

# LIVERPOOL ANARCHIST



On March 17<sup>th</sup>, P&O Ferries sacked 800 workers without notice over a zoom call. The next day around 300 people gathered outside the Port of Liverpool (in Seaforth, Sefton). This was a huge show of support, given the location is difficult to reach and the short notice. However, the opportunity was wasted, mainly being used to listen to speeches. Despite a sense of camaraderie, with traffic into the port continuing as normal it was hard not to feel like the only thing we were demonstrating was our impotence.

In contrast, on the morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, demonstrators took direct action at the port. A small number of people were allowed into the port to demonstrate at the P&O terminal under close supervision, a distraction which allowed the remaining 40 or so people who had gathered to then block the road into the port. The blockade was maintained for about half an hour, with high morale and support from onlookers, before police moved in to push protestors off the road. This unofficially organised action caused long delays and a tail-back of lorries far down the road.

On the 26<sup>th</sup>, there was a march, around 250 strong, from the Seafarer's Centre to the port (followed by yet more speeches). On April 2<sup>nd</sup> at Pier Head, a joint rally with the People's Assembly

only managed to attract around 50 people. On the 6<sup>th</sup>, around 60 people marched along Princess Way (a dual carriageway leading to the Port), only to be followed by, you guessed it, speeches! That last march at least led to lorries having to queue to get into the port, despite this the drivers showed their support with beeps and raised fists.

These protests have been organised by the RMT and Nautilus trade unions, and they have mainly been attended by trade unionists and socialists. Fortunately, anger has been directed against employers and not foreign workers. There have been many high profile speakers such as mayors, MPs and national trade union leaders. Despite all this, the Liverpool to Dublin line resumed service from as early as March 19<sup>th</sup>, and it's hard not to feel that, locally, the campaign is losing momentum. As far as we see it, there are two, conflicting, strategies to secure victory. In broad terms, the first approach is associated with the trade union leadership, while the latter tends to come from the rank-and-file.

The first relies on seeking support from the Tory government, Labour opposition and the mass media. This support is hoped to equate to economic and legal pressure on P&O to rehire the workers, as well as repealing anti-trade union laws, making fire-and-rehire illegal and even nationalisation.

However, it seems likely that P&O knowingly made legally dubious decisions, aware that there might be consequences, and deeming it economically worthwhile (perhaps since, if it had all gone to plan, the workers movement would have been caught off-guard and unable to act). It's hard to view support from the Tories with anything but cynicism, especially since they knew about the mass dismissals beforehand and did nothing. However, the Labour Party is no better. In Coventry, their local council have shown the true colours of all holders of state-power, hiring scabs and misleading the public to crush a bin strike. Media coverage about P&O has been sympathetic, but how long can weekly demonstrations make for good news articles? And if they seem ineffective how long will people keep attending?

The second strategy is that of a persistent campaign of direct action. Without agency staff informing crews that they were going to be replaced (and then refusing to work), the Hull

crew occupying their ship, and road blockades in Dover, it's possible that this could have all blown over without a fuss (afterall, mass dismissals are part and parcel of capitalism). Since the first week following the dismissals, this approach has quietened down, with the exception of sympathetic action from overseas workers. But secondary picketing, road blockades, sit-ins, a concerted consumer boycott, and sympathetic strike action (most of which are illegal) could breathe life into the campaign, and make these protests seem worthwhile. •

10.04.22

*"The State was never and never can be anything other than the political apparatus of force of the propertied classes to ensure the economic exploitation of the broad masses of the working people."*

**Milly Witkop**

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## FLANNELS OUT OF FASHION

Sometimes it can feel like our world is progressing (slowly) in a positive direction. And there are times when you despair, like when real animal fur comes back into fashion, after years of it being unacceptable and supermodels pledging never to wear it again (spoiler: they usually do). For many years, Merseyside Animal Rights have been protesting against the sale of fur in Liverpool shops, including Cricket on Mathew Street and currently Flannels in Liverpool One. As part of the national Stop Fur At Flannels campaign, on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 9 of us recently paid them a visit to let them know what we think of them and, with chalk and banners, draw attention to what they are doing. We gave out a lot of informative leaflets to (overwhelmingly supportive) Saturday shoppers, many of whom were under the impression that the sale of real fur has already been made illegal in the UK (fur farming was banned in 2000 but imports are still allowed).

The staff are used to our visits and guard the door, often locking it between customers. Sadly, there was a constant stream of them going in and

out of the shop, mostly refusing to engage with us, although a few took our leaflets and may rethink their support of the shop if they take the time to read them. If they then let Flannels know they are considering going elsewhere in future, this can put more pressure on the shop than we ever could.

Liverpool One security kept an eye on us but didn't really interfere. Sometimes we are actually glad of a heavy-handed show of police, as it draws more attention from passers-by, who want to know what on earth is going on, gifting us added opportunities to tell them! We left after 2 hours but will return soon, especially as Flannels are building a massive new store in Clayton Square, the grand opening of which we shall certainly be 'attending'! You can contact us at

[merseysideanimalrights@lists.riseup.net](mailto:merseysideanimalrights@lists.riseup.net)  
or @MARcampaigns on Facebook. •



# WHO ARE THE WORKING CLASS?

Talking about “the working class” conjures up various images of brawny dockers and factory workers, of people in flat caps with thick accents, no doubt white and male, with reactionary views and traditional values. While this is nothing but caricature, there are real differences in wealth, trade, skill, privilege, and culture that can be divided into sociological classes. When we talk about class, however, we refer to a fundamental distinction between those who own and control capital, and those who work for them to create their profits.

‘Capital’ includes all the land, materials, buildings, vehicles, machinery, technology, software and data that are used to extract, produce, transport, and distribute goods and services to generate a profit. The people who own all this might be called capitalists, investors, shareholders, and landlords. Others who don’t necessarily own, but partly control and share in the profits of capital might be called employers, managers, directors, agencies, and bureaucrats. This is the capitalist class (or the ruling class, since they also rule over society by means of the state).

The working class can be defined, in contrast, as those who neither own nor control capital, who do not employ workers or live off the profit that others create. Most of us must work for a wage in order to survive. This does not just mean manual labour, but all kinds of work, from retail to programming, hospitality to academia. We sell our labour-power (ability to work) and create commodities (things and services with exchange value). We create more value than what we are given as a wage, and the surplus value, which we call profit, is either reinvested in the business or goes into the pockets of the capitalist class. This is the meaning of the exploitation of labour.

But not all of us can work. The capitalist economy must maintain a pool of unemployed people which generates competition between workers, pushing down wages and conditions. Since unemployment usually involves poverty and degradation, it serves as a disincentive against refusing to work, disobeying management, or any



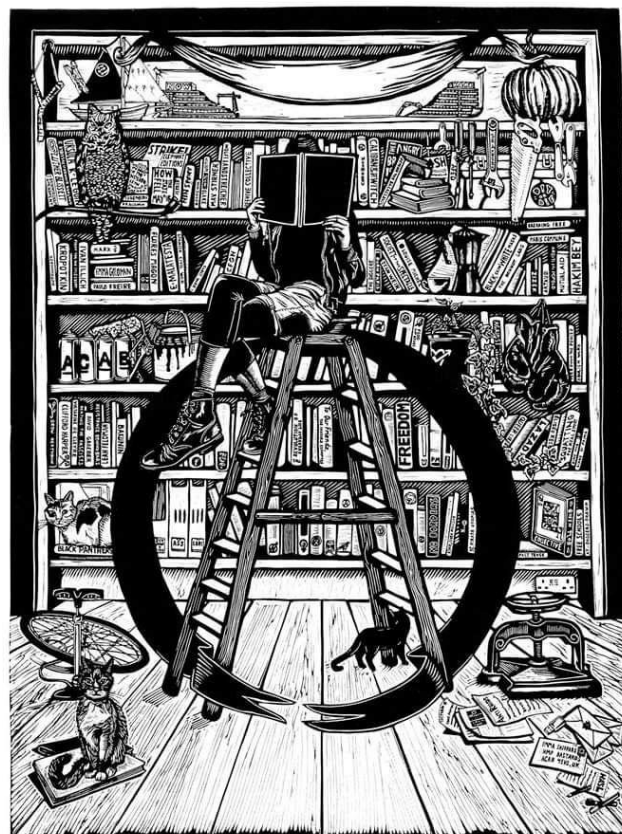
other activity (such as industrial action) that might result in being sacked. Unemployed and retired workers, lacking ownership and control of capital, are part of the working class. Others are dependent on those who do work, such as children and stay-at-home parents. Household work such as raising children, cooking, cleaning, and caring, is typically unpaid, and has historically been the burden of women.

How many times must we hear about the racist and sexist working class, as if it were one homogenous mass, a hive-mind, – as if no ethnic minorities or women were workers? Indeed, the working class is as diverse as society itself. No doubt, many workers are bigoted, and this not only offends human dignity, it also divides and weakens the working class, leaving us more easily controlled and exploited. As well as containing both inclusive and prejudiced elements, there are also a wide variety of views held in the working class: from socialism to conservatism, liberalism to anarchism.

There is no definite line between the two classes, it is an abstract distinction (though based on material realities) that describes a conflict of forces in capitalist society, not a tool of individual categorisation or judgement. Modern capitalism has seen ever more divisions of power in the workplace, where your supervisor may be doing much the same work as you, only with a little more

authority, privilege, and a few extra pennies in their paycheck. The part of the working class with more skilled and “respected” professions will likely have a greater degree of control over their own work, higher wages, and greater job-satisfaction. They may have a stake in maintaining their position, which often means taking the side of the capitalist class and defending the government-imposed order. This could be referred to as the middle class, and while this is an important distinction, ultimately these workers are still exploited (albeit to a lesser degree) like the rest of the working class.

The contradiction between the capitalist and working class is that the former seek to extract ever more profit from the latter by keeping wages low, cracking the whip to raise productivity, and cutting expenses by worsening our conditions and environment. In opposition, we seek to work less, gain higher wages, and improve our living and working environment. These differing interests lead to a constant class struggle, expressed informally through absenteeism and favouritism, but also explicitly through strikes and mass dismissals. We have no illusions that the working class is necessarily powerful or inherently revolutionary, but since we produce all wealth we have the potential to transform our present situation and ultimately society itself. Class struggle will only end when the working class expropriates all capital, takes control over our own workplaces and neighbourhoods, abolishes the state, and starts to voluntarily create and share everything we need and desire to live fulfilling lives in freedom and equality. •



## ANARCHIST BOOKFAIR

On Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup> of May the fourth Liverpool Anarchist Bookfair will be taking place. It will be at the Black-e (next to the Chinatown Gate) from 11 till 5. Expect vegan food, talks & stalls from anarchist and activist groups, and a large selection of subversive literature for sale. Includes subjects as wide as animal rights, environmentalism, feminism and the workers' movement. If you have been reading this newsletter, and meaning to get involved in a group or read more about anarchist theory, it's a great opportunity to do so. •



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:  
[liverpoolanarchist@tuta.io](mailto:liverpoolanarchist@tuta.io)

You can find us online at:

[liverpoolanarchist.wordpress.com](http://liverpoolanarchist.wordpress.com)

And the Solidarity Federation at: [liverpoolsf.org](http://liverpoolsf.org)