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Capitalism is constant war.

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“Intellectual property is a legally fabricated monopoly, confining culture and science, and violently depriving the poorest and most marginalised from access to critical resources. The fictions of copyright and patent are despotic attempts to monopolise the mind; outrageous constraints on intelligence and creativity; and a destructive protectionist scheme for the profit of power.”



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Word is Born

By Christine Hannigan

When you read the word ‘sustain’, you can conjure a clear action in your mind of what this means. Maybe you think of nurturing something so it lasts, or a singer belting out a long note. Add ‘-able’ to the end of that word, though, and your mental picture might blur. This adjective – ‘sustainable’ – could be thrown around by property developers to describe HVAC systems of buildings not yet in existence, or politicians who want new rail lines laid, claiming that, despite construction across neighbourhoods or ancient woodlands, the trains will be sustainable engines of economic growth. Maybe you think of a water bottle or tote bag for sale, marketed as ‘sustainable’ simply because it can be used more than once, or isn’t made entirely from plastic (never mind the distances in the supply chains, or the labour conditions of whoever manufactured it).

Add another suffix, -ity, to make ‘sustainable’ a noun, and the word becomes nearly unintelligible. ‘Sustainability’ is an abstract concept, a shapeless aspiration deployed by powerful people to justify ‘green’ projects or policies – not with environmental end-goals but capitalist profit motives in mind, which are inherently consumptive and wasteful.

Holding powerful people and institutions responsible is harder when we describe the world as a series of fixed objects rather than active, ongoing processes that uphold, maintain, and expand oppressive societal structures. Bad things get blamed on ‘austerity’, frequently. It’s not that calling systematic decimation of local authority funding ‘austerity’ is *wrong*, but it fails to hold central government leaders accountable for actually withholding money. Naming ‘austerity’ alone makes it sound like a fog that one day settled over Britain, abruptly denying basic services and killing people. Continuous, deliberate choices by a small yet powerful group indifferent to humanity are euphemised into an agentless entity.

Mutating verbs and adjectives into vacuous nouns shifts our focus to being rather than doing, thereby erasing the choices and actions made by real people to uphold economic and social orders. A reliance on nouns to describe the world and its problems flatten ongoing, active processes into fixed phenomena, seemingly happening of their own accord. In 2016, Ed Hahn coined this the ‘stactive voice’ – a portmanteau of ‘stative’, as in a statement, and ‘active’. Grand historical processes are explained in a way that obscures actual people and institutions perpetuating them, giving the impression of a fixed state. Metaphorical verbs like

‘emerge’ or ‘arose’ passively describe phenomena and structures like racism or capitalism, obfuscating the people and institutions that operationalise these abstractions into real policy and everyday life. Passive voice, which describes the receiving end of an action without naming its actor, allows the consequences of concrete actions by specific people to seem as though spontaneously occurring on their own.

Phrases like ‘rising rents’ and ‘a lack of affordable housing’ litter reports about ‘Britain’s housing crisis’ produced by government agencies and investment consultancies – and, subsequently, are amplified by media outlets. These phrases are not inaccurate but do not get to the crux of the issue. Rents do not raise themselves: landlords do. Even active verbs can be used to shirk responsibility or make non-committal declarations. Politicians may claim they will ‘tackle’ this seemingly-happenstance housing crisis. In this context, ‘tackle’ has no specific, corresponding action attached – it is merely symbolic. The politician could instead pledge to ‘build’ housing, or ‘move’ unhoused constituents into homes; in Britain’s capital, although 8% of the population suffers homelessness, there are nearly twice as many vacant homes as homeless Londoners. There may be a lack of affordable housing, but there is not a lack of housing.

Focusing exclusively on victims distracts from the agents of their mistreatment. How many cheery government efforts, like ‘participatory planning’ aim to ‘include marginalised communities’? Catherine R. Squires wrote about this word in 2002; it gives attention to the condition of being excluded, not the activity of excluding, implying people marginalise themselves. Without specifying who is the marginaliser, it allows the government, or private contractors hired by the government, to position itself as an inclusive saviour. Dooming people as ‘marginalised’ discounts their networks and innovation beyond “traditional or state-sanctioned public spaces and mainstream discourses,” which Squires said are “dominated by white bourgeois males.” Marginalising mechanisms remain intact, and there is no transfer of power.

Powerful people with influence over the media manufacture discourses to set debate parameters and create mental associations. Returning to the ‘housing crisis,’ its popular conception is in part created by politicians and companies interested in extracting land value through speculative real estate investment and construction. They will represent houses as mere financial products, not fundamental to human survival, and dehumanise people without any financial product over their heads. This association then makes it socially acceptable for police to criminalise, harass, and trash the possessions of people surviving in open space.

To further isolate these people, architects might design features like spikes where benches should be, or arrange buildings so they channel harsh winds, but these are bad for anyone seeking safe and comfortable passage. The density, uses, prices, and rents of new buildings, however, is predicated on their ‘viability’ – another stupid-ity with a Latin root of ‘life’ now twisted to mean that government guarantees private developer shareholders a certain return on their investment. What is being sustained?

All language has a lineage. Some contemporary buzzwords go back centuries. In ancient religious and biological etymologies, ‘regeneration’ implies entire transformation of the regenerated object. But the ‘new locations’ borne of ‘sustainable regeneration’ are not new to the people around before. By using the same paradigms and linguistic features of the people who generate them, we reinforce their hegemony, even if the words we are saying at face-value criticise wrongdoings. We might decry racism or blame the world’s ills on neoliberalism, but we must articulate who is embodying the hate, and map the routes their poison seeps through. ‘More diversity,’ for example, is an earnest recommendation to solve entrenched cultural plagues like misogyny and racism. Military generals might claim to want ‘equality, diversity, and inclusion,’ and issue bland proclamations that ‘encourage’ and ‘support’ them within the confines of the organisation. Even if ‘diversity’ prevents sexual assault and white supremacist violence from proliferating in the ranks, the institution still violates space beyond the individual bodies of employees. Does the gender identity or race of a private contractor or soldier, however marginalised, matter to the innocent civilians they’re drone bombing?

Race and gender are two obvious examples of how organising the world through artificial classifications limit everyday comprehension and existence, inventing myths and denying our interconnectedness. So long as a hierarchy exists in our minds and the world, groups will remain divorced from each other, to everyone’s detriment. Oppressive language euphemises real actions by boiling them down to static nouns and delineating made-up categories members do not necessarily choose themselves. English is malleable and can evolve quickly. We already have some existing grammatical conventions and words to aid communication and harmonious understanding, and can use our imagination and inspiration from other languages to make more.

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The Far Rights

By Sam Moore and Alex Roberts

To group together or to split apart?

There are lots of people who we could call ‘far right’. Some are obvious: small groups of neo-Nazis like the remnants of National Action, new fascist parties like Patriotic Alternative, or the Brazillian government.

Then there are parts that are more ambiguous. The average marcher on the FLA and DFLA marches between 2017 and 2019, for example. There, huge numbers of people objecting to the murder of children by Islamist terrorists were caught in the tension between understandable outrage at the perpetrators and unjustifiable Islamophobia towards all Muslims. Often they campaigned, even if they didn’t quite realise, for the more aggressive enforcement of the terrorism laws the UK already had. They were entwined with the state, rather than a mass force against it.

There’s even a case to be made that the harder parts of the Conservative Party are bordering on the far right. When Priti Patel calls for pushbacks against people trying to cross by sea from France to the UK, she comes close to the edge of liberalism. Such pushbacks, as the Labour party have meekly pointed out, run the risk of the UK breaking its international obligations. However weak liberalism might be as a protection against the most brutal forms of state power, it did for a while function as such, however imperfectly. If liberalism is now creaking under the weight of its own contradictions, there is a risk of it letting the more nakedly far-right parts of governance in.

These ‘far-right’ groups above share little in common, either tactically, or in their beliefs. If they’re all so different, what’s the point of lumping them together as ‘far right’? One answer might be that their common core of racism makes them bedfellows – or at least, save the most extreme elements, might make them so in a crisis situation. We might even say that they form a kind of unified political movement of sorts. Despite their apparent agonistic ideas, the more extreme elements let the moderate forces appear reasonable, measured, even laudable. The Home Office can clamp down on neo-Nazis and thus appear to oppose the racism that it itself feeds off.

Another reason to attempt to draw a line around ‘the far right’ might be so that we can see how blurry that line has become. Indeed, it’s possible that the boundary has become so unclear that we should shift our entire way of thinking about political categories.

Are there stable positions that can be neatly categorised at all? Or are there just rough distinctions between different blends of ideas? Are political ideas solids, or are they gases?

If we think they’re gases, then we might ask: what is the purpose of making these distinctions between parts of the far right? Aren’t they all to be opposed, regardless of their exact position? Isn’t the thing they have in common that we are against them? Asking these more practical questions we’re immediately thrown to the other extreme from the questions above: why bother with these fine-grained and pedantic discussions of the differences between the different parts of the far right, if they are all to be opposed in the end?

It’s between these two extreme and untenable positions – every part of the far right is theoretically distinct/every part of the far right is practically the same – that anti-fascist thinking tends to revolve. Neither is helpful: we must find a way out.

The internet and the far right

These confusions do not just exist in anti-fascists’ heads. There are good material reasons for why ‘the far right’ is an unclear category now. Just as it has made participation in other political movements trivial (posting a black square, anyone?), the internet has done the same for the far right. There’s no longer a secret handshake to get into the secret meeting or a small sect of the party that admits its anti-semitism while the rest deny it. There’s no ‘inner chamber’, although there are more informal forms of secrecy.

Much of the most successful online far-right movement of the last few years – the alt-right – was built on the model of extremely variable participation. Repost a meme, or spend months attempting to forge alliances with officials in the Trump campaign, or commit a mass shooting – it was all part of the movement.

Although there are still some organised fascists out there, they are the small hardcore of a giant amorphous movement. In fact, it’s so amorphous that most people in it probably don’t think of themselves as on the far right at all. They have perhaps a few opinions they think of as a little controversial, or a few labels they apply to themselves with a little frisson of excitement, but very few are ‘fascists’ in any particularly clear sense.

A lack of serious political commitment is not just caused by the internet, it’s also a longer-term trend. The decline of mass politics has also meant that people’s opinions, although they are often stridently expressed, are actually much less deeply held than they once were, expressed as ‘commentary’ on a process they, in reality, have very little control over. It is this combination of escalating rhetorical assertion and declining real political control that has brought participants in the far right to the strange position of having a noticeably flimsy commitment to some relatively extreme beliefs.

There are other reasons for the lack of clarity about the category ‘far right’ when it comes to the governmental far right. Amongst the governmental far right, liberalism has proved itself incapable of effectively managing its crises. Nevertheless, those like the current Conservative government, who find themselves pressed by forces to their right, cannot simply adopt all the forms of open violence that they might like to.

European far-right politicians wandering in the borderlands of conservatism and the far right need to uphold their moral status as the voice of civilisation, while at the same time reaching for the harder forces of the state.

In each case, this lack of clarity about the categories of ‘far right’ and ‘fascist’ make it difficult to know who anti-fascists are supposed to be opposing.

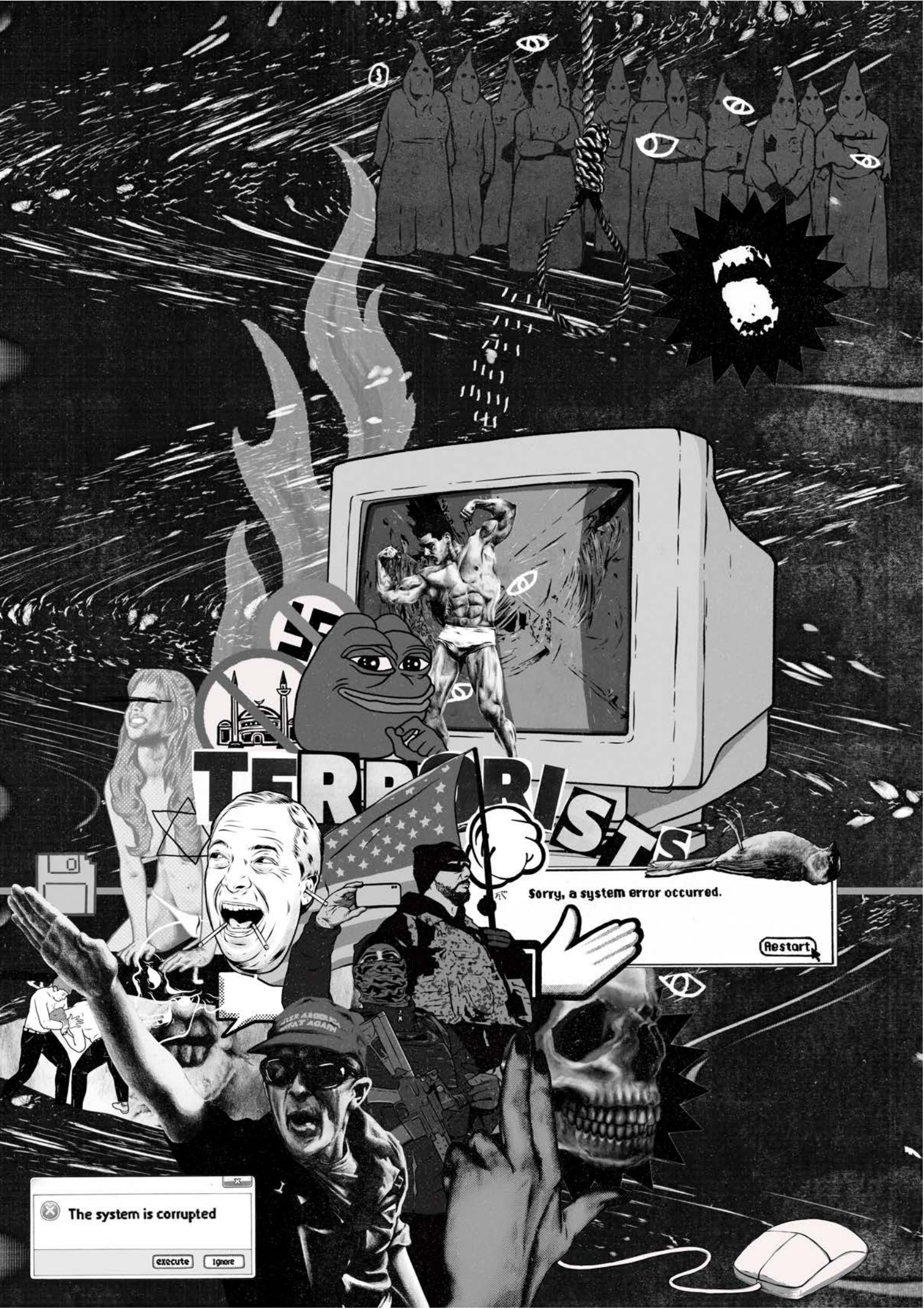
Anti-fascist strategy

The practical necessity of anti-fascism and its theories have a complicated relationship in other ways as well. There’s a tendency amongst those who oppose the far right to look for movements that suit the tactics we are already good at.

In the UK, the vacuum of obviously far-right street movements has left anti-fascists searching around for something to attack. Perhaps that’s why some anti-fascists were so keen to see the anti-vax movement as ‘far right’. It was a large street movement with apparently reactionary politics. In short, it seemed like the English Defence League (EDL) who anti-fascists had done a good job of opposing in the 2010s. We’ve got into the habit of adapting our ideas of the far right to the tools that we have available rather than the other way around.

Sam Moore and Alex Roberts are 12 Rules for WHAT. They are the authors of Post-Internet Far Right (Dog Section Press, 2021) and make a podcast about the far right.

dogsection.org/press/pijr/



By Aviah Sarah Day

The structure focused on open meetings that prioritised training new members in political organising. Actions emphasised awareness-raising through stunt based direct actions, such as a roadblock on Oxford Circus or dying the fountains red at Trafalgar square to chants of “you cut, we bleed.” A turning point was the occupation of the red carpet at the premiere of the film *Suffragette*. Chanting “dead women can’t vote,” Sisters jumped the barriers to highlight that the fight for women’s liberation had not ended with the vote, with 2 women a week killed by a current or ex-partner. The huge media attention garnered brought hundreds of new sisters and siblings to the collective. The decision was subsequently taken to establish three London groups in North, South-East and the East End of London, soon followed by chapters in Portsmouth, Bristol, Doncaster, Glasgow, Manchester, Leeds, Brighton, Liverpool, Newcastle, Birmingham and Cardiff.

In 2016, 32-year-old black woman Sarah Reed died in Holloway prison after being taken there from a psychiatric hospital for defending herself against sexual assault by another patient. Sisters joined the protests organised by Sarah's family, and this period furthered a shift in our political analysis. A proposal to establish Sisters as a prison abolitionist collective was passed by consensus. Through careful and loving discussion, we could no longer escape the conclusion that policing is inherently violent and disproportionately harms poor communities of colour, maintaining rather than preventing violence. The alternative of transformative justice, based on community support and care for survivors – and perpetrators – was advocated.

Sisters Uncut used the media furore and public outrage at the violent treatment of mourners at the vigil to pivot the conversation on to the proposed Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill, due to be voted on the following week. The authoritarian bill includes revenge measures against protestors, draconian stop and search powers and a criminalisation attack on Gypsy Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities. A national movement to 'Kill the Bill' was born, with groups springing up across the country. A powerful street movement with an increasingly abolitionist expression has challenged the government's plans; however, differences in tactics between a parliamentary campaign and a strategy to make the bill unenforceable through community resistance momentarily stalled the movement.

Sarah Everard's murder has convinced many more that giving police total, unaccountable control over us leads to violence and murder. The acceleration of state powers in recent years means that where anti-austerity was the focus of the last decade, our organising horizons must confront state power in all its forms, from prisons and immigration controls to the policing of communities and picket lines. Victory can only be achieved through building mass, participatory working-class power to withdraw consent, whilst also dreaming of a new world.



8

Shoot Your Officers

By Joe Glenton

One of my hopes for my new book, *Veteranhood: Rage and Hope in British Ex-Military Life*, is that it can offer some guidance for ex-military people drawn into radical politics. In short, I wanted to prepare the framework for a left-wing veteranhood ahead of their arrival. In 2020, I asked many former soldiers, sailors and airmen where exactly radicalised working-class veterans fitted into left politics? Because the answer isn't always clear. At least not as clear as it has been for previous generations. And this quite despite the fact the military ranks have always produced serious left-wingers of every hue. There is a sense that a general decay in knowledge about the military, and military people, has set-in in Britain.

"It's tricky isn't it," one former soldier told me, "I've seen people on Twitter who are very anti-veteran, some of the A-Level standard of responses to arguments. All soldiers are class traitors, monsters and all that shit. There are some elements of the left which are clearly hostile."

He's right, of course. Though I'd add – happily – that the groups who performatively veteran-bash are marginal and unserious. Yet they are there, as I've seen myself over the years. Sometimes it comes from certain varieties of 'anti-colonialist' – commonly the kind who think the likes of Gaddafi and Assad respectively were and are figures of profound anti-imperialist virtue. But also from middle-class left poseurs, whose animus is rather different. And we'll deal with the latter here.

Not every former soldier, sailor or airman follows the same path into left politics, but mine was particularly jarring. I had had no politics beyond a largely moral opposition to the war in Afghanistan, which would eventually land me in jail. After discharge, I found myself pulled deeper into a world as strange in its mores, rules and rituals as the military would be to civilians. For the most part I had to negotiate this transition from a rigid, disciplined and authoritarian organisation into the undisciplined, atomised mess of left politics alone.

I came into the left at a difficult time: the early 2010s. In my naiveté, I had expected a disciplined mass movement of working-class people ready to storm the Bastille. What struck me quickly was that there existed little discernible sense of an over-arching purpose or direction in the way I was used to. To add to my confusion (and with honourable exceptions) parts of the left were, and continue to be, led or represented by people who could just have easily been military officers.

As I was to discover, quite a few leading left figures were the kids and grandkids of my former Tarquin Overlords, the spawn of the officer class. This is not to write them all off – some of them are fine people indeed – but the idea that I had escaped the tyranny of the posh was soon found wanting. And it jarred. I felt worlds apart from those people and still do. Working class activists, who inevitably knew and understood people who had served in the ranks, got where I was coming from. Others did not. The first friction I encountered came from members of that more privileged group.

This left was thoroughly smashed, wallowing in historical defeat and, it seemed to me, largely fixated on recruiting students. A section of those who drifted in were middling, liberal class-tourists who had attached themselves (usually briefly) to the competing Trot groups I was around in the early 2010s. Our differences became clear. I, in my newfound revolutionary ardour, was engaged with Marxist thought only in the sense that I wanted to overthrow the class that had sent me to die in Afghanistan and hang it by its entrails; some of these others seemed to be engaged with Lenin and Trotsky only in the sense that they wanted to socialise while occasionally speculating about whether Lenin had been secretly gay and why Trotsky was such a dick to women.

Valid questions, I supposed, but surely secondary to those figures' revolutionary insights. It follows that these liberal university society types did not readily embrace me, an apparently hyper-masculine ex-squaddie. Clearly, they had never encountered 2 Para, Mortar Platoon, in comparison to whom I am roughly as conventionally masculine as Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen. And not, in all honesty, could I abide them. Their politics seemed to consist in a series of tick boxes and, in the end, I somewhat gloried in ticking all the bad ones. Not that I helped myself by having one foot in the barracks, as opposed to the toe I maintain there today.

As for the UniSoc identarians, being liberals and thus disinclined to strongly held principles, morals or thoughts of their own, I expect that ten years down the line most of them are singing the praises of women bomber pilots and knocking out Joe Biden cupcakes. It is of no matter really, but what interests me about the class-tourists is what I perceived to be a condescending essentialism about military people. Interesting, because it seems to be common to all the anti-soldier currents on the left and probably says something about the politics of the people involved. For that cohort, I am sure a dislike of the soldiery was just an extension of their general repulsion for working class people. Former and serving military personnel are mostly working-class and so I was seen in much the same way. Naturally, they did not say this directly. Theirs was a passive aggression, common currency among the bourgeoisie, but a supreme cowardice among soldiers.

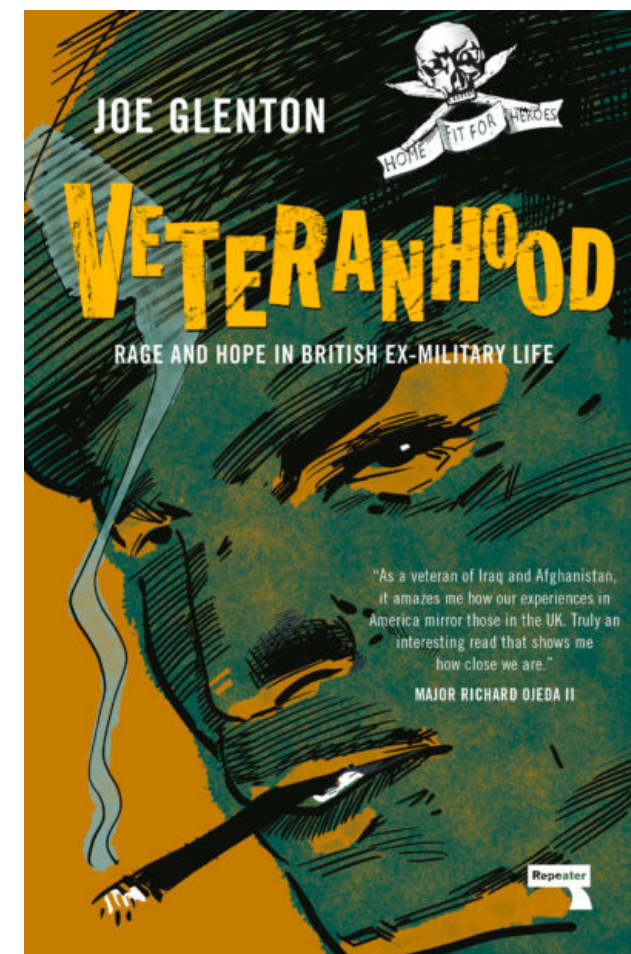
Other strangeness can spring from this poverty of critical thought. I have had it suggested to me, absurdly, that those who enlist are a camouflage-clad equivalent to the police, apparently in a lazy attempt to cram us into the same category. As if a young soldier's relationship to capitalism or the state is anything like that of PC Plod. As if cops are not recruited differently from a distinct cohort, trained, paid, and deployed differently; as if a starkly different ideological makeup is not required for their job; and as if the two groups do not have very different outcomes. I will reconsider that position when more homeless ex-coppers than destitute ex-soldiers huddle in doorways in Britain's city centres. In a way, this shallow view, in which we are lazily pathologised as cops in green, or homicidal racists by dint of some inherent defect, is the mirror of Blazer (right-wing veteran) identity, and the people who subscribe to it, like Blazers, are for all intents and purposes, reactionaries.

It is clear that I was seen by some as an untidy prole who'd blundered into their privileged orbit. Of course, Tommy Atkins is no stranger to the contempt of the chattering classes. And they were a marginal set and barely even on the political left, let alone representative of it. Their politics had not developed enough to embrace the nuances of class, empire and capital. Critically, these people were never materialists. By which I mean there was no space in their analysis for serious questions about why people join the military: a question I am asked solely by bourgeois people. It was clear that they could not understand why I had even joined up. For many working-class people, the option of a military career looms awfully close. If you are well-off, it generally does not. You have other, better options. To say that the rationale for joining the military is incomprehensible to you, to scoff at those who sign on the line, is telling on nobody but yourself. This kind of soldier-hatred is an outgrowth of a general contempt among bourgeois leftists towards working-class people.

What, I asked my ex-army interviewee, should we make of it?

"Veterans", he told me, "don't need the other parts of the left to define them. I think they need to define themselves, in terms of what their formulation for what left-wing veteranhood looks like. It's not for other people to work out."

And here is a fundamental truth. Veterans can be acutely conscious of class, albeit in lived rather than theoretical way. Those of us who find our way into the varying communisms, socialisms and anarchisms have often already arrived at a point where we start to we look to ourselves for leadership. It's not exactly shooting your officers, but it's a start.

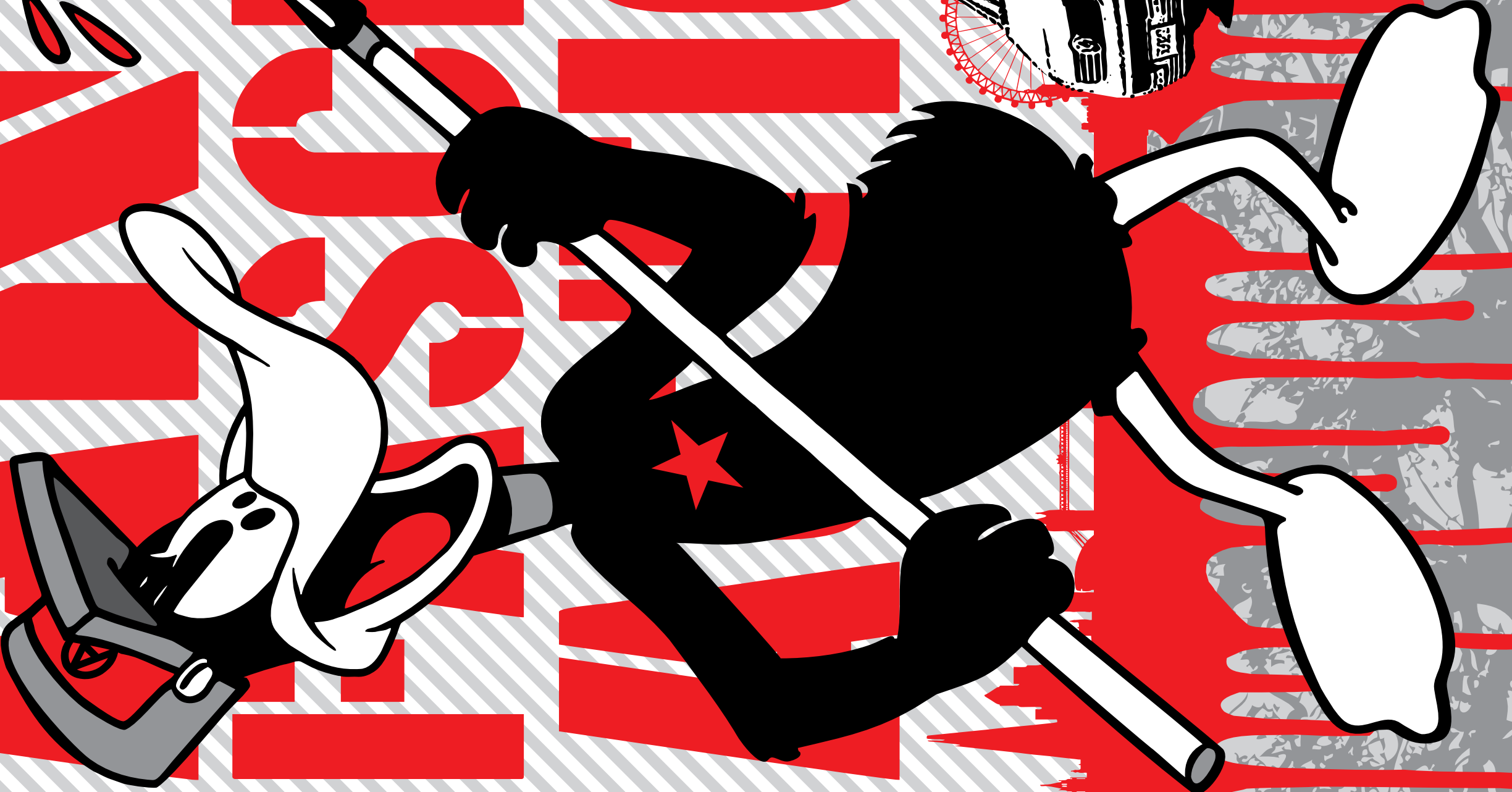


Joe Glenton was a British soldier for six years, serving in Afghanistan. His first book, *Soldier Box*, was published in 2013 (Verso) and his most recent book, *Veteranhood* is out now (Repeater, 2021).

→ LOVE GRAFFITI ←

HATE FASCISM

TOXICOMANDO
FASCISM



Abolish Psychiatry

By Campaign for Psychiatric Abolition

We are the Campaign for Psychiatric Abolition (CPA), a collective of psychiatric survivors who are fighting against the violence of policing, prisons and psychiatry. We want to demonstrate that our collective struggles against imperialism, racism, capitalism, cisheteropatriarchy and the climate catastrophe are also a struggle against psychiatry. We came together to form CPA after seeing how hostile radical spaces can sometimes be towards anti-psychiatry and mad liberation; it often feels like some of those who understand the need for police and prison abolition still see psychiatry, the institution that locked up and tortured so many of us, as benevolent and caring – a liberal myth that has insidiously made its way into places that should be safe for victims of state violence.

It is clear from the history that psychiatry is there to control, not care for us. The birth of psychiatry cannot be separated from eugenics and colonialism – psychiatry was the soil from which eugenics was allowed to grow. It was created as a tool to justify the violent plundering and torture of colonised people around the world. By psychiatry diagnosing some people as inferior, deranged, deviant and delusional, Western oppressors were able to legitimise the abuse of the people they colonised. Enslaved people escaping their bondage were labelled as having ‘drapetomania’, a supposed mental illness, because white society refused to accept the idea that Black people could revolt against their oppression. In the present day, psychiatry is also wielded against Muslim communities, working in tandem with PREVENT to heighten surveillance and policing efforts, labelling mentally ill Muslims as an automatic terrorism risk.

The long history of queerphobia at the hands of psychiatry is also well-documented. Conversion therapy and electro-shock therapy their ‘cure’ of homosexuality, deemed a mental illness up until 1973, whilst our transness continues to be medicalised and pathologised. Women, too, were, and continue to be, labelled as hysterical and locked in asylums, often as a result of their natural trauma responses to patriarchal violence.

We also know too well, as seen with Nazi Germany, Mussolini and the US sterilization of Puerto Rican, Black and Indigenous women, that psychiatry has often been a tool of the far-right – any institution so easily incorporated into fascism should have its legitimacy questioned.

Very little has changed: psychiatry continues to be wielded against oppressed communities, the lunatic asylums of the 1800s still standing (for now) with the haunting echoes of past patients drowned out only by the desperate screams of current ones. We are all screaming for the same thing: abolition. Psychiatry may have learned to portray a more respectable veneer, but the lunatic asylum, electroshock therapy and tranquilisation lay just below the surface.

We formed CPA to fight back against this violence, which permeates the lives of every psych survivor. Our organising encompasses a wide variety of community work: one aspect of this is the workshops we give about psychiatric abolition across Britain to the public, comrades, and radical organisations. We see education about ‘mad liberation’, crisis care and peer support as essential life and organising skills. This is not about ‘awareness’, but survival. It is about knowing how to be there for our comrades and loved ones without calling either the cops or the docs.

Our work also includes serving our communities in material ways, such as delivering care packages to our incarcerated friends in psych wards and providing them with the support and resources they need, whilst working collectively for their freedom. We also work to tackle the root causes of mental distress, like poverty, oppression and homelessness, by carrying out mutual aid and providing a safe space for psych survivors to voice our experiences without feeling dismissed. We believe in the importance of direct action and taking the fight of psychiatric abolition to the streets; to support this belief, we carry out actions, alongside other psych survivors, to target all these places of abuse and torture.

We also want to take every opportunity to draw attention to the interlinking struggles and experiences of psych ward patients, prisoners and people incarcerated in detention centres – all dehumanised because we are deemed ‘mad’, ‘bad’, ‘illegal’ or all three.

We are all transported in the same high security vans to be locked away from our communities, subjected to torturously limited contact with the outside world. Our possessions and glimpses of humanity – clothes, photos, shoelaces, phone calls, visitations – are taken from us. Every last crumb of food and drop of water controlled. In some places they still use straitjackets and bed restraints, and throw patients into freezing or burning baths and showers.

They control every minute detail of our lives ‘and capture’, even down to the colour of the walls, which are painted with ‘calm’ colours in an attempt to ‘lure our minds’; they have thought of absolutely everything to make our existence as torturous as possible. The windows and doors are locked and if we show too many signs of distress, we can be locked in solitary confinement for days at a time. They surveil us with cameras in every corner, with staff watching us 24 hours a day, ready to physically or chemically restrain us against our consent at any point. As we are all legally declared insane or ‘criminal’, any appeal we file to court won’t be taken seriously, and once we get out, if we ever do, we only find more barriers with housing, work and reintegrating into the society we were torn from for so long.

In the 21st century, containing mad people and electrocuting our brains is still seen as an acceptable cure to our distress – distress often caused by the forces of oppression and poverty so prevalent under racial capitalism. When we say we are treated like prisoners, it is not to create a divide between the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ of punishment – it is to say emphatically and without question that the struggles of those society deems ‘insane’ and ‘criminal’ are inextricably linked. We are one, and we extend endless love and solidarity to all of our siblings incarcerated, in all forms, at this current time. Fuck cages!

We are not calling for an end to mental health care; we are simply begging for it to exist in the first place. We deserve a world where we can actually heal, instead of a system that reproduces trauma. We are fighting for patient-centred, community care, where the violence of poverty, racism, incarceration and colonialism do not drive us to insanity. A world where we are able to truly look after each other, where our needs are centred, and madness is not seen as an individual failing but a greater incentive to solidify our communities.



We are fighting for an end to psychiatry’s monopoly on mental healthcare, because every day more of our people are suffering and dying, with nowhere to turn without the prospect of being locked up. No one will be free until psychiatry is abolished. Anti-psychiatry is not a dated movement destined to stay in the 60s, it is an active practice that survivors are forging every day. We are anti-psychiatry because we cannot afford not to be. We are anti-psychiatry because, despite it all, we are trying to snatch life from the jaws of death.

One day, the systems that harm us will all be ashes, and our communities will have the space to heal and flourish – we can promise you of that because never have we felt or witnessed more pain, fury and determination than in the eyes of psychiatric survivors. The struggle against psychiatry is a struggle for our collective liberation. Psychiatry will fall, and alongside it, all of us will rise.

Campaign for Psychiatric Abolition (CPA) are a group of psychiatric survivors fighting against all carceral systems.

@CPAbolition

Fermenting change

By Brewery Workers Union

The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) has launched the Brewery Workers Union, bringing together current and ex-brewery workers to create a network of support, workplace organisation, solidarity, training and legal advice and aid. The Brewery Workers Union builds on skills and experience gained from the IWW’s members and officers, whether they work in a brewery setting or not.

We aim to build on the networks we have – workers, reps, officers, legal teams and activists – whilst working alongside other trade unions and activist groups to support and build solidarity with brewery workers. We will be organising workplaces, providing training on your legal rights – including health and safety, contracts, grievances & disciplinaries – as well as organising social events, running rep training sessions and so much more.

Sexism in craft beer & effective action

The craft brewing industry likes to present itself as progressive, or even revolutionary. Brewery owners often rail against the big beer corporations that produce most of the world’s beer in their mega-factories. Yet for those working in craft breweries, the reality that they are still part of the same capitalist system is all too apparent.

In summer 2021, when Brienne Allan, a brewer at Notch Brewing in the USA, asked on Instagram if other women had experienced sexism in the brewing industry, she had a flood of responses from women employed at a huge number of breweries and bars. Hundreds of stories of discrimination, harassment, violence and sexual assault were posted, with high profile companies and prominent individuals implicated. The public pressure forced several guilty parties to resign their positions.

Before long the flood of women raising their voices had crossed the Atlantic, as Siobhan Buchanan asked a similar question about sexism in the brewing industry in Britain. Despite the claims the craft brewing industry is modern and progressive, it’s still rife with all the sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia and exploitation found in other industries. Libel laws in Britain are much stricter than in the States so despite it being clear that there were huge problems, rich owners have been able to use threats of legal action to cover up many of their wrong-doings. But the problems haven’t gone away and nor have those fighting against them.

One company mentioned several times was craft beer standard bearers BrewDog. These self-styled business ‘punks’ have shown themselves to be no better than the earlier generation of hippy capitalists whose talk of changing the world was no more than hot air to distract us from how much we’re being screwed over.

Over a hundred former and current BrewDog staff formed the group Punks With Purpose and wrote an open letter to the company, condemning their toxic workplace culture and demanding change. Outspoken member of this group Charlotte Cook, a London based brewer, is also a member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) union. Appearing on national radio, in social media and at an online industry conference she stated clearly that an important step workers in breweries should take is to unionise.

At the time of writing, BBC Scotland are on the verge of airing their documentary ‘The Truth Behind BrewDog’. And, even before the film has been broadcast, CEO James Watt has made a series of threats, character assassinations and unverifiable claims in Trump-like manner on the company’s shareholder forum, Equity for Punks.



It seems that the journalists at the BBC, and increasing pressure from workers who have come forward to share their experiences, has proved to be too much for him. Whilst James Watts continues to dig his own grave, we are confident that this only strengthens our cause and proves to many what we always knew – that he is a shallow, power-hungry, dangerous and untrustworthy individual.

But our struggles aren’t focused on one brewery. Following our own workplace experiences, case work as reps and organisers and conversations with fellow workers, we know, we know we aren’t alone – and that we have the ability to bring about change.

Why a Brewery Workers Union?

As union reps and organisers who work in breweries we felt there was an essential need for a Brewery Workers Union in line with the aims and code of the IWW. We are worker-led and do not support managers or those with the power to fire and hire. Like so many, we are enthusiastic, passionate and excited about beer. This curiosity leads many to learn about the history, science and artistic value of this beautiful beverage, leading to working in pubs and taprooms, as homebrewers or attending brewery tours, or to eventually working in a brewery. Many others have vital skills and experience that cover the wide range of essential roles needed – engineers, dray drivers, laboratory staff, warehouse operatives and more. Sadly, so many of us are exploited, harassed, suffer physical and mental health issues, and feel routinely ignored and undermined by management and HR.

We are sick and tired of our skills and enthusiasm being taken advantage of. A lack of adequate health and safety procedures, on top of long hours, low pay, serious physical injuries, poor mental health and burnout, are issues that have continually come up in our time as workers and reps. Push workers too far and they will snap – and fight back.

Where we are

After case work wins, mutual support in our workplaces, sharing knowledge and skills, we wanted to make it formal and began the Brewery Workers Union. We are still in our infancy but the interest so far has been incredible. Beginning in November 2021, we’ve had workers from all over the UK contact us, as well as establishing links with workers in the USA, Ireland and Belgium. In December, we ran an in-person and virtual training session on Health & Safety, with workers from seven different breweries across England attending. We continue to support workers in individual cases in relation to health & safety and gross dismissal issues and our weekly drop-in sessions on Tuesday evenings at May Day Rooms have been fruitful.

Currently we are planning Organiser 101 training – an essential training course for those who want to organise effectively within their workplace. We’re also planning Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace training, which will employ the legal framework alongside personal accounts and approaches to reporting, campaigning and organising around these issues. We continue to support and be in contact with Punks With Purpose and ex-and current BrewDog workers who need support, advice or assistance with workplace issues, and we welcome contact from brewery workers.

Ultimately, we would love to be able to inspire others to build on this network of solidarity and mutual support across the UK and further afield. As we are London-based, our focus will be on brewery workers in London with whom we can offer in-person support and solidarity, but we are able to offer virtual support and training for those outside of London. As IWW training springs up across the UK, keep an eye out for these opportunities – contact your local branch, become a member, follow us on social media, and feel free to contact us. There is power in knowledge and none more so than knowing your rights and how to support others in your workplace.

Brewery Workers Union is a branch of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)
@breweryunion

The Neoliberal Prison

By John Bowden

Neo-liberalism, an ideology and concept usually associated with a particularly ruthless brand of free-market economics, has now reached into the very core services of the state and institutions that were once considered strictly off limits to financial speculators and entrepreneurs: the NHS, the prison system, and the criminal justice system. Neo-liberalism doesn't just involve a massive shift of economic power and wealth to an already extremely powerful and wealthy social group, but also a fundamental shift in the philosophy and policy of organisations like the welfare and criminal justice systems, both of whose 'clients' are now increasingly lumped together as an undifferentiated mass of the 'undeserving poor' or an always potentially criminal 'underclass' requiring an equal degree of punitive supervision, surveillance and 'management'. For the poor, the welfare state is becoming increasingly like a carceral state.

The change of philosophy and policy as far as the criminal justice system is concerned is especially reflected in the treatment of those subject to judicial supervision orders and conditions of parole, and the changing role of probation officers and criminal justice social workers from a 'client centred' and rehabilitative approach to one far more focused on strict supervision and 'public protection'.

Occupations that were once guided, to a certain extent, by the rehabilitative ideal have now become little more than an extension of the police and prison system. Any vision of positively reforming and socially reintegrating the 'offender' has now been abandoned, instead prioritising punishment, social isolation and stringent supervision. This replacement of the rehabilitation model with a more managerialist one, enforcing ever-more 'robust' and invasive conditions of parole and supervision, renders its subjects increasingly less as prisoners being returned to freedom and more ones waiting to be returned to prison for technical breaches of licence conditions. As with all things neo-liberal, the increased focus on the strict supervision and surveillance of ex-prisoners and 'offenders' draws its inspiration from the U.S. and its parole officer system with a total emphasis on the straight-forward policing of parolees. It's also a form of supervision increasingly extended into the lives of the poor generally, especially those dependent on welfare and state benefit, the social group from which prisoners are disproportionately drawn.

In an age of economic deregulation, the marginality and inequality of the poor has increased to such an extent that they are now demonised and subjected to the same penal-like supervision as ex-convicts.

Tory politicians and the media now stigmatise benefit claimants as 'scroungers', 'shirkers' and potential criminals with zeal. This stigmatisation and marginalisation is applied most viciously to poor single mothers who are now typecast not as poor but as deviant and a problem group who should be socially excluded and shamed, just like ex-prisoners. The steady increase of the female prisoner population is undoubtedly a symptom of the criminalisation of poor claimant-dependant women and their increasing relegation to the margins of society.

Within the prison system itself, apart from its growing privatisation, the neo-liberal approach has jettisoned completely any pretence of rehabilitation and replaced it instead with the bureaucratic, managerialist model of box-ticking, exemplified by offence-related courses managed by prison-hired psychologists and which statistically have no appreciable effect on re-offending rates. As far as most prisoners are concerned, offence-related courses represent little more than obedience tests and are just a necessary prerequisite for parole or transfer to lower-security institutions. 'Telling them what they want to hear' is a strategy accepted and agreed on by both prisoners and those administering the courses. There is, of course, a huge social and existential divide between the prisoners who attend these courses and those managing them, usually middle-class psychologists and trainee psychologists who have little or no concept of the social conditions and circumstances that shaped the 'offending behaviour' of most prisoners. Consequently, they apply a crude form of moral behaviourism to prisoners' criminal and anti-social behaviour (different from that of financial capitalists of course) that has nothing to do with social deprivation and extreme disadvantage, and everything to do with defective moral decision-making.

The prison-industrial complex, the finished product of neo-liberalism in the field, or market, of criminal justice, is not just reducible to prison privatisation, it also shapes and influences a



set of institutions, practises and ideologies based on fear, punishment and control, as exemplified by the American experience.

In the U.S. there are over 2.3 million people in prison, and more than twice as many people under direct state supervision. Virtually all are from a well-defined social group: the poorest and most dependent on social welfare and assistance. This mass criminalisation of the poor is beginning to find expression here in the U.K, with a popularised contempt of welfare recipients and the urban 'underclass', and a growing consensus that penal policy should replace welfare policy as a means of dealing with them. Through a slavish imitation of the U.S. criminal justice system, Britain now has the highest imprisonment rate, the most overcrowded prisons, the severest sentencing practises, and is one of the worst abusers of prisoners' human rights in Europe.

As the social democratic model that characterised Britain since 1945 continues to fracture and break in the face of unrelenting U.S.-style neo-liberalism, the welfare state will be replaced by the penal state and the treatment of the poor will resemble a sort of punitive containment, supervised by parole officers in everything but name.

An important determining influence in the treatment of prisoners, regardless of the prevailing political and social climate, is actually the balance and relationship of power that exists between prisoners and guards within prisons themselves. During the 1960s, 70s and 80s a real shift in that institutional balance of power was achieved by prison protests, strikes and uprisings, and an organised movement of prisoner resistance that was recognised and supported on the outside of prison by political activists, radical academics and prison abolitionists. The struggle of prisoners was recognised by such groups as a legitimate political struggle against an institution originally and purposely created to punish and discipline the rebellious poor. The destruction of working-class communities during the Thatcherite era deeply affected the culture of prisoners and significantly weakened their solidarity, allowing guards and the system to regain absolute power within prisons, and enhance the Prison Industrial Complex.

Movements like Black Lives Matter have, however, re-focused political resistance on the police and prison system as weapons of state repression and re-energised the prison abolition movement. Within prisons themselves, despite their total lockdown, there is a

growing network of prisoners in contact with groups such as the Prisoner Solidarity Network who are committed to the abolition of the prison system and the entire capitalist system generally. On the 22 January the Prisoner Solidarity Network coordinated and staged a protest outside Belmarsh prison in London that was attended by prisoner solidarity and prison abolition groups. The energy and strength of the protest attested to the growing momentum of the anti-prison movement.

Whilst the organised labour movement in Britain is depleted and disempowered, and sources of resistance to the growing authoritarianism of the state seem minimal, it is amongst the most marginalised and oppressed that real resistance will originate and find expression – and prisoners are definitively the clearest example of that.

John Bowden is a member of the Prisoner Solidarity Network and a former prisoner.

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