

LIVERPOOL ANARCHIST

The feminist movement seems to have lost its momentum. Many of its historical successes were legislative, such as the right to access abortions, get divorced, and equal pay. While there are still reforms worth fighting for, such as the decriminalisation of sex work, the gains mentioned above cover many aspects of our oppression and yet we fall very short of equality between the sexes.

Women are still disproportionately poorer and more likely to be the victims of domestic and sexual abuse. Many liberal feminists have focused on increasing diversity amongst managers, politicians and police; or on individualistic and cliquey cultural projects, particularly associated with academia and social media, that are inaccessible and disconnected from our workplaces and neighbourhoods.

The gender pay gap exists between women and men doing the same jobs, but also between jobs that are disproportionately carried out by a particular gender. Why should care workers, receptionists or nurses get paid less than security guards, bus drivers or electricians? Women also tend to do more unpaid work such as housework, childcare and other caring responsibilities. This often means not being able to work, or having to work part time. There is legislation in place to end the gender pay gap, but it has proved inadequate, and ignores the more fundamental issues around poverty pay for "feminine" occupations, and unpaid labour. Another solution that is often suggested is that we need to try to break down this gendered segregation of labour. Initiatives to encourage women into male-dominated fields are positive, however, since many women will be attached to their current occupations or household responsibilities, even if this is simply a product of a

patriarchal culture, they are unlikely to switch careers and shouldn't be expected to, especially if it means sacrificing their own happiness, lowering their household income or throwing away years of experience.

This leads to a condition of economic dependency between women and men. Certain women, such as those that are migrants or transgender, are particularly vulnerable. Women's abstract, legal freedoms are then undermined by this economic dependency. For example, the right to divorce may be meaningless if leaving your husband could result in deportation. In particular, victims of domestic abuse (which often

involves financial abuse) may be reluctant to flee their situation, or may even return after doing so, due to a fear of becoming homeless. Austerity, leading to reduced services in women's hostels, has made this issue far worse.

All of the above problems are of course general trends which affect women. Many men, such as stay-at-home fathers, will face similar economic issues, which may leave them vulnerable to domestic abuse. It is also worth noting that while non-binary people do not neatly fall into

this paradigm they may face many similar issues, as well as unique problems such as homelessness caused by parental rejection.

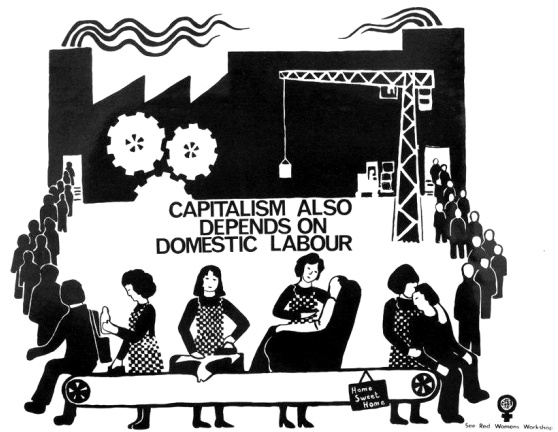
We do not think the solutions to these economic disparities and dependencies will come from above. More politicians or employers who are women (or non-binary, black, with working class backgrounds, etc.) do little to help the situation of ordinary people, and often just encourage them to identify with their rulers and oppressors, rather than to struggle against our capitalist and



patriarchal system. Likewise, we reject the idea that police forces, which are fundamentally violent and typically full of abusers, can be relied upon to protect women.

We can address these issues by helping women to organise collectively to improve their lives through direct action. The Covid-pandemic has shown that society “valuing” certain jobs does little to improve pay or conditions; we need to prioritise supporting industrial action in workforces typically associated with women. Class struggle doesn’t end in the workplace either; tactics such as rent strikes have historically been women-led, while opposing cuts to public services is vital, not least because they disproportionately affect women.

Through engaging with these struggles we can help to improve the lives of women, and everyone, in the present, and also to break out of our activist and social media bubbles and to fight sexist attitudes within our everyday lives. This can build our confidence, and encourage us to take control over aspects of our personal lives, while also building strong movements that can meaningfully fight off attacks against reproductive or trans rights. We also need to use these struggles as opportunities to demonstrate that while progress can be made within our society, if we want true equality we need to dismantle capitalism and the



state. There is no such thing as “fair wages”, there is no just reason why some forms of work are paid less, or not at all, and all workers are paid less than the full value of their work (this is where profit comes from). This disproportionately affects women, but we need to set our sights higher than simply redistributing this exploitation. The rights women have won could easily be reversed if it suited our rulers. If we want a revolution to benefit the working class, we need to take control of society ourselves, instead of remaining reliant on politicians. This is why we see striving for anarchist-communism (a moneyless, classless and stateless society) as a feminist project, although if we expect such a project to liberate women, then we need to be involved in struggling for it ourselves, and to challenge sexism in doing so. •

JUST COMPLY

On March 3rd the following message was sent from Merseyside Police to the workers at Just Eat in Liverpool (via their management):

“Going forward any couriers who are seen by the police NOT wearing an Orange Top Layer (Winter Jack, Summer Jacket, Just Eat T-shirts) Delivery Bag and Helmet while riding WILL be stopped and their details forwarded onto the hub. Not only is this to combat the recent incidents and thefts but to also keep you all safe.”

In response, the President of the IWGB union, which it should be noted does not have an organised presence in Merseyside, stated that if the police report couriers for not wearing their uniform then they will probably be fired.

Back in December, after multiple cases of having their bikes stolen, around 50 couriers gathered outside McDonalds in Bootle, and then

protested by riding around Liverpool as a convoy, blocking traffic and beeping their horns. In response, on March 2nd, Merseyside Police were at the Just Eat Hub to discuss “crime prevention” with couriers, although it's unclear how much the police were influenced by the workers or management of Just Eat.

We certainly feel that police enforcing dress codes sets an alarming precedent, and does little to practically address the issue of bike theft (in contrast to something like having bike sheds in areas such as Bold Street or Stanley Road). However, what is absent in this debate is the voices of local couriers. This is just one reason why they should get together and form a democratic organisation which can discuss these issues, voice their demands, and where necessary take action. What better time, than in the midst of a national strike by couriers against Just Eat? •

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE ANGRY WOMEN OF LIVERPOOL?

The following account is about a group made up mostly of anarcha-feminists. They were focused on direct action and opposed to government, cops and the city council, rejecting calls to increase representation within these institutions.

In 2007, a group of women from the Liverpool Social Centre Collective had a meeting to discuss the responses we were getting from certain members of the collective – and other groups and collectives we were part of – whenever we raised issues of feminism. For the next seven-ish years, on and off, we held monthly meetings, discussions, talks, educationals, direct actions, radical blocs in women's marches and generally made a nuisance of ourselves, under the name of the Angry Women of Liverpool (AWOL).

Whenever a woman at a lefty meeting was being patronised or ignored, when a call for childcare at meetings or rotas for washing-up duties was met with dismissal, whenever feminist, queer, disabled or other marginalised struggles were called "Identity Politics" or "a distraction that divides the class", and especially whenever a woman's point was being dismissed on the basis that she should be more calm and polite about how she made it, there were we, shouting back. We were there when anti-choicers came to Liverpool to wave their placards in pregnant folks' faces, blocking them with a pretty striking AWOL banner. We dressed as suffragettes and chained ourselves to the town hall railings protesting cuts to domestic violence and rape crisis services. We even ended up name-checked in *Private Eye* for actions around the Socialist Workers' Party's rape apologism.

Our meetings featured early attempts at intersectional* organising and safer spaces policies, and a gloriously nerdy reading and discussion group. For many, it was our first real life feminist space, and a chance to meet and talk about ideas that we'd written and read about online:

representations of women and feminism in pop culture, women in writing, directing, sport, stand-up comedy... We spoke at International Women's Day and Reclaim the Night marches, where we were told off by councillors for starting anti-cop chants (and let's not forget "Kill A Rapist With A Spoon" – some of us still have our Spoon Bloc badges), and our banner never failed to get some poor fucker asking what we were angry about. Reader, we told him. Then, after some seven or eight years we just sort of... fizzled out.

At the time, it seemed to me that those of us who'd always organised the meetings just



developed other commitments and priorities. We were happy for others to take over, but nobody ever did for long. Perhaps the lack of a formal structure meant there was no clear way for newcomers to take on those responsibilities. There were also more organised feminist networks emerging at the time, like Sisters Uncut and (a little later) Sisters not Cisters.

Whenever I was asked to speak for AWOL at marches or events, I used to talk about anger not as a loss of control but as a constructive force that could be channelled and focussed, forged into a tool for building change, burned as a source of energy. I thought of it as a healthy connection to the world: it meant you were paying attention. It feels like since then, a lot of the radical groups that were active in the years surrounding 2010 have turned their anger inward, and some of that bottled fuel exploded in our faces. These things happen in times of defeat, but some betrayals leave scars that never stop stinging. I would never have thought, in those early days of AWOL, after all our discussions on

trans solidarity and intersectionality, after how carefully we worded those “women only” call-outs to be sure that they included trans women, that any of our early members or supporters would become trans-exclusionary radical feminists (TERFs). I am deeply bitter about how many of the places and people I found my voice with have let us down so badly. I am also deeply grateful for those who are still on the right side of the fight, and for those who’ve joined it since.

It was a bittersweet moment in 2020 when, with a trans solidarity march approaching, a new network formed and with no shops open for fabric, I pulled the letters off the old AWOL banner and re-arranged them to read “Trans Liberation Now” (yes, I did have to cut out one or two extras...)

Keep directing that anger at the right targets. When it’s bottled for too long, it turns to vinegar, and now I’m afraid to open up a bottle around a group I care about, for fear all that acid will cause it to just... dissolve. That doesn’t have to be a bad thing, though. We need to be less focussed on the groups we form and more on what they stand for. Stay angry, folks, and cut up your banners. •

*By intersectional I mean acknowledging that no struggle stands alone and every battle has a number of fronts. A feminist group that doesn't fight for women of colour, trans women, disabled women and working class women isn't a feminist group.

TUI VICTORY

The travel agency TUI used to run the deportation flights for the Home Office. SOAS Detainee Support (SDS) coordinated a campaign against this with several other groups, which led to many protests being held outside TUI stores, including Liverpool, in August 2021. In the past 6 months TUI have not facilitated any further deportation flights, and back in September SDS heard rumours that they had pulled out of their agreement with the Home Office. SDS have concluded that their campaign was successful, although TUI have not released a public statement. The protest in Liverpool was not particularly large, yet, harming their public image by calling for a boycott seems to have secured its success. •



The Enclosure of Eden

*Eden's garden grew from filth
And Rots produced its flowers,
Germs and fungi knew the roots
And Eve beheld their powers.
She learnt to tend all life she found
With no need to count the hours,
She ate of all the fruit she pleased
And drank of blissful showers.*

*One day into her peace there came
A man highly regarded,
Declared himself as God
Before their conversation started.
Eve did you think this fruit's for you?
To whom belongs this garden?
I say its mine and I'm in charge
But if you pay your rent you're
pardoned.*

Ava





DESIGN CENTRE OCCUPATION

In the seventies the Fashion Design Centre was set up in Kirkby using a government grant to cover 40% of the £400,000 spent on equipment. However, the owner, a swiss international company, announced the closure of the factory after it had only been open for 16 months, since staff had to have been working there for 2 years continuously to access redundancy pay.

After being told about the closure over the phone, the textile workers immediately began to organise against it. On March 20th they unanimously decided to occupy the factory, while searching for an alternative means to keep it open - either through another company taking it over or forming a workers cooperative. Almost all of the 200 workers were women, and the sit-in gave many of them a newfound confidence. While factory closures, and occupations, were common in Merseyside at the time, it was unusual for them to be led by women. Surprised to find herself occupying her workplace one woman commented "around here it's never been heard of to have women doing this."

By June, the women had won, finding a buyer willing to take on the workforce. Some of them intended to setup a women's action group so they could use their experience to help other workers. •

"If I'm not meant to be some man's

*slave then why be a slave to a boss, to a
corporation, to a customer?"*

Liberté Locke

SOCIAL CENTRE REOPENS

Next to Nowhere can be found on Bold Street, and accessed through a red door next to 'News from Nowhere'. Until recently there have not been public events at the centre due to concerns around Covid-19, however, it is now opening up again. On Saturdays from around 12 to 5 there is a vegan cafe where food and drink is available, pay what you can afford. On March 22nd there will be a free film screening of 'Clash' (2016) at 8pm. The centre is also available for groups that are non-hierarchical to use for meetings or to put on events. You can find them online at: liverpoolsocialcentre.org

"We want to move beyond defensive demands and self-criticism that reflect a scramble for the crumbs that the system has offered. Instead, we want to redirect the flow of our political energy into building movements that go on the offensive to simultaneously improve our daily lives through social demands, while prefiguring the type of society we wish to construct. This also means treating our smaller campaigns as opportunities to learn and train for the long war against patriarchal capitalism."

Romina Akemi and Bree Busk



If you would like to subscribe to our mailing list then please contact liverpoolanarchist@tuta.io with the subject line "mailing list". If you would prefer a paper copy you can usually find some at News from Nowhere, the feminist bookshop on Bold Street.

THE LIFE OF MAY PICQUERAY

May Picqueray was born in Brittany, France, in 1898 to a seamstress and a postman. In 1918 she became active in the anarchist and syndicalist youth movements. Over the course of her life she raised three children as a single mother. While she settled into proofreading, she also worked as a bank teller, delivery woman, drafter, fish seller, grocer, interpreter, mushroom picker, receptionist, typist and carer. This makes it all the more impressive that she dedicated her life to the struggle for freedom.

In 1921, the anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti were falsely tried for murder, amidst a wave of repression against revolutionaries in the USA, sparking solidarity protests across the world. May was disappointed that the French papers were silent on the issue, so she sent a stun grenade to the US ambassador in France, leading to the case being covered regularly (unfortunately Sacco and Vanzetti were executed in 1927, though “redeemed” by the US legal system in 1977).

From there, May went on to do administrative work for the Metalworkers’ Union, part of the revolutionary CGTU union. While attending meetings, demonstrations and picket lines, she was involved in scuffles with nationalists, police and even communists. She joined the CGTU’s delegation to Soviet Russia in 1922. She found a “communist” society where strikes and political dissidence were banned, where starvation and child homelessness were rife. While the delegation feasted with the ruling members of the Communist Party, she showed her disgust by standing on the table and denouncing their gluttony amidst famine. In a private meeting with Leon Trotsky, then head of Russia’s military, she somehow convinced him to release two anarchist prisoners, despite the fact that she refused to shake his hand because their

politics were “divided by Makhno and Krontstadt”. Nonetheless, her rebelliousness was punished on her journey home: she believed the Soviet authorities poisoned her in Germany and set her up to be imprisoned in Belgium. She was a supporter of the anarcho-syndicalist wing of the CGTU, so when the communists came to dominate the union in 1924, she left. After WWII she became active in the Proofreaders’ Union.

The main focus of May’s activism was the anti-war movement, and she edited the libertarian anti-militarist paper *Le Réfractaire*, from 1974 until her



death in 1983. When the Nazis had occupied France during WWII she helped people in the resistance or on the run, providing shelter and forging papers so they could avoid conscription or cross borders. When the Nazis withdrew from France, she also forged documents for some collaborators, not indulging those who sought revenge. On one occasion she also took the opportunity to seize and redistribute provisions which were being taken back to Germany. After the war, she assisted the anarcho-pacifist Louis Lecoin in his successful campaign to secure legal rights for conscientious objectors. In the seventies she supported the Larzac struggle, where plans for the mass eviction of farmers to expand a military base were successfully

resisted. While turning to pacifism, she never denounced, and often supported, those who chose to fight. She took part in one mass-trespass against the building of a nuclear reactor in 1977, during which the police brutally attacked protesters, particularly youths that came armed with batons and hard hats, resulting in many injuries and one death. She stated that if non-violent activism “amounts to issuing watchwords and not carrying them out and exposing tens of thousands of people to a hail of grenades, and then heading back to camp, happy to have “done our duty” and leaving young people who had been accepted as “protection” to be slaughtered without affording them any assistance and treating them, or allowing them to be treated as mindless thugs ... then count me out!”.

She also helped the anarchists Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman write their

autobiographies, united child refugees of the 1936 Spanish Revolution with their families, and smuggled nine prisoners out of Le Vernet concentration camp (which had originally been setup by the allied government for those fleeing the Spanish Civil War, most of whom were anarchists). Her life was full of small acts of solidarity, too many to list here.

May Picqueray suffered for her bravery, she was imprisoned multiple times, and saw the horrors of war and fascism, the initially promising Russian Revolution turn into a tragedy, and the defeat and decline of the anarchist movements in Spain and France. Nonetheless she remained committed to revolutionary anarchism and the belief that, if people fought for it, they could live in a world free from capitalism, the state and war. •

Art by Helen Delmar
[instagram.com/dantde_lion](https://www.instagram.com/dantde_lion)

AGAINST WAR

War has broken out in Europe once again as Russian military forces launched a brutal invasion of Ukraine in February. Behind the battlefield, imperialist powers are lining up against each other. Our rulers wage war in defence of their political and economic interests, gaining or losing geopolitical power and exploitable markets, while we are left trading in misery and death. The workers of Ukraine and Russia have more in common with each other than with the respective government and capitalists of each country. Against the false unity of the nation-state we invoke the international solidarity of the working class: imperialist war between nations must be transformed into social war between classes.

The working class have it in their power to bring the war-machine to a grinding halt by refusal to serve, fraternisation with the “enemy”, mutiny, sabotage and strike in the factories of war-production, and refusing to handle military supplies. Newfound strength, solidarity, and self-organisation can be turned against capitalism and the state: the perpetrators of war, and masters of our everyday exploitation.

In Birkenhead, Merseyside, dockers have refused to unload cargo of Russian oil destined for

the Stanlow oil refinery, which follows the refusal of dockers in Kent to unload Russian natural gas. In Russia, people are pushing back against Putin's regime and his war in mass street protests, despite thousands of arrests. In occupied Ukraine, with businesses shutting down and workers left without wages, people take what they need by expropriating food and other supplies from the stores, while blacklisting dodgy employers. On the front-lines some Russian troops - deciding that they have no reason to be shooting at their Ukrainian brothers and sisters - have surrendered rather than fight. These are steps in the right direction. •

Fight? For What?

Your country, who says you've a country?

You live in another man's flat.

You haven't even a backyard.

So why should you murder for that?

You haven't a hut or a building.

No flower, no garden, it's true;

The landlords have grabbed all the country;

Let them do the fighting — not you.

Marie Louise Berneri

SEXISM AT WORK

Sex discrimination and sexual harassment are both illegal under UK law, and it is worthwhile knowing your rights. However, bosses will treat their workers however they want if they believe they can get away with it, and legal action is mostly inaccessible for workers, and not often in their favour. But we can organise to defend ourselves and improve our situation. Gathering evidence, keeping accounts of your experiences, and reaching out to trusted co-workers are the building blocks for taking action to confront management and transform the workplace culture from one of discrimination and anguish to one where workers are empowered to support each other and act collectively against misogyny.



In the Brighton restaurant Mange Tout, workers have been subject to sexual harassment from both the owner and a colleague. After raising the issue, one worker was unfairly dismissed and two other workers suffered constructive dismissal. With the support of Brighton Solidarity Federation, an anarcho-syndicalist union, they decided to take action. A letter was first sent to the management

demanding that they implement anti-harassment training and a formal grievance procedure, address the toxic culture within the workplace, and provide financial compensation to the three workers. With



no meaningful engagement after three weeks, a public direct action campaign was initiated on the 6th February 2022. The workers and supporters began a picket at the restaurant, handing out leaflets and holding up signs to publicise the issue. They reported that “the public reaction was overwhelmingly supportive, and we succeeded in turning away the vast majority of their customers during the hour we were outside.” The dispute is currently ongoing, and regardless of whether or not demands are met, these workers have demonstrated that survivors of harassment do not have to remain silent, and can take matters into their own hands.

On Thursday 10th March, Liverpool Solidarity Federation will be running a ‘Sexism in the Workplace Workshop’ from 19:30 at the ‘Croissant of Inequality’ on Holt Road, Liverpool. The workshop will involve discussion of general issues faced by women and non-binary people at work, and explore how sexist dynamics can be challenged using direct action. It is free to attend and open to all women and people who experience misogyny at work - students and the unemployed are welcome but bosses are not. •



The *Liverpool Anarchist* is edited by individual members of the Solidarity Federation, an anarcho-syndicalist union. We aim to publish monthly and welcome all contributions in accord with our basic ideas. We advocate working class direct action to improve our lives here and now while building a revolutionary movement to do away with capitalism, the state, and all other hierarchies.

Send in feedback, comments, and submissions to:
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You can find us online at:
liverpoolanarchist.wordpress.com

And the Solidarity Federation at: liverpoolsf.org