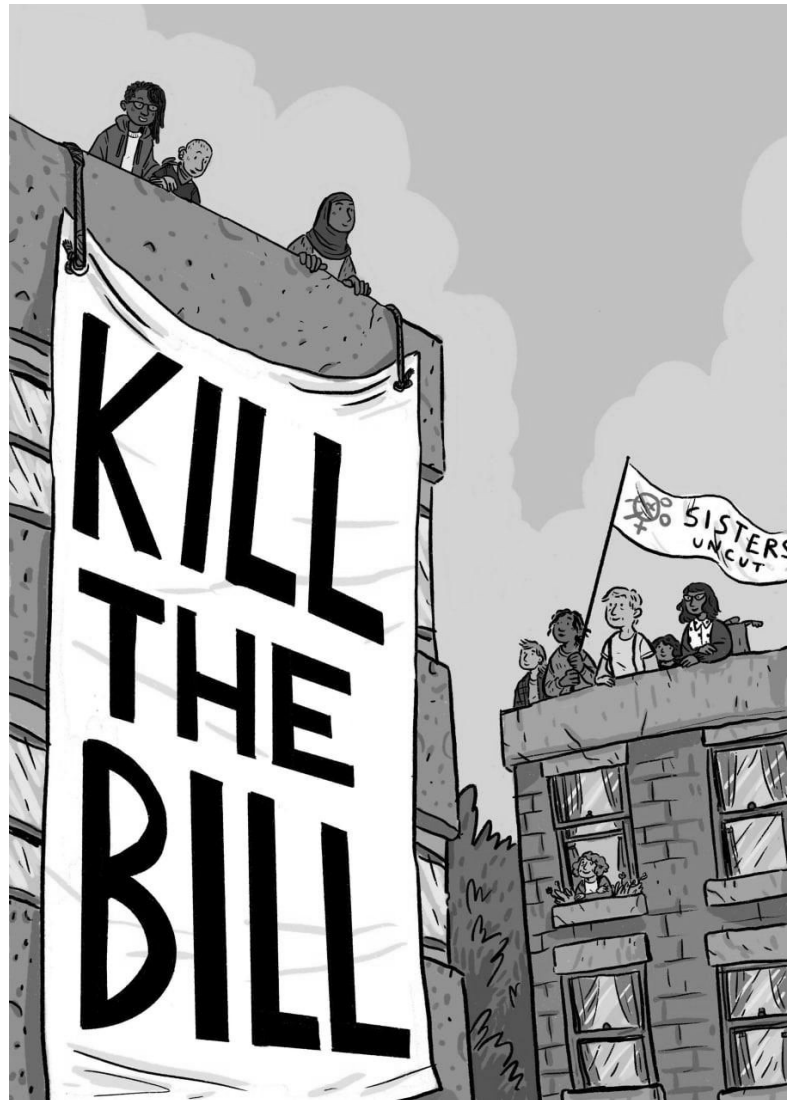


# LIVERPOOL ANARCHIST

Around 200 people gathered at Derby Square, on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March, to demonstrate against the *Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill* currently passing through parliament. At first dispersed and hesitant, people held their ground as police officers attempted to question and threaten people. The message was clear: the protest would not be tolerated. However, as the numbers swelled, confidence grew and the gathering coalesced, striking up chants of 'Kill the Bill' before setting off down Lord Street, beginning a march with great energy and a clear sense of defiance. Taking control of the streets, people demonstrated their refusal to accept further restriction of an already very limited right to protest. Unfortunately as the protest dragged on, lacking a destination, people started to drift off, enabling police officers to arbitrarily target a few stragglers, imposing fines and aggressively arresting two.

A fortnight later, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April, even more people gathered on Church Street and marched through the city centre. This time the police kept their distance, wishing to avoid resistance from protests across the country. The atmosphere was a little more temperate than the previous occasion, but made very clear that protests will continue until the bill is completely scrapped. Frustratingly but unsurprisingly, socialist parties took advantage of both gatherings as self-publicising and recruitment opportunities.

The bill in question is a sweeping piece of legislation including a significant extension of police powers and what is effectively a clampdown on the right to protest. Police forces will effectively be able to dictate who can protest, where, when, for how long, being given complete discretion to impose conditions on both static and moving protests. *Disruptive noise* will



be reason enough for police to break up a demonstration. Organisers will face up to 11 months in prison when such conditions are breached, knowingly or not, and fines will be increased for individual protestors. The common law offence of 'public nuisance' will be placed on the statute books; the vague wording allows anyone who obstructs the public, for example, to be charged and sentenced to up to 10 years imprisonment. The maximum penalty for toppling a statue will be increased to 10 years in prison. Trespass, currently a civil law offence, will become a criminal offence giving police the power to arrest and seize the property of offenders. This will effectively criminalise protest camps, and, more significantly, further

criminalises the very living patterns of gypsy, roma, and traveller communities. Travellers will face the prospect of having their vehicle (that is, their home) seized, in addition to facing up to 3 months in prison.

The reason protests in Liverpool were successful was due to the strength of the movement elsewhere. In London, in the face of police brutality, five consecutive days of protest organised by Sisters Uncut, the feminist direct action group, resulted in the bill being temporarily delayed until at least June. In Bristol a cheery protest escalated into several nights of rioting after protesters were brutally attacked by police while rallying outside a police station. Since then protests have spread, particularly across the South West, with many blockades of stations and their surrounding roads. People showed that they were willing to stand up for themselves and their freedom, to fight back and defend each other from state violence.

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*“Let us always remember that the oppression of governments has no other limits than the resistance offered to it.”*

**Errico Malatesta**

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A common response to increased police powers is that the “innocent” have nothing to worry about. Before it has even passed, we have seen the organiser of a socially-distanced nurses demonstration in Manchester, following the 1% “pay rise”, fined £10,000 under Covid regulations. Here in Liverpool police used their powers to disperse a street-side soup kitchen. Ending up at a protest against a new road or on a picket line, could see anyone becoming “enemies from within”, just remember how the police treated the dockers or miners.

Exploiting the pandemic, the state is predictably attempting to normalise their emergency powers, which will be used to suppress all opposition from below. It is their fear, and our hope, that a wave of rebellion is upon us – we face a hot summer ahead. It is up to us, the working class, the oppressed and exploited, to ensure that such rebellion is

intensified, extended, and directed not only against those who put the boot in, but also toward a more free and equal society. •

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## THE GREAT PORRIDGE STRIKE OF 1913

Rainhill Asylum, Knowsley, had opened in 1851, as a progressive institution for the treatment of “the insane”... The staff often worked an 80 hour week which was thought to be fair by the authorities because many duties were light, for example supervising recreational activities like cricket and football. Free food was provided during working hours and therefore any deterioration in the quality of food was regarded as a wage cut.

When a new menu replaced meat with oatmeal porridge on 6 April 1913, 35 nurses and attendants refused to eat the porridge, to return to the wards or, indeed, to leave the breakfast room! By midmorning the strike had spread throughout the asylum. At midday the Medical Superintendent, Dr. Cowan, agreed to revise the diet sheets. The strike was a success but they were later made to apologise or face disciplinary action. The workers were mainly members of the then National Association of Asylum Workers (NAWU), but the union’s executive regarded the strike to be “spontaneous and unofficial and did not entirely meet with the executive council’s approval.” •

The above text was taken from “Occupational Hazards”, a Past Tense pamphlet about hospital occupations.

# OVER THE WATER, SPARKS FLY

From the 24<sup>th</sup> March to the 7<sup>th</sup> April, up to thirty electricians (sparks) have gathered weekly outside Balfour Beatty's in Bromborough, Wirral. Passing cars have beeped their horns in support. Beatty's is working with EDF on the Somerset nuclear power plant, Hinkley Point C. They have been planning to train up electrical labourers in just 7 weeks to do 75% of the work of qualified electricians, both undercutting wages and leading to serious health and safety risks. The trend towards deskilling is deadly serious, whether it's taking place at an NHS hospital or a block of flats. These protests aren't the only recent labour struggle in Merseyside, with ongoing strikes at British Gas and lorry drivers winning a 6% pay rise in February due to strike action. What makes them unique is an emphasis on direct action and rank-and-fileism.

The socially distanced demos, among many across the country, were a show of strength intended to put pressure on the companies, signalling that if their demands aren't met, with the lockdown easing, disruptive action will be taken. In London the bosses have already had a taster of this, with the occupation of construction sites and offices. Just after their HQ was occupied, EDF released a statement announcing they had paused their plans, but the campaign is set to continue until they are fully scrapped. On the 31<sup>st</sup>, the first action also took place at Hinkley itself, with sparks continuously crossing the road to stop traffic, before being stopped by the police, undoubtedly emboldened by their new powers.

Sparks already have a history of direct action, with the BESNA dispute in the early 2010s, over an attempted 35% industry-wide pay cut. With their union leaders in Unite delaying strike ballots (due to fear of legal consequences) the sparks had to rely on weekly protests and

creative action, such as disrupting an official dinner of industry executives. This culminated in wildcat, or unofficial, strikes and a victory for the workers.

While primarily members of Unite or non-unionised, these recent protesters have been organising through a rank-and-file group. This certainly suggests frustration with the constraints of an official framework and complacent leadership. On the 30<sup>th</sup> Unite actually denounced the planned protest outside of Hinkley C. Beyond this, opinion on Unite seems



divided with some thinking problems could be solved through greater participation and calls for reform in the union, or even forming a separate union just for Sparks, while others seem disinterested entirely. While we would sympathise with calls for a new union, after all Unite seem more interested in selling their members life insurance than on the idea of taking strike action, a narrower purview won't necessarily lead to a militant or democratic union. For example on the railways, the RMT's broad membership are more militant than the specific-drivers union, ASLEF. Issues around union democracy are deeper than this and in our view can only be solved by forming unions that are not legalistic representative bodies, which necessitate a bureaucracy who form their own separate interests, but that are simply associations of workers relying on direct action, what might be called "syndicalism". However, groups of workers with strong opinions on this debate are best off leading by example and cooperating with other groups with differing views, rather than descending into infighting.

Nonetheless the focus of the movement is clear: stopping deskilling. The important thing is that the sparks are thinking and acting for themselves, and we wish them the best of luck with their struggle. •

# LEGAL ADVICE FOR PROTESTERS

*Green & Black Cross:* We suggest that you take a note of our protest support phone number - 07946 541 511 - and of a criminal solicitor with protest experience\*. Write them down on something the police will struggle to take from you, such as an arm or a leg.

\*Robert Lizar (Manchester): 0161 227 7777

*Out of hours:* 07900 998 999

**NO COMMENT:** You do not need to answer police questions, so don't. This is for your own protection and for the protection of others. The police will try to pressure and deceive you into incriminating yourself. Instead of trying to decide when it seems 'safe' to answer, just say "No comment" to all questions – during 'informal chats', in the police van and especially in interview. If your friend in the next cell knows you aren't going to talk, they will feel better able not to talk themselves. Remember, interviews only help the police – they will not interview you if they already have enough evidence to charge you.

**NO PERSONAL DETAILS:** You do not have to give personal details under ANY stop and search power, so don't. On protests, the police often use searches as a way of finding out who is present, both for intelligence purposes and to intimidate you. As a default, you do NOT have to give your personal details to the police at any point during the arrest process.

We recommend not giving personal details to the police for as long as possible. If you have been arrested and taken to the police station you may wish to give your name, address and date of birth at the custody desk to speed your release.

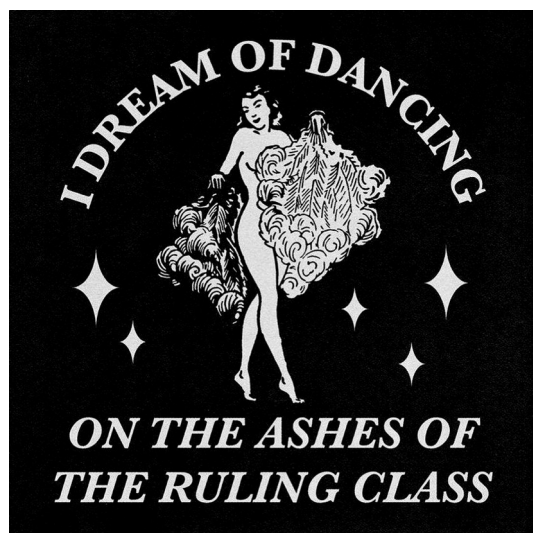
There are a few situations in which police may have a power to require personal details: if someone is driving a vehicle; if they are being fined under a Fixed Penalty Notice; under a particular anti-social behaviour power; or if there is a particular by-law.

**WHAT POWER?:** Ask "What power?" to challenge the police to act lawfully. Some police officers rely on you not knowing the law. If you are asked to do something by a police officer, ask them what power (i.e. what law) they are using and why they are using it. Make a note of what was said, by whom (numbers) as soon as possible afterwards.

**NO DUTY SOLICITOR:** Use a recommended solicitor with protest experience. The "duty solicitor" is the solicitor who is present at the police station, which means they almost certainly know nothing about protest. Duty solicitors often give bad advice to protesters; we recommend you always use a good solicitor who knows about protest.

**NO CAUTION:** Cautions are an admission of guilt. Offering you a caution is a way the police may ask you to admit guilt for an offence without having to charge you. It is an easy win for the police, as they don't have to provide any evidence or convince a court of your guilt. At the very least, you should never accept a caution without taking advice from a good solicitor. •

*Taken from: [greenandblackcross.org](http://greenandblackcross.org)*



The *Liverpool Anarchist* is written 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.

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