

LIVERPOOL ANARCHIST

≡ Issue VII

Free Newsletter

July 2020 ♦

SOLFED STRIKES BACK

Worldwide, the pandemic has exposed the class nature of our society, with businesses trying to stay open for longer and reopen sooner to maximise profits, while workers are left worrying about life and death. However, through organising together the working class have begun to fight back

The United States has seen a strike wave, with an estimated 260 strikes from March to June, and further actions linking to the BLM movement. In the UK we have also seen wildcat strikes over corona, from the post office to ASOS. Likewise rent strikes have been taking place across the US; and in the UK students in at least Sussex, Warwick and Bristol have decided to withhold rent for accommodation they won't be using. In many instances governments, bosses and landlords have banned evictions, closed workplaces or waived rent rather than lose control over the situation by forcing us to take matters into our own hands.

Locally, in response to the pandemic, the Liverpool Solidarity Federation have also demonstrated that as workers we can take action outside of party politics and trade unions and win.

Back in April, hospitality workers at Pub Invest, a company that owns most of the venues at concert square and employ over 800 people, came together in response to not being offered furlough once their workplaces shut, leaving them with no money to survive. A demand letter with 121 signatures from workers and a social media

backlash, soon meant the company changed their tune. While at the end of the day this victory belongs to those workers at Pub Invest, members of SolFed played an influential role in organising at this workplace.

On a smaller scale members of SolFed organised with a local worker to reclaim stolen wages and also helped a student to gain a rent reduction from YPP letting agents, in both cases just under £700 was won. The simple threat of



L8 Black Lives Matter demonstration, 13th June 2020. *See page 2 for article.*

collective action to back up demands was enough to succeed.

At the end of June we also hosted our first outdoor open meeting to discuss the re-opening of hospitality on the 4th of July and how we might respond as workers.

Obviously these cases pale in comparison to the strikes we see in the States. However, they demonstrate the merit of taking action as workers and tenants to defend our interests. As an anarcho-syndicalist organisation we have distributed information on rights at work, provided training to encourage workplace organising as well as taken action as and with workers and tenants to make tangible gains. In

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SolFed we are not just looking for safe working conditions or a higher wage but an end to a system that places profit above our very lives and that is built on exploitation. It is through the use of direct action to struggle against the ruling class that we can demonstrate the necessity and develop the capacity to abolish the capitalist-state system and finally take control of our lives. •

~

Information on rights at work during the pandemic:
www.liverpoolsf.org/coronavirus



BLACK LIVES MATTER

Over the last month there have been several protests in Liverpool against structural racism, supporting the rebellion that has swept across the United States of America after the murder of George Floyd, the latest act in a racially charged reign of police terror. On the 31st May and 2nd June hundreds of people came out to St Georges Hall to kneel in solidarity, and on the 13th June thousands of people marched across town chanting “black lives matter”. Such protests have emerged across Britain, seeing clashes with police in London, and the toppling of the Colston statue in Bristol (the slaver being triumphantly dumped in the river).

Across the USA, the people in revolt have escaped the pacification of reformist leaders for several weeks, resisted police domination of the streets, expropriated goods from corporations, and burned down a police station. Working class solidarity has been expressed by bus drivers refusing to transport arrestees to jail, and in the growth of mutual aid initiatives.

The uprising has been led by black youth who have lost faith in promises of reform, dismissing calls for patience and conciliation by “community leaders” and activists. This has forced people to choose a side: the oppressors or the oppressed? *“As a result of widespread rioting, more has happened in a week to discredit and limit police power than has occurred in many decades of activism”*, one commentator remarked. In the space opened up by rebellion new ideas and practices rapidly spread across society. Our sense of apathy and powerlessness dissolves into the urgency of struggle.

There have been solidarity actions in over fifty countries, including major riots. In Athens, Greece, 4000 people marched on the US Embassy which was attacked with fire bombs while protestors clashed with the police. In France, in response to the judicial whitewashing of a previous police murder, thousands of people filled the streets of Paris to protest, which escalated into multiple riots. Solidarity was expressed with the US rebellion through chants and graffiti, through heartfelt anger and grief.

These are examples of meaningful solidarity: extending the rebellion, fighting our own struggle while connecting it with the struggle of others. This contrasts with the empty words of politicians, boosting twitter hashtags, and promoting “black businesses”, redirecting our protest back into the very capitalist system that reproduces racial hierarchy.

If similar revolts were to break out here in Liverpool, what would you do? This is not a rhetorical question but a cue to think, discuss, prepare, and act. We might suppose that it would never happen here, yet for most people in the USA this uprising was not only unexpected but entirely unprecedented.

The social order is fragile. •

“Revolutionary practice consists of the relationship between means and ends. It is the use of direct action to win immediate demands in such a way that builds the confidence, solidarity, and culture needed for further struggles, and ultimately, revolution itself. Revolution is a matter of deeds not words, in our everyday struggles as well as the future upheaval.”

‘Fighting for Ourselves’

TRANSGENDER LIBERATION CANNOT COME FROM ABOVE

Recently, the government announced plans to ignore the result of the recent Gender Recognition Act public consultation, where 70% of responses were in favour of self-identification. The Tories have also suggested they may be banning healthcare for under 18s and possibly introducing “checks and balances” on the lives of trans people. Perhaps soon we will all need documentation to pee!

Since the consultation was in favour of self-id and not even about healthcare, there is a temptation to sing the virtues of opposition parties and try to befriend local councils. However, we should be realistic that less than 1/500 adults took part in this consultation.

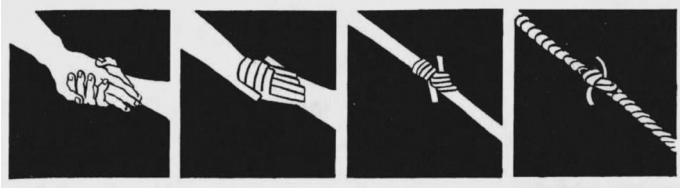
This is not an isolated incident either. In Hungary, ID cards have been changed to only show birth sex, in a move to erase trans recognition entirely. First this was done by emergency decree, then through parliament. Just like in Poland, with attempts to make abortions less accessible, the pandemic has been used as a political opportunity. While these laws are undoubtedly important, legal recognition does not and cannot protect us. Protections at work mean little in reality, and even if healthcare for trans kids is legal in the UK, due to under-funding it rarely matters, and who cites the law if they are harassed in a bathroom?

What these attacks really demonstrate is that promises of support from the mass media, politicians and corporations mean little to nothing as soon as being transphobic leads to a good story, a distraction from their latest scandal or a chance to earn some cash. Any legal gains we make can be reversed overnight.



Placard from a picket in 2015 where Sheffield IWW managed to reinstate a transgender worker who was fired for going to the loo.

If we want to make progress we should not look to capitalists and the state but to each other, both as trans people and as members of the working class. There are many examples of transgender people supporting each other to self-medicate without the approval of state or private medical professionals (due to gatekeeping and waiting times). There is a long history of workplace activity as well, for example in Surrey 1978, 400 hospital workers staged a work-to-rule in response to a worker being sacked for wanting to transition from male to female. Debates around trans rights and “representation” are nothing more than a spectacle that the ruling classes use to divide us, if we want real liberation we can only rely on ourselves. •



HOTELS NOT FOOD?

Throughout the lockdown the government promised to house the homeless population, and while they took their sweet time, many homeless people were moved into hotels. Of course, after the pandemic these people will be thrown out, and we will be told that homelessness is simply a fact of life. However, even now most of these hotels are far away from the centre and don't provide food, forcing people back into the city to beg. To make matters worse most christian soup

kitchens stopped operating when the pandemic was at its worst.

Luckily, Liverpool 'Food not Bombs' have stepped up their game and have gone from doing their weekly stall to distributing food directly, up to three times a week, while social distancing. Throughout the lockdown we were consistently surprised how many homeless people were around, how this issue wasn't being talked about, and how people would complain that no one was helping them anymore. What is perhaps even more surprising is that in Leeds the council and police even *stopped* charities from feeding the homeless.

This crisis shows that the state does not care about the working class, so we must help each other and find a way out of this mess. •

LOCAL GROUPS

- ♦ **Food not Bombs** on Facebook @LiverpoolFoodNotBombs
- ♦ **Hunt Saboteurs** at lpoolhuntsabs@hotmail.co.uk or Facebook @LiverpoolHuntSabs
- ♦ **Louder than Proud** [queer collective] at louderthanproud@protonmail.com
- ♦ **Merseyside Animal Rights Campaigns** on Facebook @MARcampaigns
- ♦ **Merseyside Anti-Fascist Network** on Facebook @MerseyAFN
- ♦ **Solidarity Federation** [anarcho-syndicalist initiative] at liverpoolsolfed@gmail.com



We aim to publish the *Liverpool Anarchist* monthly, and welcome all submissions in line with the following principles:

- ♦ *Anti-State*
- ♦ *Anti-Capitalist*
- ♦ *Intersectional*

Send in feedback, comments, and submissions to:

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