treated appallingly; before that it was Pakistanis and Asians getting the same treatment. It’s entrenched because governments and rich people encourage this to play divide and conquer. It’s this person’s fault, it’s that person’s fault, when companies like Amazon aren’t even paying tax.

So the big picture is society should not be run for the one percent – we need to find ways to challenge and change that. But our more immediate focus is how do we challenge racism, including in very urgent ways that will make life easier and give breathing space people who are suffering.

We need to educate white allies and beyond that educate people who are racist, but it also starts with educating ourselves. At school all I learnt about was Henry the 8th and how many wives he had. It was a very top-down version of European history, and forget about learning African history, or the Haitian revolution or anything else. If we can change that and people can learn about different versions of history they may come to see society now differently too.

There’s two crises, the Coronavirus crisis, which has also hit ethnic minorities hardest, but the other crisis is black people being killed by the police and in prison. We shouldn’t have to choose which do we tackle. At our Sheffield demo I’d say 95% of people were wearing face-masks and gloves. Afterwards some of those who took part held an impromptu march; we as the organisers didn’t take part but I completely understand why people felt the need to march.

That’s before you get to the hypocrisy of telling people not to protest but saying nothing about people going to the beach and positively encouraging celebrations on VE Day.

The reality is this government doesn’t care about the deaths of black and brown people. It’s no coincidence there are no black people in the cabinet. People like Priti Patel don’t represent working-class Asian people.

The government doesn’t want to be held to account for its failings, whether it’s on Grenfell or Windrush or Covid-19. That’s why they don’t want people to demonstrate. □

• Full interview at bit.ly/abdullahm

At the point of production

Excerpts from an interview which Clarence Thomas, former Secretary Treasurer of the predominantly African-American ILWU Local 10, did with the US socialist magazine Jacobin.

Fighting police murders and white supremacy is a class question. Let's not forget that the vast majority of black people, and the vast majority of victims of police repression, are working class.

For many years now, ILWU, and Local 10 in particular, has been protesting the racist policing of African Americans. And we understand that the way these murders can be stopped is when there are economic consequences. The working class has leverage – and we need to use it.

We think that the most effective way to stop police terror is by the working class taking action at the point of production: if the working class is going to be heard, labour must shut it down...

We believe that labour should strive to be at the vanguard of all social struggles, because we understand that labour has a responsibility to fight for those beyond just our own membership. Think about the demand of the eight-hour workday and the elimination of child labour – these were demands that unions a century ago won for the whole working class. It's that kind of spirit we need today.

That's why there is such a concerted effort by those in power to give workers amnesia about our own history. Learning about our real past reveals the real contradiction between the interests of labour and those who own the means of production.

Cops: not part of the labour movement

Unions should be raising demands for defunding the police and revoking the membership of police associations from our labour councils. The police in many cities are part of the central labour councils – we think this is a major contradiction because cops are not a part of the labour movement. Whenever there's a strike, the police are called in to defend the bosses, intimidate workers, protect scabs. They always defend the powerful and the privileged.

Unfortunately, labour has forgotten that cops are the

enforcers of the bosses. Think about Minneapolis, which has sparked this national revolt. Back in 1934 Minneapolis had a general strike led by the Teamsters, during which two striking truck drivers were killed by cops on Bloody Friday. And in San Francisco in the 1934 general strike led by longshore workers, we had Bloody Thursday, when police shot and killed two strikers.

In many instances, trade unionists just don't know about that history of police killings. They don't know how the rank-and-file in places like Minneapolis and San Francisco took on the National Guard, the police, the vigilantes, and the Ku Klux Klan in the 1930s and '40s. The rulers of this country don't want workers to understand our power, to have class consciousness.

I'm proud to say that ILWU, and Local 10 in particular, has been in the vanguard of the labour movement when it comes to fighting white supremacy and police murder.

In 1967 Dr King spoke to an ILWU Local 10 meeting and became an honorary member. We took workplace actions to fight apartheid in South Africa. And back in 2010 we shut down the ports to demand justice for Oscar Grant, a young black man shot by police officer Johannes Mehserle on New Year's Eve. To my knowledge, that was the first time in the history of the modern labour movement that a work stoppage was organised against racist police terror.

There is now a widespread recognition among young people and others that we need to fight white supremacy. But it's one thing to protest, it's another to build a movement. And we need to be able to engage the working class in struggle. Young people need to know that no matter how many people are out in the streets, to really win big transformational change you need workers. We need to organise in our own name, independent of the Democratic and Republican parties. □

• Full interview at bit.ly/clarencetinterview

Dockers strike for Black Lives Matter

On 9 June, on the West Coast of the USA, members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) stopped work for an eight minute, forty-six second moment of silence (the length of time the cop had his knee on Floyd's neck). On 19 June the ILWU will organise another Black Lives Matter strike, for a full eight hours. They picked that day because "Juneteenth" is the date slavery was abolished in Texas at the end of the US Civil War, and now a major commemoration and celebration. To get round anti-union legislation, they are also striking as part of their ongoing fight against privatisation of the Port of Oakland, which will have a major impact on jobs for African-Americans in the area. More at the Free Our Unions website bit.ly/foujuneteenth □

What we demand in the crisis

1. Requisition key sectors
2. Fight for workers' control
3. Make the labour movement an essential service, fighting on the issues listed here
4. Defend workers' rights. Work or full pay! Cancel rent, mortgage, and utility payments.
5. Take care of the worst-off
6. Defend civil liberties
7. International solidarity □

- See full text at bit.ly/what-d
- Animated video of full demands: bit.ly/demand-video

Protests sweep the country

London

By Jay Dawkey

There were maybe 2,000 people at the Central London demonstration in Hyde Park on Friday 12 June. About 60-40 black-white, overwhelmingly young.

Demands and chants were mostly "Black Lives Matter" and "No Justice No Peace". Speakers included a pan-Africanist; an author and lecturer (booed when he talked about entrepreneurship and aspiring to be a multi-millionaire); a guy from the West Papua campaign.

The others were not introduced and all said they weren't that used to speaking. Ideas included: better training for police, psych evaluations, appeal to MPs (not clear on what), teach black history, more local protests, fight for gay rights, trans rights, women's rights, everyone's rights (but "this isn't about class" – followed by the same speaker saying "We are here for working-class people of all races").

The two organisers argued against people going into London on 13 June and for people to protest in their area.

On the weekend 13-14 June, while there was only a small anti-racist presence in central London, there were local events across the city, for example a good few thousand at a Hackney-Islington protest at Newington Green.

The Brighton protest on 13 June was reckoned at maybe 10,000. Many further protests are planned for the weekend 20-21 June and after. See [BLM instagram](#) and elsewhere. □

Newcastle

By Abel Harvie-Clark

On 6 June, around 2,000 people gathered in the centre of Newcastle to protest in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. The protesters were young and diverse.

The megaphone became the instrument of many black people to powerfully tell their stories, spread knowledge and encourage further action. The casual racism that still infects all levels of society was called out. Experience, contemporary and historical, was discussed and confronted, really important education for many in attendance. Anger, sadness and fear about police brutality were expressed, but matched too by a brilliant pride and confidence in the strength and potential of Black communities and culture.

Political implications were not ignored either, with strong awareness and opposition to the Johnsons and Trumps who thrive off inequality, racial injustice and white supremacy. We should think about demands on Newcastle City Council, Northumbria Police, the UK government.

Another demonstration was called for Saturday 13 June, but unfortunately with a very different outcome. Conflicting information from established North East anti-racist groups did not help turnout, and a few hundred antiracist protestors arrived to find Monument occupied

by 300 drunk, aggressive and vile racists. Racist taunts, chants of "You're not English" and "White lives matter" were directed at our crowd.

Things turned into a shouting match at some points. The conflict turned ugly. By around 2.30pm, when our crowd took the knee and observed a silence in remembrance of those killed by the police, the far right group launched bottles and full beer cans at our crowd, hitting young children and sending some to hospital.

The police response was to squeeze our crowd into a smaller space, whilst the fascist crowd surrounded us from front and back, and still weren't cleared by the police. By 5.30pm the police dispersed our crowd, whilst riot police fought with the increasingly drunk and violent crowd opposing. Although the police were admittedly the only thing stopping us getting seriously hurt, they decided to clear a peaceful antiracist crowd whilst violent fascists remained. □

West Midlands

By Daniel Round, Stourbridge activist and Clarion editor

4,000 in Birmingham on 4 June. 1,000 in Wolverhampton on 7 June. Dudley, Nuneaton, Solihull and a number of other West Midlands towns have also drawn large crowds.

In Stourbridge, a Black Lives Matter rally drew one of the largest crowds for a demonstration in the town's recent history with over 200 people turning up. Lots of students and young workers said the event was their first ever demo.

After the rally, attendees spread out around the side of the ring-road in the town centre and knelt in remembrance of George Floyd, before waving placards and signs for passers-by to see. Some featured the faces and names of black men who have died in police custody in the UK, such as Sean Rigg. Others featured slogans such as "Justice for Windrush", "All lives can't matter until black lives matter" and "Refugees are welcome here". Many drivers beeped horns and passengers cheered in support through car windows.

A pathetic group of six or so far-right counter-protesters gathered nearby and shouted "White lives matter" before skulking off early on in the rally. □

• Long report at bit.ly/westmidsdemos

Toppling statues

A short tour of history, from the bringing-down of the Vendome Column (a monument to Napoleon) during the Paris Commune of 1871, to Colston and others today. See bit.ly/t-statues. □

Labour movement must mobilise against far right

By Zack Muddle

Far right mobilisations were held in London, Bristol, Leeds, Glasgow, Newcastle, and beyond, on 13-14 June, in response to the Black Lives Matter movement.

In London, thousands of far-right demonstrators took to the streets, ostensibly in defence of memorials and statues. Bristol saw hundreds, perhaps 500, with similar numbers in Leeds and Glasgow.

The organisers of the Black Lives Matter demonstration in London called off Saturday's planned demonstration for this reason. London Anti-Fascist Assembly cancelled their planned counter-demonstration to this far-right threat. Many involved were hit by a wave of targeted police repression over the previous week.

Stand Up To Racism organised a small demonstration. Fascists outnumbered it ten to one, and only police protection prevented serious harm.

In Bristol, those opposing the fascists were even more outnumbered: perhaps two dozen of us. Other unrelated events that day "split the forces" of the usual "antifa" crowd. I would normally expect hundreds to outnumber a much smaller number of fascists

Leeds Black Voices Matter persevered, bringing out 7,000-10,000 people. The police kept the fascists away from the LBVM demonstration, which made no attempt at confrontation.

The far-right mobilisations all attempted violence. They

have been widely seen as drunk hooligans, as racist thugs. But many of the far-right activists will feel emboldened by their perceived success in mobilising, and in "protecting monuments" – whether or not those were actually under threat.

Letting fascists embarrass themselves – via media which is fundamentally hostile to the left – is not a strategy for tackling this threat. Neither is relying on the police to protect us.

The labour movement can and must mobilise and organise tens of thousands of trade unionists to confront fascist demonstrations. □

Upcoming livestreams

Workers' Liberty have a schedule of videos going "live". Please tune in to watch, take part in the conversation as they are streaming, invite others, even organise watch parties on facebook! The videos (often subtitled) will "go live" simultaneously on our [facebook](#), and (if not before) [instagram](#), [youtube](#), and generally [twitter](#). Visit the sites at the times below!

From Tuesday 16 to Monday 22 June:

Wednesday 17 June, 1.30pm: "Left Unity: is Momentum fit for purpose", with Ruth Cashman, NCG candidate

Thursday 18 June 1.30pm: "Still an emergency" – *Solidarity* editorial with Stephen Wood

Friday 19 June, 1.30pm: Autistic advocate William Vanderpuye on anti-racist protests

Monday 22 June, 1.30pm: "Do we need prisons?" with Anita Downs

New videos!

Watch Workers' Liberty's videos and playlists, and subscribe to [our youtube channel](#)! Many have subtitles, if desired. **New this last fortnight:**

- [PJ, aka the Repeat Beat Poet, talks to Janine Booth](#) about George Floyd protests, police, and fighting racism
- [For one school workers union!](#) Learning from industrial unionism – introductory speeches
- [Cut the roots of racism!](#) *Solidarity* editorial
- [Where now for the US left?](#) Lois Weiner on George Floyd protests, Biden, more
- [Labour: demand Johnson quits!](#) *Solidarity* editorial
- [Starmer and the Labour Left.](#) Intro speech: How did we get here and what should we do now?
- [Climate change and coronavirus:](#) opening speeches by two socialist environmentalist activists □

Please watch and subscribe; like, comment and share! All at: youtube.com/c/WorkersLibertyUK

Upcoming meetings

Workers' Liberty have a packed schedule of varied, important and exciting meetings coming up. They are open to all, held online via zoom videocalling.

From Tuesday 16 to Monday 29 June:

Wednesday 17 June 7-8.30pm: ABCs of Marxism, [Why the working class?](#)

Saturday 20 June, morning: first of a new, fortnightly, [Marxism and Trade Unions course](#)

Sunday 21 June, 10-11am: [Australia's response to Covid-19 and slump](#), with Workers' Liberty Australia.

Sunday 21 June, 6.30-8pm: [The future of work](#) with Bruce Robinson, looking at automation and more

Sunday 28 June, 12-2pm: Socialist feminist reading group: [The Anti-Social Family, Part 2](#)

Sunday 28 June, 6.30-8pm: [Brazil and the pandemic](#)

Monday 29 June, 7.30-9pm. [The state and the current crisis](#) in "The state, crime, prisons, and the police"

For full and updated details, zoom links, later meetings, and more, see workersliberty.org/c19-online □



Correction

We printed "George Colston" instead of "Edward Colston" in *Solidarity* 551. □

The need for special demands



Debate

By **Becky Crocker**

The [editorial in Solidarity 551](#) suggests a “programme for active working class unity” in response to the Black Lives Matter demonstrations. The article falls short in three main respects.

Firstly, it advocates working class unity without explaining what this concept means in the context of a struggle against racism. It does not differentiate itself from a position that is all too common on the left and in the labour movement: that black workers must “unite” with white workers by side-lining racial oppression and focusing on struggles that affect all workers instead.

Secondly, the article does not raise many specific demands to address racial oppression. Without these, calls for working class unity can appear to tolerate inequality and division within the working class.

Finally, the article does not acknowledge that, while working class unity is possible and desirable, there are some very real barriers to unity which we must actively overcome.

The article advances demands that all workers can unite around regardless of race: a well-funded NHS; jobs with proper contracts; free education; high quality affordable housing for all. The article focuses on the need for workers to struggle in “unity” as if racial divisions can be easily batted aside.

This sounds too much like an argument for “colour-blind class unity” that you will often hear in the labour movement. Without explaining the relationship between “class unity” and the struggle against racism, the editorial slips into sounding like it is telling black workers to depart from slogans about racial oppression and focus on all-class issues instead.

Class and the struggle against racism

The closest the editorial comes to explaining how class unity relates to the struggle against racism is this section: “Class is central. Only a government based on the working class majority, uniting those from all backgrounds and skin colours can cut the roots of racism and intolerance”. The problem is that the relationship between the struggles of “the working class majority” and fighting “racism” is barely explained.

Saying, “class is central” it is not saying, “race is marginal”. It means that the working class is the only class that is in a position to overthrow oppressive class relations through struggle. The working class is “the tribune of the oppressed”, the social force that is best placed to struggle against racial oppression at the same time as it fights for freedom from exploitation and oppression for all. Far from marginalising race, class struggle can amplify and add weight to the struggle against racial oppression.

It is a shame that the editorial does not explain how this works and instead sounds like it is advocating the more common “colour-blind” concept of “class unity”.

If the working class is to act as the “tribune of the oppressed” it must be armed with specific demands that challenge racial oppression. The editorial calls for “free education” as a unifying demand. But free education, on its own, is not a unifying demand, without additional demands that address discrimination within the education system.

The article attempts some anti-racist demands, but limits them to: disarming the police, curbing police powers, and much-increased democratic scrutiny and accountability; a radical reduction in the prison population; closure of immigration detention centres and the opening of our borders; end “No Recourse to Public Funds” and the NHS surcharge; freeze Brexit. These demands are bold and far-reaching, but do not seem to cut to the heart of what Black Lives Matter has been about.

As a white person, I can only comment on what I have read in recent weeks: black people saying “enough” to being spat at in the street; to needing a receipt to avoid accusations of shoplifting; to being extra polite in class to avoid expulsion from school; to being qualified to the max to compete for a job that a white person could breeze into. These daily indignities have their roots in structural racism, which our demands must address. Ideas include: teaching about the history of slavery and colonialism in schools; an examination of the impact of behaviour codes in schools and how they disproportionately result in black kids being excluded; investigation into health inequalities.... and many more.

We cannot be blind to the barriers to unity that exist in our movement. Labour movement culture is too often built around a white male working-class culture. In addition, sectionalism, where unions organise around issues that affect specific trades or groups of workers, promotes struggle around self-interest. It means that, in a segregated labour market, workers in a white-dominated workplace will be encouraged to think that issues affecting black workers are not “proper trade unionism”.

The editorial calls on the labour movement to take the lead in the Black Lives Matter movement. In reality, we need to call for the transformation of the labour movement to make it fit for this task. Unions need to examine and challenge their own histories of racism; challenge racial segregation within and between industries; and amplify the struggles of black workers. □

• Abridged: full text at bit.ly/bc-racism

Belly Mujinga

The TSSA transport union is supporting a petition calling for justice for Belly Mujinga, the transport worker who died of coronavirus after being spat at on the concourse of Victoria Station: bit.ly/belly-p □

Take up anti-racist concerns, fight for workers' unity



Debate

By Dan Katz

All the programmes Workers' Liberty and our forerunners have ever advocated for dealing with racism have combined a fight for specific demands against racist activity by the police, state bodies, and racist groups, and in opposition to racist government policy, with the idea of a united workers' movement which fights for basic, fundamental rights.

Look at the original version of our pamphlet *How to Beat the Racists*, published nearly 30 years ago, for example, and you'll find exactly the same ideas presented in a similar way.

Take the example of housing. In 1993 the British National Party had Derek Beackon elected in Millwall ward, on the Isle of Dogs in East London. He was the first fascist elected in England since 1976.

Two thousand white workers turned to the BNP. Why did they do that? Because successive local Labour and Liberal councils had failed to provide decent services, and had discredited themselves, and because there was a massive housing crisis. No-one could get a council flat.

The BNP had an answer: give council flats to white people. In that situation liberal anti-racism – everyone should be nice to each other – had no grip at all.

In order to undercut the BNP, and win white workers away from the fascists, we needed to show a way for them to get housing.

Of course, amid all this, Black and Asian people, while being blamed, also had inadequate housing and often were in a worse position than the white people in the area because of racist discrimination.

In fact, in the end the BNP were defeated in Millwall, in 1994. The local Labour Party got special dispensation from the national party to fight on a more left wing programme, promising much more council accommodation.

Or take the Brexit vote. Many white workers who wanted to defend the NHS, wanted secure well paid jobs, thought turning against immigrants would sort out their concerns. With terrible political consequences for everyone, and a ratcheting up of racism for immigrants and non-white people.

In order to stop situations like this, where white and black are divided on race lines by demagogic right-wingers, struggling against each other for scarce resources, it is extremely important we raise the idea of workers' unity on key questions: homes, jobs, education.

In fact, raised by the socialist left with the intention building a movement to militantly fight for a levelling-up of provision, these policies are also anti-racist policies.

And immediately this is very pressing on the jobs question. There is a massive jobs crisis coming. Black and Asian workers are discriminated against in hiring and firing. But minority communities are not able to stop that on their own.

Full employment, on union rates of pay, will benefit all workers, while benefiting BAME communities currently marginalised and discriminated against most of all.

Programmes by black organisations like the American Black Panthers, which demanded "full employment for our people", were utopian. How could Black Americans, 10% of the population, win jobs for black people in isolation from the rest of the working class? To guarantee employment for all in well-paid useful jobs requires governmental action, and that requires a majority.

And in many areas white workers will not stop job losses without unity with BAME workers.

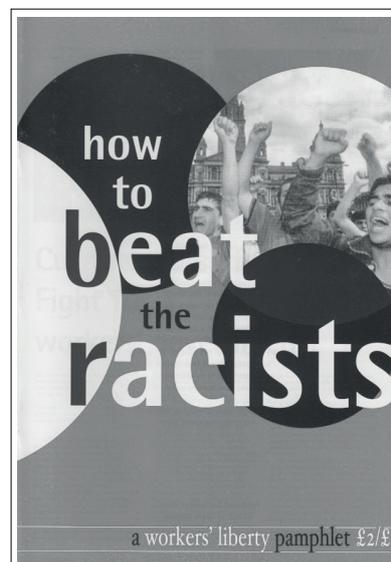
In order to win the trust of black workers, white people in the unions and Labour Party must be seen to take up anti-racist concerns.

So black and white workers' unity in common struggle on basic questions is a big part of the fight against racism.

The current posture of the union leaderships must be challenged. They do not generally organise effective industrial action in defence of jobs and conditions and they contract out the fight against racism and fascism to groups like the SWP's front-group Stand Up To Racism.

None of the unions have mounted an effective challenge to the far right mobilisations in recent years. My union, the school workers' union NEU, sends our general secretary to speak at anti-racist marches, but does not organise to put hundreds and thousands of our members on the streets against racism and fascism.

We must transform the labour movement to more effectively fight against racism and for well-paid jobs and affordable, pleasant homes for all. □



The 2001 edition of this pamphlet, published after the far-right BNP more than tripled its votes in the election that year, aims to convince labour movement activists of the importance of fighting racism, anti-racists of the importance of the labour movement – and fighting to transform it. This message is as relevant as ever.

workersliberty.org/pamphlets

First day of shops reopened



Diary of a tubeworker

By Jay Dawkey

"So I have to pay now? Since when? How long for?" The first day of the 60+ Oyster Card being excluded from morning peak time travel, is not going well, at least for these passengers. "Beep beep... beep beep"

I look at the gate and "57" flashes up. The code for a ticket or pass not being valid where it is being used. "Is it a 60+ Oyster or Older Persons Freedom Pass"? It is almost all our conversations for the first hours of the day. We all clock-watch till 9am when they become valid again and the questions will stop. "Where are all these people travelling at 5am who are over 60 going to? Shouldn't they be at home baking cakes?" J says.

It is definitely busier now. More people leisure-travelling, shops opening. The volunteers from the GLA are out with their table of masks and the private security marshals are trying to remind people to socially distance. Almost everyone is wearing a mask.

Mine keeps making my glasses fog up so I have to wear them down my nose like an accusatory librarian. In the mess room the marshals come in and out for water. They

are working outside in Hi Vis and suits, and it's hot work. "I had the virus, and my wife had the virus, it's just like the normal flu but it lasts a long time" one tells me and F. "But you drink enough ginger tea with the black seed and it helps.

"It's bad though, you two don't want to catch it. I feel better now I know I had it, but I wouldn't wish it on anyone. God protected me".

"Well, you fought it off" F suggests. "But without God there isn't me", he counters. "Well, playing devil's advocate...."

"You should never play the devil, the devil will win". We laugh, but he is being deadly serious.

Everyone thinks this week we'll end up on almost normal shift lengths and spend more and more of it dealing with customers. A more senior manager turns up and asks what we think the flow is like.

T reports that "I missed two trains before I got on the one this morning. That is going to get worse, so either they tell us we don't have to any more, or they do something else, or we won't come in on time".

The manager nods but doesn't say anything. I don't think he smiled, but then all of us have got masks on so it's hard to tell. □

• "Jay Dawkey" is a Tube worker.

£3,412 towards £10,000

A donation of £155 from Zack and £50 from Lucy takes us to £3,412, towards our £10,000 target by 22 November.

We have seen an increase in sales of our paper and some of our pamphlets at the recent Black Lives Matter demos. All our branches are now thinking of ways to adapt to sales with less cash-handling. You can continue to support us by making donations by bank transfer, by PayPal, or by cheque to our office. (The industrial estate in which our office is sited will soon, we're told, be open longer hours).

We are continuing our programme of online meetings even while the lockdown eases. Zoom saw its profits for February to April rise to \$27m, compared to \$198,000 last year, and now has a stock market value greater than the combined four largest US airlines.

We do not seek to profit from this crisis and pay out huge dividends to "investors", but we do want to "profit" by spreading our ideas, winning new recruits and increasing our capacity. □

• workersliberty.org/donate.

Goldsmiths action grows

By Cathy Nugent

Fixed term teaching staff have joined the marking boycott at Goldsmiths, started by Associate Lecturers (ALs) and Graduate Trainee Tutors (GTTs). They are also "working to rule", performing only contractual duties. The college, part of University of London, has been planning cuts since the start of the year and wants to sack 163 academics on fixed term contracts and 309 ALs and GTTs.

The college is putting through the sacking by allowing the contracts of these staff to expire.

According to research by staff at Goldsmiths, around 75% of those being laid off are from a BME background. That is a huge loss to the college, in terms of knowledge and skills and for BME students, who have consistently argued for the need for more BME teachers as role models and mentors. The college has yet to produce an equalities impact assessment on these plans.

Fixed term staff are demanding an extension of their contracts at least until 31 October, when the college will know how many new students have enrolled. □

• [More online here](#)



John Moloney

On Monday 15 June, PCS launched our new campaign, "Dying for Sick Pay", with an online rally. The demand of this campaign is for equal terms and conditions for outsourced workers, specifically full occupational sick pay from day one.

Early on in the pandemic, we secured an agreement with the Cabinet Office that outsourced workers would be paid in full for sickness and self isolation, but on some contracts this simply wasn't enforced, such as OCS at the Ministry of Justice, where Emanuel Gomes tragically died after working through his symptoms, because he couldn't afford to live on Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). Part of the focus of the new campaign is on ensuring the agreement is enforced across the board, and we don't see more workers literally worked to death.

It's also a "no-going-back" campaign. It looks forward to the world beyond the pandemic, and it's about saying we want to make these gains permanent. We fully expect the Cabinet Office to withdraw the agreement at some point, and for the government to withdraw its decision to pay SSP from day one of sickness rather than day four. We can't accept that. We can't accept a reversion to a situation where some workers can't afford to be ill.

There'll also be a political side to the campaign where we'll be asking our Parliamentary Group to take action around this and putting pressure on the relevant ministers who are responsible for setting employment standards in their departments. I also want to work with others in the labour movement organising around similar issues, including campaigns like [Safe and Equal](#), and other unions who are organising outsourced workers and fighting for equality and in-housing.

Another key aim of the campaign is to build union membership amongst outsourced workers, and push for recognition on outsourced contracts where we don't currently have it. This isn't a philanthropic effort where other people charitably do something "for" outsourced workers, it's about empowering outsourced workers themselves, and giving them the tools to fight to win change. We're working with the United Voices of the World union, of which Emanuel Gomes was a member, which has members amongst outsourced Ministry of Justice workers.

In parallel to the campaign, we're taking the step of coordinating our organising efforts across all outsourced contracts in the civil service, with regular meetings of the relevant reps and officers to coordinate activity. We want to move beyond disputes on a specific contract towards company-wide disputes involving all workers employed by a particular contractors – whether that's ISS, Interserve, Aramark, or others – across the whole civil service. This will be hard work, but it's necessary.

This campaign is also part of a rethinking of how we approach organisation and negotiation in terms of directly-employed workers and outsourced workers. We want to move to what might be called a more industrial unionist approach. We need to ensure that whenever we negotiate with the central employer around terms and conditions for our directly-employed members, we're raising demands relating to outsourced workers too, and refusing to accept the employers' division of the workforce.

We insist that the civil service workforce is a single workforce, and we want to approach our negotiation and campaigning accordingly. If we move towards a dispute over directly-employed civil servants' pay, we'll look for ways to bring outsourced workers into that, both in terms of parallel disputes over pay with the outsourced contractors, and in terms of raising demands around outsourced workers, including the demand for in-housing, within the main negotiations.

Tube: assess BAME risk!

From *Tubeworker*

The London Mayor told London Underground it had to do a risk assessment for BAME workers. Then before you know it, a hurried document has come out which makes no reference whatsoever to the trade unions (despite a legal requirement that health and safety reps are involved in risk assessments), quickly followed by another one which claims that BAME workers are at no more risk of Covid-19 infection if they are at work than if they are not!

The Mayor's call was for risk assessments for BAME workers, older workers and people with underlying health conditions (i.e. some disabled workers). Now the company seems to be rowing back on BAME workers by talking about the other groups. All risk assessments matter, perhaps.

Members of each of these groups need to be risk-assessed in their own right, and there also need to be "intersectional" risk assessments, for example for black disabled workers. □

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For a workers' government

BLACK LIVES MATTER AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

By Mohan Sen

Inside this issue of *Solidarity*, we have excerpts from an interview with West Coast US docks activist Clarence Thomas. Thomas calls for the US labour movement to get serious about challenging police racism and violence.

The British labour movement needs to get serious too.

Small groups of left activists like Workers' Liberty aside, trade unions and the Labour Party have largely had no organised presence on the great wave of demonstrations following the killing of George Floyd. This is partly, no doubt, caution in the context of Covid-19; but also a more general passivity that predated the pandemic. The labour movement could have helped to organise more protests with covid-distancing and in ways that minimised virus risks (as some protests already were); instead it largely did nothing.

It is all too common for labour movement organisations to effectively "outsource" anti-racist – and not just anti-racist – campaigning and do little to mobilise their members. That culture is now deeply ingrained.

Most unions and union leaders have been remarkably quiet during the upheavals of the last three weeks. Go on the national Twitter accounts of Britain's largest unions, Unison and Unite, and you'll find almost nothing about Black Lives Matter, and nothing about the protests.

Labour's main political interventions have been backing for the Tories' proposals for harsher sentences on those who vandalise war memorials; and Keir Starmer's criticism of protesters who took down the statue of slave-trader Edward Colston in Bristol.

Some union leaders and Labour MPs have supported the protests. But the thousands of labour movement activists who have attended demonstrations, in some cases providing important support, have been left without wider support.

If the labour movement had mobilised at all seriously, the far right could not have won partial victories on the streets over the weekend of 13 June. In any case our movement has a wider positive responsibility – to use its social weight and creative capacity to champion the interests of the whole working class, and particularly the specially oppressed.

A labour movement not roused up by this mass revolt against oppression will not revive and will not transform

society. Socialists must try to rouse it up.

Part of the reason for the labour movement's silence is surely worse than passivity.

The Labour and union leaders are keeping fairly quiet about it at the moment, but they mostly have an actively conservative, pro-police political line.

Unlike in the US labour movement, there are no police unions in ours. But it is widely accepted in the unions and on the left that the Prison Officers' Association is a normal part of our movement, and even a radical, left-wing force. Meanwhile the labour movement has nothing to say about the huge, and disproportionately black and brown, prison population.

Even under Jeremy Corbyn, Labour presented more police as part of the solution to the problems working-class people face. In the 2017 and 2019 elections, and in between, the party campaigned for thousands more police. It demanded hundreds more border guards and, beyond opposing privatisation, said little about the prison system.

The unions, by and large, fell in behind Labour's pro-police stance. The Labour left, reluctant to criticise or even differ with Corbyn, by and large went quiet.

A labour movement capable of and committed to replacing capitalism will need to organise to replace the existing police, who defend the interests of the ruling class. Socialists must pursue that argument. We must educate about the history of conflicts between the police and workers in struggle, and how our movement confronted the cops.

We must also develop immediate changes we can push for Labour, the unions and anti-racist campaigners to demand.

We must insist on the right of self-defence, by the labour movement and oppressed people, against police violence and oppression.

We should demand sharp limits on police powers; measures of democratic accountability to rein them in; social reforms to limit the spheres in which the criminal justice system operates; and a clear program to refund and expand the social provision gutted over the last decade. (For more detailed ideas, see bit.ly/poltodo.)

Every Labour Party or union activist who supports the Black Lives Matter protests has a responsibility to help get this debate off the ground, linked to backing and mobilising for the demonstrations. □