

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry



CUT THE ROOTS OF RACISM

- » **Economic equality: jobs, pay, and homes for all**
- » **Free movement. Defend migrant rights**
- » **Curb police powers**

Rebellion against racism

An ongoing movement to build from the George Floyd protests?

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Hong Kong defies ban on commemorating Tiananmen

By Chen Ying

On 4 June, the 31st anniversary of Tiananmen was remembered in a very different way here in Hong Kong. The Government had refused the organisers permission to hold the annual event in Victoria Park, insisting that no more than eight people can gather together because of the virus.

The organisers responded by defying the ban and still gathered in their thousands in Victoria Park. They also for the first time initiated dozens of other gatherings in different parts of the city.

In the past few years, some radical protestors have drifted away from the 4 June commemorations and criticised the organisers for continuing with the same old-fashioned format. Others have focused on self-determination for Hong Kong rather than the struggle against the Chinese Communist Party's one-party dictatorship and against the "counter-revolutionary" verdict of 31

years ago.

This year, there was a clear sense of unity, with protestors holding different views rallying together to defy the ban.

The HK police chose to ignore the clear breach of social distancing regulations and did not arrest the organisers for staging an illegal assembly. Many of the pro-democracy leaders had already been charged with unlawful assembly for their participation in last June's protests.

12 June will be the first anniversary of the million strong demonstration that derailed the government's introduction of an extradition law, and the Government has refused permission for a march and rally, again on Covid-19 grounds.

Organisers have stated that the march will take place on the first day that the Government lifts the "no more than 8" rule, expected to be later in June. □

• More: bit.ly/4-june-hk

Iraq in the pandemic

By Nadia Mahmood

We were in the middle of the uprising in Iraq, the "October uprising", when the Covid-19 pandemic began to spread...

A lockdown, which meant staying home and not going to work... a wave of lay-offs or private sector workers. And some workers in the public sector did not receive their wages, specifically in the health sector, or their wages were delayed, and some civil servants of a certain age were forced into retirement... All these factors led to an economic crisis... People who rely on daily wages... had two options... to die of hunger or coronavirus.

This situation caused people to have a lot of grievances, so they took to the streets, breaking the curfew. During a demonstration in the city of Nasiriyah in March, a female activist was assassinated.

In light of these events, labour and civil society organisations and the Worker-communist Party of Iraq reached a National Program Agreement. In this document, they held the government responsible for providing treatment, hospitals and field hospitals, as well as helping the unemployed and providing them with financial aid.

The government and the Covid-19 Task Force issued a new procedure, which provides financial aid to laid-off workers in the private sector. Each person who is eligible is granted 25 dollars a month. 25 dollars per family in a country where a kilo of meat costs 8 or 9 dollars and a carton of eggs around 5 dollars or a kilo of fish 6 dollars...

Another result of the Covid-19 pandemic is the violence women have been subjected to. We have never witnessed

this level of femicide and female suicide in Iraq. We have and are still hearing every day stories of women being killed by their families, or being pushed to breaking point by domestic violence and committing suicide. We heard stories about rape, about women being chained up.

These repercussions of Covid-19 have had a disproportionate impact on women and precarious workers. □

• Abridged from the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation website bit.ly/rls-irq. The RLF also reports: "the protesters in Tahrir Square took their own precautionary measures, [such] as the manufacturing and wearing of facemasks, the disinfection of tents and the decision that only 20 % of the protesters are to remain in the square... As soon as the lockdown ended [on 10 May] protesters returned to the streets to demand their political, social and economic rights and the overthrow of the political system". □

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

Cut the roots of racism

“” Editorial

The Office of National Statistics compile statistics on the number of Hate Crimes reported each year. They have more than doubled since 2012 to 103,000 in 2018-19. Of those, nearly 79,000 were race hate crimes.

Between April 2018 and March 2019 the police made 376,000 stop and searches in England and Wales, a rate of 7 per 1,000 people. The rate for white people, however was 4 per 1,000 and for Black people 38 per 1000.

In 2017 the Lammy Review showed that Black people (African or Caribbean background) represent 3% of the general population yet 12% of the prison population in England and Wales.

In the ten years prior to 2018-19 Black people made up 8% of deaths in police custody.

The TUC's Racism at Work report (2018) found that over 70% of BAME workers in their large survey had experienced racism at work in the previous five years. About 60% felt they had been subjected to discrimination at work. Over 10% had experienced racist violence at work.

There is, clearly, a vast amount of discrimination in the UK on grounds of race. Politically that has been given a boost by the victorious Brexit campaign and the election of a populist-right Tory government with a vicious anti-immigrant agenda.

In the recent past Labour has pandered to anti-immigrant racism. Under Blair, Labour drove Labour drove anti-migrant measures, strengthening of police powers, and a growth in prison population. Ed Miliband included tighter immigration as a key pledge in the 2015 election campaign. Under Corbyn the Labour Party promised 500 extra border guards and 10,000 more police in its 2017 manifesto. In its 2019 it said it would top the Tories' police numbers by 2,000.

Verbally Labour opposes racism. The Tories and Liberals claim the same. Words are not enough.

We must fight for policies that can undercut and remove the roots from which racism flourishes.

We demand:

- 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

We must build a movement – inclusive to Black, brown, white workers from all backgrounds – capable of unity in a struggle that can benefit us all. We demand:

- A well-funded NHS
- Jobs with proper contracts and union pay rates for all, and a cut in the working week with no loss of pay
- Free Education

- High quality affordable housing for all

Our programme is a programme for active working-class unity. Labour and the unions must take a lead and call people out onto the streets in ways that are both safe and visible.

The young people protesting for Black Lives Matter have shown us the way.

Our movement must advocate a workers' government. We need a government that fights for our class as hard as Johnson and the Tories fight for the rich and powerful. Such a government would rest for its power and legitimacy not on the capitalist state machine (civil service, courts, prisons and police) but on an organised base in workplaces and communities.

If we fail to rouse our movement, currently partially locked-down, but for decades since the 1980s quiet and under-confident, we will be set back further. We face serious attacks from the right and the far-right in the UK as the bosses attempt to make workers and young people pay for the enormous Covid-induced economic crisis. An aspect of those attacks will be to foster and exploit racist divisions and hatred of foreigners.

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.

Young people and students, turn to Labour and the unions, make them fight!

Inside the labour movement: demand a radical workers' government. Workers of the world, unite! ☐

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 9 to Monday 22 June, excluding ongoing study courses:

Wednesdays 10 and 17 June 7-8.30pm: ABCs of Marxism – 10 June, [What is the third camp?](#) 17 June, [Why the working class?](#)

Thursday 11 (and 18) June, 6pm: [Covid-19: Protesting in the pandemic.](#) Informal discussion of politics and the pandemic, different focus weekly.

Sunday 14 June, 6.30-8.30pm [changed listing]: [Film showing, discussion and benefit night.](#) Showing: 'At the River I Stand'. Register before 3pm Sunday.

Monday 15 June, 7.30-9pm. [Do we need prisons?](#) in "The state, crime, prisons, and the police

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

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

For full and updated details, zoom links, later meetings, ongoing study courses – newcomers welcome – and other resources, see [workersliberty.org/c19-online](#) ☐

Telling porkies: Labour, Momentum and the police

By Ruth Cashman, Lambeth Unison secretary, candidate for Momentum NCG

Momentum rightly reacted to the global George Floyd protests with support. They released a video "[Spot The Difference](#)" outlining racism in the British criminal justice system.

Nothing in their reaction has acknowledged the failures of the Labour left on policing since 2017. Under the left's leadership Labour adopted a generally "pro-police" line, including vocal campaigns to increase police numbers.

In 2017 Labour's manifesto promised 10,000 more police officers and 500 more border guards. In 2019 the party promised to top the Tories' police recruitment by 2,000.

In the intervening two years more police was a major campaigning demand for Labour; sometimes it seemed like its only campaigning demand. In 2019 there was a day of action against police cuts.

Many left-wing policies included in the 2019 manifesto were never even mentioned before then, let alone campaigned for. Tellingly, for instance, the party never demanded the restoration of all the funding councils have lost since 2010 – until it appeared in the 2019 manifesto.

More police – but not reversing the council cuts which have devastated our communities!

Under left-wing shadow Justice Secretary Richard Burgon, Labour rightly criticised prison privatisation but said nothing about the crucial issue of reducing the prison population, let alone anything more radical. Nor did it discuss ending the disastrous reality of most drugs being criminalised.

In the face of a pro-police stance from our left-wing leadership, much of the left went quiet. Some endorsed the "more police" line most notably Momentum, who repeated promoted the demand and produced a video bracketing the police with firefighters and health workers and describing them as "heroes". In 2017 Momentum promoted the Tory Police Cuts Calculator criticising Tories for defunding the police. In 2019 Momentum released the "[You Are A Socialist](#)" video, giving the police force as an example of socialism in action!

There is nothing wrong with changing your mind or an organisation changing its position. Hopefully the current movement will educate people on the role of the state apparatus and the police in repression of working-class struggle and oppression of minorities. But Momentum must be honest about its positions. Labour and Momentum activists should take part in and cheer on anti-police demonstrations without fighting for our party to adopt an adequate stance on crime and policing.

There will be different views on the left about how comprehensively we want to see the police force as it exists transformed and/or abolished or replaced. But central to the debate needs to be the idea, at the moment largely absent from the official labour movement, that the police

as they exist are fundamentally one of the problems confronting working-class people (particularly black, brown and migrant working-class people), not part of the solution.

The labour movement needs to drop the "more police" line, advocate serious measures to rein in police repression, violence and bigotry, and argue to radically transform society and curb the powers and role of the police. Socialists in the labour movement must urgently engage with the anti-police movement now burgeoning, to launch a serious debate about the demands we need. □

• Full article on the Momentum Internationalists blog at bit.ly/labmmpol

Momentum voting 16-30 June

On 9 June, 52 candidates had nominated for the 24 elected places on Momentum's National Coordinating Group (see bit.ly/mmcandidates). The number will rise as both the slate backed by Jon Trickett and Ian Lavery, Momentum Renewal, and the limited-reform slate Forward Momentum, are planning to stand full lists, and not all their candidates have yet appeared on the Momentum website. Voting is 16-30 June,

Three candidates that backed the Momentum Internationalists platform in the Forward Momentum primaries – Abbie Clark, Nadia Whittome and Ana Oppenheim – were elected to the FM slate.

Ruth Cashman, banned by FM from their primaries (bit.ly/ruthnccg), is standing independently, on the MI platform, as are Elaine Jones and Kasun Witana.

There are half a dozen candidates that seem to be "independent", i.e. linked to no kind of slate. Three supporters of the Anticapitalist Platform organised by socialist group Red Flag have nominated.

Both Forward Momentum and Momentum Renewal have had little to say about political issues – whether police violence and racism, the Covid-19 crisis, the climate crisis, taking on the Tories, Starmer's moves to the right, workers' struggles, migrants' rights or anything else.

Much of the little FM and MR have put out has been pretty bland. And sometimes it is hard to take what they say seriously – particularly in the case of MR, but FM too, on their commitment to democracy.

FM has promoted a web link to its "Plan" but not really campaigned around the demands in it. Some FM candidates have been better, clearer and more radical politically.

Momentum Internationalists has put out extensive analysis and demands on a wide range of issues: see its program at bit.ly/midemands and bit.ly/mointblog for its blog. The MI blog has had 19 posts since the campaign began; the FM blog has had four. The Anticapitalist Platform has also put out substantive content, much good, some we'd sharply disagree with. □

A class-struggle platform

From Ruth Cashman's NCG manifesto

I signed up to the Momentum Internationalists platform, for democracy, class struggle and internationalism. See momentuminternationalists.org/what-we-stand-for for the full programme.

Capitalism by its nature produces crises, and capitalists by their nature will seek to make the working class pay for them. In the Covid-19 fallout, capitalists are driving for wage cuts, job losses, repossessions, and cuts in public services. There is, however, nothing inevitable about them succeeding. Struggle will decide.

We need a transformation of the labour movement. One of the basic problems in society – in the political system and in the economy – is the lack of democracy. But at the moment, our own movement isn't even democratic: our MPs are unaccountable, and policy is largely decided behind closed doors. Despite big talk, Momentum has hesitated on pushing structural reforms like open selection and became an uncritical top-down mobilising vehicle in which there is no real internal democracy. The left has incubated a lack of pluralism and an intolerance for dissent.

In "normal" political life, there is a separation between direct action struggles by the working class (demonstrations, strikes) and "politics", which happens somewhere else. The Labour Party often siphons off working-class politics to a professional caste of politicians and experts insulated from the mass movement. We need to rebuild the labour movement as a force by which the working class can assert itself and its interests at every level of society – from the workplace to the streets to national politics.

We need to stand for socialism – for replacing capitalism with a new society based on democratic social ownership of major industry, services and finance, and workers' control. To win that we need a strong stand against racism, sexism, transphobia, and all other bigotry and oppression.

Stand in solidarity with workers and oppressed minorities across the globe. Challenge British nationalism. Fight unequivocally for migrants' rights, and to defend and extend free movement. Call for a Brexit extension to stop Johnson's attempt to rush through a hard Brexit.

Foster solidarity with oppressed people in Palestine, Kurdistan, Uyghuristan, Kashmir, and across the world.

Internationalist pledges for Momentum candidates

Labour for a Socialist Europe is working on short pledges for Momentum NCG candidates to sign up to – on free movement and migrants' rights, extending the Brexit transition period, and fighting nationalism on the left. See labourforasocialisteurope.org for more ☐

Campaign against the threat to annex the West Bank; solidarity with pro-democracy groups like Standing Together in Israel; oppose antisemitism including on the left and under the guise of "anti-Zionism". ☐

From Abbie Clark's manifesto

I organised to win the Labour Campaign for Free Movement's migrants' rights motion at last year's Labour conference.

Over the past five years, many socialist motions passed at conference have been excluded from manifestos or not campaigned on by the party, including the repealing of all anti-union laws, extending free movement and closing all detention centres. Momentum should be campaigning for conference to be sovereign and for these policies to be implemented in full. But to transform and democratise Labour, we must also do the same in Momentum.

Whilst Momentum successfully mobilised activists during elections, it failed to organise the left beyond electoral politics and disenfranchised its membership. To unite socialists on the basis of radically transforming society we need space for members to debate, decide policy and develop campaigns. By supporting existing and new Momentum branches with funding and campaign resources, the establishment of sovereign regional and national conferences, and an education programme, Momentum can provide this space. Momentum must also take seriously the development of workplace organising. We should coordinate with trade union struggles, and develop work-activists, central to any fight to overthrow capitalism.

I was proud to be voted on to the Forward Momentum slate by supporters in our region, working with comrades in Momentum Internationalists. I want to be on the NCG to rebuild Momentum. We have the opportunity to re-found our movement, transform Labour and build a socialist mass movement with democracy at its core, rooted in class struggle, standing in solidarity with workers and oppressed minorities here and everywhere. ☐

New audio!

Listen, download or subscribe to [Workers' Liberty Audio](https://workersliberty.org/audio) recordings of our paper, other publications, and many meetings. **New this last fortnight:**

- [Lois Weiner: Where next for the US left?](#) George Floyd protests, Biden, more
- [Solidarity 550 part 1](#) and [part 2](#), 549 [part 1](#) and [part 2](#)
- [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](#). ☐

US army on streets against protesters: 1932 version

By **Barrie Hardy**

The broadcast media in the United States are bound by no rules of impartiality and in many respects reflect the views of one or the other of the two dominant capitalist parties.

The notorious Fox News promotes the right-wing Trump agenda, spiced up with far-right conspiracy theories. On the other side, CNN and MSNBC do actual serious reporting, but are not immune from ideological myths.

Those liberal news outlets now promote the idea that Trump's threat to use the military against the American people is an aberration such as never happened before in American history, and that the US military is somehow above politics.

History throws up several counter-examples. Most notable is the attack on the "Bonus Army" in 1932.

In 1924, American soldiers who'd fought in the First World War had been given compensation certificates for each day they served, with 4% interest each year before the payout was made. So if you'd been in Europe for a year you were owed around \$400. The catch was that the certificates were redeemable only in 1945!

In 1932, when the Great Depression was at its height, many vets were broke and wanted the money in the here and now.

Around twenty thousand veterans and their families descended on Washington to demand their money. The US army had been segregated, but in the protest movement black and white Americans were united.

The Republican-dominated Senate and President Hoover weren't having any of it, though. The demonstrators were branded "red agitators" and the army was called in to put them down.

Key figures in the assault on the protesters would later become very familiar. Presiding over the action was Army Chief of Staff Douglas MacArthur, who branded the Bonus Army "traitors bent on overthrowing the government". His aides also had names that would become well-known: Eisenhower and Patton.

George Patton was a particularly nasty individual. When he encountered his former valet, Joe Angelo, among the protesters he refused to recognise him, despite Angelo having earned a medal during the war for saving Patton's life.

Patton told those under his command: "A few casualties become martyrs, a large number an object lesson... When a mob starts to move...use a bayonet to encourage its retreat".

That's essentially what happened. The protesters were tear-gassed and bayoneted. Their camp was burnt down. Two veterans were killed and countless others suffered gas-related injuries.

Hoover lost the 1932 presidential election, but the Democrat Roosevelt administration didn't change much. FDR refused to pay the bonuses and by reappointing MacArthur as Army Chief of Staff only added insult to injury.

Such historical examples demonstrate that the military arm of the state is not neutral and above politics. It serves the interests of the ruling class.

Yet repressive institutions can be riven by sections of it going over to the people. Demilitarisation of the police forces in the United States needs to be a major demand in turning back attacks on the working class. □

Workers' control in schools

By an **AWL school worker**

The National Education Union (NEU) has issued guidance to reps on how to escalate in schools where the joint union safety checklist is not being met, up to workers using their individual rights under health and safety law not to work where they see a serious and imminent danger.

This can be applied to win safety in schools even where there is no wider opening.

One London school used the escalation letter after 1 June, sending it at 10pm on Wednesday, signed by 20 of the 23 NEU members. Reps met the head at 8am Thursday. He apologised, said he would immediately address their concerns, and asked the union group to add to and amend the risk assessment.

This is a powerful model of how unions can pursue significant workers' control of health and safety during the pandemic and beyond.

The NEU has reported that on 1 June, 44% of schools did not open more widely to any of the primary year groups suggested by the Prime Minister.

35% of schools opened on 1 June on the terms expected by Johnson. 21% of schools opened more widely, but on less than his terms. By 5 June, an additional 6% of schools will have opened more widely, but more than two-thirds of them to less than the prescribed set of year groups.

The regional variation in school openings tracks regional levels of the virus. Just 12% of schools in the North East and 8% in the North West – where levels of the virus are higher – opened fully to all eligible year groups. As of 9 June, the government has dropped its plan to reopen primary schools across England to all year groups before the end of this term. □

Say her name



Women's Fightback

By Katy Dollar

The murder of George Floyd has sparked a global movement against racism and police brutality. The discussion of racist violence and police repression have again shone a spotlight on how dangerous it is to be a black man in America.

But by viewing the criminal justice system as the front-line of structural racism and men as the primary participants, we risk ignoring the violence which is a day to day reality for black women.

Black women's interaction with the state, through law enforcement, is marked by violence. Black women are murdered by the police. They are assaulted and injured by the police. They are sexually harassed and assaulted by the police. They are arrested wrongly by the police. They are convicted and incarcerated for defending themselves against violence of others.

Breonna Taylor, a health worker, was shot dead as she slept in her own bed when the police broke into her home. Part of the reason such violence receives less attention is that, like all violence against women, police violence against black women is proportionally less likely to occur in public.

For George Floyd, Eric Garner, Walter Scott, we can watch their last moments on video, the unwarranted violence clear and public. We can see police officers as spec-

tators and participants. The public collective nature of it is all too reminiscent of lynching. But when Black women and girls – Breonna Taylor, Aiyana Stanley-Jones, Tanisha Anderson, Atatiana Jefferson, Charleena Lyles – are killed, it is often at home, away from the watching world.

When black women are victims of non-police violence, then too they are affected by the racism of the criminal justice system. About 22 percent of Black women in the United States have experienced rape. Forty percent will experience intimate-partner violence in their lifetime. And Black women are killed at a higher rate than any other group of women.

A 2015 survey of Black trans and non-binary individuals found that 53 percent have experienced sexual violence, and 56 percent have experienced domestic violence. At least 16 Black trans people were reportedly murdered in 2018 alone.

When abuse occurs, they are less likely to be believed. A Georgetown Law Center report found that "adults view Black girls as less innocent and more adult-like than their white peers". Black girls are perceived to be more independent, more knowledgeable about sex, and in less need of protection. Beliefs and stereotypes about Black women make them less credible victims despite being statistically more likely to be so. These include ideas about promiscuity, mental health aggression, physical strength and honesty.

Black women are over policed and under protected by a racist and sexist criminal justice system. As the left begins to discuss alternatives to repressive policing, we must not forget how gender too plays a regressive role in criminal justice. □



New videos!

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

- [Where now for the US left?](#) Lois Weiner on George Floyd protests, Biden, more
- [Labour: demand Johnson quits!](#) *Solidarity* editorial
- [Stارmer 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
- [Make the schools safe!](#) and [It's your right to refuse unsafe work!](#) *Solidarity* editorials, with Stephen Wood
- [Crime and policing](#) – intro in a series on "The state, crime, prisons and the police" □

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

Protest against annexation

On Saturday 6 June 6,000 people (equivalent of 45,000 in Britain) demonstrated in Tel Aviv against the plan of the new Netanyahu-Gantz coalition government to formally annex large parts of the West Bank to Israel, thus creating a bar against any future Palestinian state being more than a collection of scattered patches of land. Netanyahu has long threatened annexation, and now the government talk of moving on 1 July.

Police initially tried to ban the protest on virus-control grounds, but backed down.

The Joint List of Israeli-Arab parties, the soft-left Meretz, and the grassroots movement Standing Together supported the protest. They need international solidarity. □

The police, capitalism and democracy

The great surge of protests across the world sparked by the killing of George Floyd is bringing a new generation of young activists.

They deserve more than the hurried reforms now offered here and there in the USA.

Reforms can stick, deepen, become a lever for more, but only through the work of a movement which works and educates week by week, year after year.

The unequal toll of the pandemic, the shredding of health care and social provision, the cascade of job cuts, the climate emergency, show a whole world needs to be changed, and simultaneously on many fronts.

In a society ruled by the profiteers who depend on exploiting the working class and dividing us, local against migrant, this-ethnicity against that-ethnicity, police, even if renamed "community safety", will always protect property and target the worst-off.

The pressures of a society of insecurity and violence will bear down to make it secure for the well-off, by violence against the worst-off.

As the Minneapolis bus workers' union puts it, "we need a new Civil Rights Movement... joined with the labour

movement".

A joining-up of the new young activists with the backbones of workplace organisation and community struggle, with unity and with autonomy for the diverse components.

A renewed labour movement aiming for nothing less than socialism, a workers' government, the replacement of profit as the motor of society by human solidarity and equality.

Democratic community self-policing can become a reality only in a society of democratic community economics. And to win that we need a movement that will turn around economic life, to centre on solidarity and social provision rather than on profit-making. □

Police in the USA

In the USA, police shot and killed 1,004 people in 2019. The comparable figure for the UK is 3, for France 26, for Germany 11.

The USA has 655 people in jail per 100,000 population. The UK's figure, high by world standards, is 140. The Netherlands, 54.

The USA had 12 deaths in police custody per 100,000 arrests last year; the UK, two.

US police make three arrests per year per 100 population; the UK, a more typical figure, one.

Social provision in the USA is weaker than in most relatively well-off countries. In many well-off countries, even in poorer districts, generally "the state" means health care, schools, benefits, etc. as well as cops; in some areas in the USA, there is much less to see other than cops.

Black Lives Matter, a loose network set up by Patsie Cullors, Opal Temeti, and Alicia Garza in 2013, has a detailed program to restructure policing bit.ly/zero-c as well as its headline "defund the police" call.

Public police forces, as distinct from private enforcers, developed later in the USA than in Western Europe. They were preceded by more ad hoc "slave patrols". They have long been notorious for being a law unto themselves. Efforts to reform them date over a hundred years.

The US police are also more militarised than European police, with a special program initiated by Bill Clinton to have surplus army hardware passed on to them. However, they are generally less numerous (per population) than European police. Their pay varies hugely from place to place, but is often relatively lower than European police rates. □

Call Starmer to account

Momentum Internationalists has launched an open letter calling for Keir Starmer to withdraw his criticism of protesters who pulled down statue of slave-trader George Colston in Bristol and instead back their action.

Please add your name bit.ly/starmercolston

The issue with Starmer is wider. Beyond the Colston remark and a few anti-racist platitudes, he has been largely silent in this crisis.

Neither his record as Director of Public Prosecutions – for example failure to prosecute the police killers of Jean Charles de Menezes, or aggressive prosecution of people after the 2011 riots – nor his general conservatism suggest someone keen to challenge police violence and 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 □

Labour and unions should be on streets

By Jocelyn Cruywagen

Jocelyn Cruywagen is a worker at Lambeth council, a rep and activist in Lambeth Unison and an anti-racist campaigner. She spoke to Sacha Ismail.

Black Lives Matter is about more than just killing and violence. It's also about black people being denied jobs, rights and equal opportunities.

We need radical, revolutionary change. Labour and the unions should be leading people onto the streets with our banners and flags, yes, with social distancing measures, but taking a lead. There is the pandemic, but there is also the much longer-term pandemic of racism. We have to tackle that.

The reality is very different. The quietness of the unions has been mind-boggling. We haven't even had clear statements that the labour movement is against these killings, the killing of George Floyd but also all the other George Floyds in the US and Britain and all over the world.

Black activists in the unions need to take a lead but that also implies unions supporting activists to empower them and given them confidence. Not just when an issue like this flares up, but also consistently, at every opportunity.

My message to the young people on the streets is that you need unions. If you work, particularly if you're black, you should not be without a union – in a union but also being active. The only way you can resist abuse from employers and managers is to know your rights and have the organisation of activists and reps to back that up.

The beautiful thing is how young and energetic the demonstrators are and how they want to fight – but that needs to be more than a one-day fight, it needs to be an everyday fight, including in the workplace.

Change the unions

But that means changing the unions – challenging the bureaucrats and gatekeepers – and getting them on the streets too.

In terms of the Labour Party, under Keir Starmer it seems like less and less of a hospitable environment for black activists. I don't think he has socialist values or any interest in how people are experiencing their struggles on the ground – particularly black people. We keep hearing about constructive opposition. You can negotiate, but that should come on top of having clear demands. Nothing comes if you don't have demands, and if you're not talking to people on the ground you won't.

A lot of people got very excited when Starmer challenged Johnson over care homes, but what did he actually call for? It's the same on the right to strike and other issues. His line is a white liberal line, not a socialist one.

With Jeremy Corbyn, he was at least someone you could relate to as a socialist, someone who had an interest in what was going on around the world. Starmer is a Sir – he's part of the empire.

He's said nothing about Black Lives Matter and now we have the rubbish with the statue.

In South Africa [where Jocelyn is from] we've renamed

schools, universities, airports. Why did we still have that statute in such a beautiful city as Bristol? I don't know the details, but I'm sure people have petitioned and asked nicely and it fell on deaf ears. That is certainly something we are used to in challenging racism at Lambeth council. Things change when people take action.

I should say that black politicians at the top of Labour are not necessarily any better than Starmer. Holding a position in the Labour Party doesn't necessarily mean listening to people on the ground and their demands.

We need to end stop and search. We need to reach out to and push black police officers to put pressure on their white colleagues, who are always the ones leading the way in harassing people.

Beyond that we need community policing in a real sense, not just rhetoric. You think of all the people in Brixton who are regularly harassed and searched by the police over something they did years ago, or nothing at all, and actually many of those people would have a better approach to the safety of the community if they were empowered to develop it. □

• See bit.ly/lambethcouncilracism for more on the campaigning against racism at Lambeth council which Jocelyn is involved in

Protests sweep the world

Black Lives Matter protests have swept the world, and not just the big cities. Fraser Andrews reports on the 6 June protest in a relatively small town, Milton Keynes.

This was by far and away the most the most significant protest I've ever seen here in Milton Keynes.

I estimate up to 1,000 gathered – in a city of 250,000. That's five times the size of any anti-austerity demonstration here at the peak of that movement. Lots of homemade signs. A mostly young crowd, mostly black and other people of colour. Little organised socialist presence.

As the "official" demonstration ended not long after 12.30, some people with a megaphone asked the crowd: "Do we want to march?"

Yes! The crowd made its way out of the station square and up the main boulevard, gradually gaining a more confident, militant form.

Initially everyone politely sidled up the footpaths, but then we moved into the centre of the road, bringing traffic to a standstill.

We marched to the city council building, and then around town to the police station. Protesters excitedly demand the police "take the knee" – which some did, to a great sense of victory among the crowd.

Generally it was peaceful. The exhilaration on some of these young people's faces as they got a sense of their collective power was inspiring. □

Is Minneapolis abolishing the police?

By Mohan Sen

Three-quarters of Minneapolis' city council members have pledged publicly to disband the city's police department and introduce new systems of "public safety".

This is good news in that it shows the impact of anti-police protests and their success in shifting the political narrative.

Minneapolis demonstrators booed and heckled mayor Jacob Frey when he refused to commit to "abolishing" Minneapolis PD. He deserves booing for his double-dealing attitude to the anti-police movement.

But it's also true that the council policy is in fact more tentative than the "instant anarchist utopia" it sounds like.

The details so far are unclear, but the Minneapolis council members are setting abolition of Minneapolis PD as a longer-term rather than imminent goal. The more immediate policy is cutting the department's budget, cutting back the police's role and redirecting funds to public services and community programs.

Twelve out of thirteen council members are members of the Democratic-Farmer-Labour Party, which despite its name is just the Democratic Party's Minnesota unit (the Democrats absorbed a labour movement party and merged the names). It seems their intention is to combine "defunding" with reconstituting the police with new rules. They don't dislike the current police chief, but rather deplore his inability to control his department.

Camden, New Jersey, a 90% "minority" city which for years combined high crime rates (the country's fifth highest murder rate) with a brutal police force, did disband its police force in 2013.

"Community relations"

The replacement was a county-wide force, with an emphasis on "community relations" and much stricter rules for the use of force and disciplinary procedures if they are broken.

Now, "excessive force" complaints against the Camden police have dropped 95% since 2014; and meanwhile violent crime has fallen sharply, with the murder rate dropping two thirds between 2012 and 2018.

However, the number of police officers in Camden has actually gone up substantially, as has the number of "low level" arrests and summonses.

If the Minneapolis councillors do something similar to Camden, even more radical, that may well bring improvements but will not amount to "abolishing the police" in the anarchist sense.

In fact, capitalism with only private enforcers (like US cities before mid-19th century, or some "failed states" today) may be worse than regular police. Until capitalism is overthrown, even a reformed police will enforce capitalist interests; but what we want instead is a developed alternative structure based on the labour movement and working-class communities to take its place. Our movements are not yet strong enough to create and sustain such a structure.

Socialists' general approach, which of course should be tested and reshaped in the course of the struggle, is as follows.

We want to replace the existing, capitalist police by a democratic community-controlled patrol service under workers' rule. Even further beyond that, we want to see that sort of service gradually merging into becoming only a subsection of community self-administration.

However, the existing police cannot be abolished and comprehensively replaced in this way – in a way that takes us forward – without overthrowing the wider power of the capitalist class and creating a workers' government.

The problem is not that the demand to abolish the police is "too radical". It's a question of how it can be realised.

To demand that the capitalist class abolish its own state machine makes no sense. On the other hand, the breakdown or withdrawal of parts of that machine in favour of expanded private security, or private vigilante groups, would not be a step forward.

Immediately, we should fight for radical measures to curb police power, introduce stronger elements of accountability and democracy over them, expand public social provision and limit the spheres in which the police operate. Meanwhile we should build up the movement to overthrow capitalism and its state – including by opposing the police, however reformed.

We are seeking to interview US activists to gain a better understanding of the issues and debates there, as well as their implications for the UK and more widely. □

• Watch or listen to [Crime and policing](#) – intro in a series on "The state, crime, prisons and the police"

People turn against Trump

Three quarters of people in the US view George Floyd's murder as part of a problem of racial injustice – a major shift from a few years ago.

According to a 3-4 June Ipsos poll, 74% believe the killing was "a sign of broader problems in the treatment of African Americans by the police" and only 26% that it was an "isolated incident". Six years ago, shortly after the police murders of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, 43% said they were signs of a broader problem, and 51% isolated incidents.

In 2014, 60% of white Americans thought those killings were isolated incidents; today 70% think Floyd's murder shows a broader problem. (The percentages among black and hispanic Americans have also risen substantially.) And 55% of Republicans.

Only 32% of Americans approve of Trump's reaction to Floyd's death and 66% disapprove – even worse than on his response to Covid-19. □

What is the police?

By Robert Fine and others

What is the police? In its modern form its history can be traced back to the early 19th century in this country. It was a brain-child of a liberal reform movement and in many respects a progressive development. It represented a transfer of police functions from the personal possession of aristocracy, gentry, and merchants to the people as a whole, expressing a liberal fear of "despotism from above".

At the same time, however, it also reflected a fear of "the mob below", i.e. the working class and the poor, and... the involvement of the people was from the beginning largely formal and has remained so ever since...

Police... salaries, open recruitment from all strata of society, and hierarchical discipline were meant to ensure that the private concerns of the police were strictly subordinated to its public duty. Bureaucracy also carried with it, however, secrecy, careerism, and separation from ordinary citizens... The police itself has become a powerful private interest in society...

At its worst, accountability has been a means of gaining public consent for the police without reciprocal influence

over the police...

The socialist vision is not restricted to a restoration of... limited consensus, but extends to a program of democratising the police to a point that stretches far beyond post-1945 accommodations and reaches toward the replacement of the police as a special force above society by a new form of policing...

This democratic vista cannot be realised in isolation from the democratisation of other areas of social life, including production relations... □

- From Glyn Cousin, Robert Fine, and Robert Millar, 'The Politics of Policing', *Policing the Miners' Strike* (1985)
- Watch or listen to [What is the state?](#) – intro in a series on "The state, crime, prisons and the police"

Britain's police: what to do

Some ideas for the British labour movement to fight for:

1. The right of oppressed people and the labour movement to self-defence against police violence.
2. Curb police powers, including: sharply restricting the use of force; aggressive prosecution of police who kill and violate human rights; abolition of stop and search; ending undercover infiltration of social movements; disarming and demilitarisation. Replace the Independent Office for Police Conduct with a strong, elected body. Restore and expand legal aid.
3. Accountability including subordinating forces to elected local representatives with real control over budgets and operational policy.
4. Reforms to reduce the police's role in society and stop criminalising swathes of working-class people, including: dramatically reducing the prison population; an end to police dealing with mental health emergencies; an end to persecuting youth under the banner of combating gangs; an end to persecuting homeless people; legalisation of drugs; legalisation of sex work; an end to persecuting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.
5. Mobilise to defeat the Immigration Bill. Dismantle the anti-immigrant apparatus; abolish the immigration police. Halt the Tories' rush to a hard Brexit.
6. Instead of more police: emergency funding to block a new wave of cuts to services; reversal of all cuts since 2010; then major increases in public spending – taking collective, democratic control of wealth to ward off a social disaster and begin to meet working-class needs for decent jobs, homes, benefits and services (including youth services, refuges, mental health services, drug rehab). Abolition of anti-migrant restrictions such as NRPf and the NHS surcharge. □

((•)) 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 9 to Monday 15 June:

Wednesday 10 June, 1.30pm (youtube only): PJ talks to Janine Booth about George Floyd protests, police, and fighting racism

Thursday 11 June 1.30pm: "Cut the roots of racism" *Solidarity's* editorial with Stephen Wood

Monday 15 June, 1.30pm: For one school workers' union! Learning from industrial unionism



Wake up Labour!

Call for the Labour Party to restart decision-making meetings, to function as a campaigning force in the pandemic, and to get accountability for councillors and the parliamentary leadership! Sign here: bit.ly/w-u-l

Allow online Labour meetings

Another petition demands that the next NEC meeting gives permission for formal business to be conducted by Labour Party units online: sign at bit.ly/allow-meet □

Fossil-fuel reboot?



Environment

By Zack Muddle

Big-name mainstream economists like Nick Stern and Joseph Stiglitz [have championed a “green recovery”](#) from the current economic slump as good for “the economy” as well as “the environment”. Many politicians have said similar.

Yet the vast majority of the huge rescue packages to prop up industries and companies are being poured into the fossil fuel economy, without environmental conditions attached.

The [Guardian \(6 June\)](#) estimates that \$509bn (£395bn), more than half a trillion dollars, worldwide, will go into high-carbon industries with “no conditions to ensure they reduce their carbon output”, but only \$12.3bn to renewable energy and other low-carbon industries, and \$18.5bn to high-carbon industries conditional on environmental targets.

These plans are even less green than economic stimuli following the 2008 financial crisis. The European Central Bank might channel [up to €220bn](#) to fossil fuel companies which intend to expand production.

Of 53 companies revealed on 4 June to receive payouts from the Bank of England’s “Covid Corporate Financing Facility”, several were airline companies, yet more were coachline companies, car manufacturers and oilfield service companies – to the tune of [billions of pounds to date](#). The Bank’s CCFF is current set to support lending up to £66.6 billion.

“Green strings” attached to such loans to private companies are [insufficient](#), but with CFFF, no such strings exist.

This comes on top of [continued government subsidies](#) to fossil fuel industries, already over \$5 trillion – five million million dollars – yearly, and rising [year on year](#).

The UK-government-led global “Race to Zero” campaign is window-dressing. Launching on 12 June, it will ask businesses, cities, and universities to sign up to targets of net zero by 2050. The Paris/UNFCCC framework, within which this sits, is [completely insufficient](#).

[Over history](#), and [across the world](#), fossil fuels have become welded into the accumulation of capital.

Today, low-carbon energy sources remain considerably less profitable than the fossil fuels industry.

The Covid-19 emergency has seen a rapid downturn in use of energy and fuels, including, and in many places disproportionately, fossil fuels. But their continued use remains built into global economies and infrastructures.

Transition will require abandoning and liquidating [immense infrastructure projects and assets](#) around the world. This will not happen easily, or without a fight.

The figures about “rescue packages” as lockdowns ease show there is no easy transition by way of market pres-

ures in a neoliberal world.

Compared to current renewable energy infrastructure, the contemporary fossil energy infrastructure is in some ways more flexible. A fossil-fuel power station can easily be run well under capacity for a time, saving fuel, then ramped up again, while nothing is saved from wind or solar farm costs by a period of lower output.

Fossil energy production may bounce back with a vengeance. Fuel prices have been pushed down by temporarily reduced demand. Oil prices turned *negative* as in many places it was cheaper to *pay* for the crude to be taken (and stockpiled), than to stop pumping temporarily.

Transition of aviation and automobile industries is [possible and desirable](#). But it will require more “interference” with the market, greater public investment, more disruption to existing companies, than restarting destructive industries with cheap fossil fuel.

Nothing about the coming months and years is, however, inevitable. The trade union and labour movement must organise and fight to demand green jobs for all, a worker-led environmental transition and recovery. □

Children at risk

The *Observer* (7 June) relayed reports from charities that “trafficked and unaccompanied children are going missing in ‘significant’ numbers from the UK’s care system” during lockdown.

It says that it is “too early” to estimate figures, but that the government’s move under the Coronavirus Act (via Statutory Instrument 445, 23 April) to remove or weaken councils’ legal obligations on vulnerable children is probably a factor.

A report from the IPPR think-tank (4 June) reckons that by the end of 2020, 300,000 more children will be living in poverty because of the effects of the lockdown and job losses (though 100,000 will have been pulled above the poverty line by the increases in Universal Credit).

Department for Education figures on 21 April showed that just one in 20 of the “vulnerable” children entitled to attend schools after they were closed to most students on 23 March was turning up. School staff who have phoned round say many parents are too scared of the virus to allow their children to attend.

By comparison, in Australia, where the government had similar rules to Britain, many more “vulnerable” children attended during school closure. In Australia the general death rate was lower and confidence about government plans was higher.

The government has allocated £12 million to projects to help vulnerable children. More solid funding for services and benefits is needed, and serious discussions with school workers about the best ways to get more “vulnerable” children into school. □

Protesting in the pandemic

By Martin Thomas

A radio interviewer asked David Nabarro, World Health Organisation special envoy on Covid-19, what he'd say to the interviewer's (or Nabarro's) young adult children about the Black Lives Matter protests.

Nabarro replied: "Yes, of course, you go [to the protests]. Because it matters. This is so important.

"But you wear a mask, and you keep it on properly. You keep physical distance, and it can be done..."

He added: "It's probably on the transport going to and from [the protests] that the risks are greatest".

The (mostly) young people who have gone on the streets against racism are right to do that, and socialists should be there with them. The difficulties of protests in the pandemic should be seen in that context.

As one protester in London told us as she observed (approvingly) our precautions on our stall – contactless payment, anti-viral wipes, hand sanitiser, sanitised pens, etc. – "Yes, this coronavirus is important, but there are other things too". We sought the least-packed edges of the crowd, too. But we were there.

If this movement can win significant pro-social-equality shifts in pandemic policy – like the shifts in police policy in some US cities and states – that alone will justify it. Conversely, if the killing of George Floyd were met with silence on the streets, that would be a blow against life and equality.

It is good that the cops have backed off from trying to stop the protests in Britain. It is good that a court in New South Wales, Australia, overruled a move by NSW's conservative government to ban a Black Lives Matter protest there on virus-lockdown grounds.

Some of the Black Lives Matter protests have been carefully covid-distanced. In London on 6 June, organisers distributed face masks and sanitisers. Almost all protesters wore masks. But the numbers were so much bigger than expected that the core was crowded until protesters moved off in impromptu marches.

Nabarro added on the radio: "If you're at all unwell, you don't go, because you're a threat to other people". If your health is frail, or you live with frail people, likewise.

If we have a say in the details of future protests, we'll advocate gathering in large open spaces to allow covid-distancing, marches rather than static protests. We would hardly expect to have a say, though, if even young and healthy socialists shunned the protests happening now.

To get the arguments into proportion, four points.

First, orders of magnitude. The best guess is that about one person in a thousand has the virus in Britain now. Maybe 50,000 people came to the 6 June protest, and those would be people with no or negligible symptoms, so if unlucky 25 had the virus.

The best guess is that with this virus a person socialising, working, etc. as in "usual" times would infect 2 or 3 others over the whole time they are infected.

On average, in a crowded protest for a few hours, and if

unlucky, they'd infect one other? That's 25 new infections. Compare it to 3500 new cases a day anyway.

And those 25 would be overwhelmingly young, with about 1/4,000 chance of dying if they get the virus.

There is a risk, but of the order of a quarter of the traffic-accident risk from those 50,000 doing a one-hour bike ride. Much smaller than the risks inflicted by social inequality *day-after-day* in workplaces without PPE and isolation pay, overcrowded housing, etc.

There is nothing inconsistent in demanding precautions in workplaces where people have to work every day, week after week, and running a small one-off risk to make a protest.

Second, the "mass gatherings" known to have created "clusters" for the virus have been ones with lots of indoor socialising, kissing, hugging, shaking hands (like the Gangelt carnival and the Daegu religious gathering). Not political demonstrations where the big majority of person-to-person "meetings" are fleeting.

Third, it is not for us to make dogma of the Tory-designed lockdown. The lockdown has its own toll, also hitting the worst-off hardest. We do not know which bits of the lockdown may have "worked" to slow infection, and which not. We are finding out, tentatively, only now that lockdowns are being eased bit by bit.

We never supported the ban on protests. We argued from the start that the labour movement must act as an "essential service". As with other "essential services", there is some risk, which we seek to minimise but can't abolish.

Fourth: socialists' general attitude when our people move for liberation, even if in ways we wouldn't have chosen.

On 4 July 1917 the soldiers and workers of St Petersburg went on the streets against the Provisional Government to demand All Power to the Soviets. The Bolsheviks thought the action premature. Rightly. Even though the Bolsheviks managed to keep the protest fairly orderly, it led to a great backlash against the Bolsheviks, with Trotsky jailed until early September and Lenin forced into hiding.

About 700 people died on the protest. Perhaps the Bolsheviks counselled their more vulnerable members to stay home that day. Their core activists went with the workers, explaining and advising, but from within the movement. □

Marxism and Trade unions course

Following 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 ground fundamental ideas about what trade unions are, and the role of socialists in unions and work. The sessions: 1. Our Fantasy Union; 2. The Marxist Critique of Trade Unions; 3. The Bureaucracy; 4. The Rank and file; 5. The Role of Marxists; 6. Workplace Bulletins.

Fortnightly zoom meetings with material to consider in between. [Saturdays 11am, starting 20 June](#). □

“Black lives matter! Black lives matter!”



Diary of a tubeworker

By Jay Dawkey

I was in the mess room when the shouting started. I paid no attention at first. I knew the demo in central London [3 June] had been big, but didn't really twig whether people would be out on a Wednesday afternoon and how they would get there and get home.

“Jay, I think you should come out here”, F, who is covering on another station, radios through.

I get into the ticket hall. It's not normal peak-time busy, but its busier than normal. Yeah, people are shouting, but it's not an aggressive protest in the station. The manager obviously feels differently and is rushing to try and close some of the station doors.

That is going to create a bottleneck, I say to F. We are better off just opening up the gates and letting people pass. We should put our masks on as well.

The line of five police at the top of the stairs, already here, is causing more trouble than is needed, with protestors wondering why they are being held. We move to direct people as fast as we can and just move people out of the station, which is difficult when trying to stand 2m away from everyone and communicate while you and they are wearing a mask.

Throughout the week there are just two topics of conversation. Compulsory masks on public transport: “Who is going to enforce it”? “Why didn't they do this from the beginning”? “The volunteers are gonna get those masks robbed within a hour, trust”.

£3,207 towards £10,000

This week has been a slow one, taking us only from £3,125 to £3,207 towards our target of £10,000 by 22 November. Only a few small donations this week, but several more promised for the next week!

As more and more places now become card-only, why not get your change jars paid in and send the money to us?

We've been selling literature at the Black Lives Matter protests while trying to maintain covid- distancing, collecting cash payments in collection boxes rather than by hand, and using portable contactless card payment machines (until demos get so big they overwhelm the mobile phone networks which the machines use).

More income will help us getting more contactless machines. workersliberty.org/donate

The other is all about the protests. Some tube workers come through who have been at the protests. At other times we debate them in the control room. “They shouldn't be looting”, a much better off senior member of staff says. “That discredits the protests, and what have they achieved?”

“They got all those officers charged, and they've reopened the case of that woman getting shot up in bed [Breonna Taylor]. The media will focus on the looting but when bredren has been pushed around enough he's gonna react. Man isn't smashing up his local shop, he's doing Walmart. They're insured. And anyway that's a small amount of people. American police are mad, look at them arresting that FBI guy or slamming people to the floor over speeding”.

“But then you have people stopping other police from joining demonstrations”, the manager says. “They are the example we need and that should be encouraged”.

“So are these BAME impact assessments on the Tube going to ensure black lives matter?”, I ask. He decides he has to leave at this point. Not interested in taking the conversation further.

• “Jay Dawkey” is a Tube worker.



Featured book

What was the USSR? Was it socialism? A powerful body of critical Marxist analysis of the USSR from the '40s and '50s remains largely unknown. This work of critical rediscovery vindicates those who made the Revolution, who fought Stalinism until it killed them. It traces efforts to remake a democratic, revolutionary socialist movement during the mid-century events that shaped the world since. 608 pages, £8.

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Standing up for equality



John Moloney

There was a discussion at our National Executive Committee [of the PCS civil service union] about the Black Lives Matter protests in the USA. There was overwhelming support for the struggle against racism and police brutality. Some comrades did raise safety concerns about mass gatherings at a time when the threat from the virus is still high, and BAME people have been disproportionately affected. The issues will be discussed further within the union, as we want members to be able to protest safely.

Racial inequality is an industrial issue in the civil service. As well as the virus disproportionately impacting BAME people, there is also a racial pay gap. There are high concentrations of BAME people amongst outsourced workers, who are invariably the lowest-paid and often the worst treated. This is a form of racial discrimination in itself. The United Voices of the World union (UVW), who we're working with, in the Ministry of Justice, are pursuing a legal case on this basis. Our demands for equality for outsourced workers, including full occupational sick pay from day one, are part of a fight for racial justice in the workplace.

There is also discrimination amongst directly-employed civil service workers. BAME workers are promoted far less frequently than their white workmates, which is something we've raised before. As the civil service's HR processes are effectively paused due to the pandemic, we're pushing the employer to look into this again, and arguing that this is an opportunity to overhaul processes that have systematically disadvantaged BAME staff.

As we look at ways to mobilise the labour movement against police brutality, we need to ensure we retain international perspectives. I was honoured to chair, in a personal capacity, a recent online solidarity rally with trade unionists and democracy campaigners in Hong Kong, such as Carole Ng, the chair of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions, who've been resisting the brutality of the Chinese state.

Although we can't draw mechanical equivalences between this movement and Black Lives Matter, there are commonalities in that both involve people taking action for basic rights in the face of severe repression from state forces. I hope our union will soon formally discuss the movement in Hong Kong and adopt a stance of solidarity, which will mean I'll be able to chair future rallies in an official capacity. □

• John Moloney is assistant general secretary of the PCS, writing in a personal capacity

Masks, visors, and volunteers

From the Tubeworker blog

The government has finally announced, well behind many other countries, that face coverings will be compulsory on public transport from 15 June. No sooner had the policy been announced than ministers appeared to unpick it, with Transport Secretary Grant Shapps saying they only needed to be worn on trains and buses themselves, not in stations.

Volunteers will apparently be on hand outside some Tube stations to distribute face coverings. Unions have rightly raised concerns about whether this will be part of the wider deployment of volunteers at mainline train stations, who the Department for Transport says "will play a crucial supporting role in keeping people moving by easing crowding and providing advice to help maintain social distancing, protecting passengers and tackling the spread of the virus."

An RMT statement in response said: "Passengers should not be relying on volunteers and would be much safer in the knowledge that the person assisting them is a fully trained station staff member. These plans are not only a concern for our members' job security, but also the health and safety of the entire railway industry."

Cloth face coverings have been available to staff for some time, although many doubt their efficacy. A particular controversy ensued recently after RMT procured nearly 3,000 plastic face shields for frontline staff across LU, something many of us have been calling for as an additional protection measure against spitting attacks of the type we've seen at Victoria and Stratford. Although the employer, rather than the union, should be responsible for providing this equipment, we were happy to see the union stepping up when bosses wouldn't.

Little wonder that many station staff reacted angrily, then, when LU issued instructions to staff not to wear the visors, on the basis that they weren't official LU issue! "Give us an official LU issue one and we'll wear that: until then, let us wear this one" was the reaction of many. Thanks to pressure from union reps, LU have now affirmed that they won't discipline anyone who chooses to wear one of the RMT-supplied face shields, and the company has also agreed to produce and trial an initial supply of their own visors. □

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Solidarity



For a workers' government

NO TIME TO LOSE ON ISOLATION PAY AND PPE

By Colin Foster

The government has dropped its plans to reopen primary schools to all year groups before the end of term in July, but will allow shops to reopen from 15 June, and pubs, hairdressers, cinemas, etc. from 4 July at earliest as long they meet covid-distancing rules.

Face-coverings will become compulsory on public transport from 15 June. Britain's lockdown-easing policies are more erratic than in other European countries. So far, as in those other European countries, the curve of cases and death is still moving downwards, but in Britain the movement is slow.

There is no good reason for the labour movement to be last-ditch defenders of keeping lockdown measures as strict as possible, as long as possible. The lockdown brings its own human and health costs, and those hit the worst-off hardest.

Workers' control is our principle, and there is reason to be cautious so long as rates remain so high. Britain's rates of deaths and cases are still three to four times those of France and Italy, since their rates are going down too. In terms of new cases per day, Britain is roughly where Italy was in mid-May, and France at the start of May.

The return to work announced by Boris Johnson on 10 May is moving very slowly. The number of workers furloughed continues to increase, now to 8.9 million, 1.4 million more than it was on 10 May.

Slow return

London Underground traffic has gone up only slightly. Looking at it from a miniature level, at the industrial estate in London where *Solidarity* has our office, the bike shed, overflowing in usual times, has just one bike in it each day, and only about six out of 35 units are working at any level.

World-wide, numbers of deaths and cases are rising most in Brazil, Mexico, Peru, and Chile. The rise there, so far, is more straight-line than the exponential curve seen in Europe in March and April, but it shows no sign of slackening.

Whether there will be a "second wave" of the virus in the autumn, internationally or in Britain, no-one knows. We do know that the chance we now have to create a better infrastructure for infection control must not be missed. The boss of the NHS trusts' umbrella group

NHS Providers says: "NHS Test and Trace can only, at this point, be described as a work in progress. Given how much depends on it, building public confidence in NHS Test and Trace is vital and ministers should stop describing it as world-beating when it clearly, currently, isn't".

The main social measures needed to underpin infection-control become more urgent rather than less:

- The test-and-trace operation should be run as a public-health operation, by public health workers on good pay and conditions and contracts, rather than handed over to contractors like Serco and Deloitte, employing workers on minimum wage or little more for 12-week gigs.

- Industry should be publicly requisitioned to supply PPE, rather than relying on a web of private contractors and sub-contractors and sub-sub-contractors. More PPE will be required with steps back towards normal life, not less.

- Full isolation pay should be guaranteed for all workers staying home because testing positive for or showing possible symptoms for Covid-19. No test-and-trace operation can work well without good guarantees of the identified virus-carriers self-isolating.

In the first place, full isolation pay is needed for all care home workers. Despite the government announcing a £600 million fund for that purpose, the pay guarantees are still not filtering through.

The "second wave" already surely under way is one of job cuts. Maybe a million jobs have been lost in the lockdown, and unemployment has gone up from 4% to 7% or more. A new cascade of job cuts has been triggered more by the lockdown-easing than by the lockdown. Big companies in manufacturing and aviation have announced plans for huge job cuts, and they are being followed by more and more smaller companies down the supply chain. The labour movement needs to campaign for jobs for all!

- 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. □

- See safeandequal.org for campaigning on these issues