

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry

Organise to make the future **SAFE & EQUAL FOR ALL**

» **Beat back
racism**

» **Curb police
powers**



» **Jobs and homes for all:
shorter work week, expand
public services, tax the rich**

Fight for isolation pay

Despite the government allocating £600 million for it, most care homes still lack full isolation pay

Pages 10-11

The End of Policing?

Alex Vitale's book on the US police reviewed, and a discussion of alternatives

Pages 8-9

Scientists say "One metre? Not yet"

Tories propose reducing 2-metre rule to help pubs reopen. Scientists dissent

Page 7

Racism: many fronts

In the pandemic; on the streets; in workplaces and unions; deportations

Pages 13, 14, 15, 16

Hong Kong: The Empire Strikes Back

By Chen Ying

A music teacher in Hong Kong has been sacked by her school, because she allowed one of her students to perform the song *Glory to Hong Kong* as part of an assessment task at school.

Lau Ka-tung, a social worker, was accused of hindering officers from proceeding by standing in front of a cordon and using his body to strike a policeman's shield. He was sentenced to a year in jail, the first social worker to receive a jail sentence resulting from last year's protests. The defence applied for bail as they planned to file an appeal against the sentence, but the application was denied and he was sent behind bars immediately.

Last month, HK Chief Executive Carrie Lam declared that a Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education History exam question asking candidates whether they agreed with the view that Japan did more good than harm to China from 1900-45 is to be scrapped because the question was "biased".

A teacher of Liberal Studies who was blinded in one eye by a rubber bullet last June has resigned from his teaching post. Several Liberal Studies curriculum officers in the examinations authority have resigned from their posts. The subject is now under threat, being blamed for inciting students.

Hong Kong police have stated that nearly 40% of 9000 people arrested since last June are students, including over 1600 secondary school students. Over 100 primary and secondary school teachers have been arrested. The Education Secretary has declared that all teachers must undergo training on professional ethics.

The Professional Teachers Union's survey showed that 90% of teachers were losing confidence in the autonomy of the teaching profession, with 78% expressed frustration with "pressure from the government".

A school principal is retiring for personal reasons – he did not manage to prevent 50-odd students from singing "Glory to Hong Kong" and chanting protest slogans in his school's playground.

The Hong Kong Government forced through a law on the Chinese National Anthem, the March of the Volunteers. Now schools are expected to teach all students to sing this on all important occasions such as National Day on Oct 1st, HKSAR Day on 1st July etc, as the National Flag of the People's Republic of China is raised in school playgrounds.

To crown it all, the National People's Congress has imposed a National Security Law on Hong Kong.

The Empire has definitely Struck Back.

The National Security Law would punish acts deemed to constitute secession, subversion, terrorism, collusion and foreign interference in Hong Kong. It bypasses the Basic Law, Hong Kong's mini constitution established in 1997 as the basis of the One Country Two Systems framework. It cuts through the Common Law approach to justice, and undermines a judiciary which is supposed to be independent of the executive branch. The Chief Executive has powers to nominate which judge should preside over specific National Security court cases. Even within the government's inner circle, the Executive Council, opinion is divided whether there will be jury trials for National Security court cases. In special cases, China can take over a case and conduct the trial in the mainland instead of in Hong Kong.

All parties on the democratic camp have already declared their opposition to this National Security law. The next move from Beijing is now expected to be using the National Security Law to disqualify pro-democracy candidates in the forthcoming September Legislative Council elections, unless they swear allegiance to this new law. □

“What we stand for

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty fights for socialist revolution, for the labour movement to militantly assert working-class interests.

See workersliberty.org/about – if you agree, join us! □



Upcoming meetings

Workers' Liberty have a packed schedule of varied, important and exciting meetings coming up. They are open to all, held online via zoom videocalling.

From Wednesday 24 June to Tuesday 7 July, excluding ongoing study courses:

Sunday 28 June, 12-2pm: Socialist feminist reading group: [The Anti-Social Family, Part 2](#)

Sunday 28 June, 6.30-8pm: [Brazil and the pandemic](#)

Monday 29 June, 7.30-9pm: [The state and the current crisis](#) in "The state, crime, prisons, and the police"

Sunday 5 July, 6.30-8pm: [1906/1997: The Labour Party and the right to strike](#)

For full and updated details, zoom links, later meetings, and more, see workersliberty.org/c19-online □

((•)) Upcoming livestreams

Workers' Liberty have a schedule of videos going "live". Please tune in to watch, take part in the conversation as they are streaming, invite others, even organise watch parties on facebook! The videos (often subtitled) will "go live" at the times below on our [facebook](#), and (if not before) [instagram](#), [youtube](#), and generally [twitter](#). From Wednesday 24 to Tuesday 30 June:

Wednesday 24 June 1.30pm: "What is the police?" – Two-minute intro to the police's origin and function

Thursday 25 June, 1.30pm: "Organise to make the future" – *Solidarity* editorial with Stephen Wood

Monday 29 June, 1.30pm: "Starmer and the Labour left" with Duncan, a South London education worker

Organise to make the future



Editorial

The great wave of street protests after the killing of George Floyd on 25 May still continues, but the pace looks like slowing. Activists will be thinking about how they can continue their efforts over the months and years needed to win and consolidate change.

That this killing has generated so broad a protest must be partly because a pandemic which has hit the worst-off hardest everywhere, and a wave of job cuts which has done similar, especially in the USA, are in everyone's minds.

Slogans like "jobs and homes for all" have spoken to those "hidden" factors.

In some ways the wave of protests has been unique. It has been very heavily a movement of young people.

Many demonstrators have told us that they were on the streets to protest for the first time in their lives. They were too young to join the big demonstrations against cuts between 2010 and 2015.

The big Brexit demonstrations, or the school-student climate protests, maybe seemed to them less urgent.

The protesters have been receptive to left activists joining them, but the labour movement (and often even the left, apart from Workers' Liberty and the Socialist Party) has been mostly absent, preoccupied or subdued by the virus lockdown.

It has been a united multi-ethnic movement, including many young white and Asian people as well as Black. It has had few specific demands. Its keynote ideas have been equality, solidarity, unity. Calls for aid to black-owned businesses and the like have been marginal.

Workers' Liberty proposes to the new young activists that they join us in the work, over months and years, to transform the labour movement and win it to develop demands of a "levelling-up", class-unifying, and anti-capitalist character.

Against the pandemic, the demands agitated for by the Safe and Equal campaign. Full isolation pay for all. Requisitioning of industry for PPE and other medical supplies. Bring care homes into the public sector, and care-home workers into public-sector pay and conditions.

A public-health test-trace-isolate operation, run by local public-health officials with properly-employed public-sector staff, not the current cheapskate operation, contracted out to Serco for the tracing and Deloitte for the testing.

Provide special accommodation for people required to self-isolate who live in crowded conditions. Start a crash campaign to build new social housing, or convert buildings to social housing, so that everyone can gain the right to good, affordable, and uncrowded housing.

All these are, in the actual conditions, anti-racist demands, as "civil rights" were in the USA of the 1960s an anti-racist demand.

Against the job cuts which began at the start of the lock-

down and are now escalating: a shorter work week with no loss of pay. Shift to a standard working week of four days or 32 hours. Expand public service jobs in health care, in social care, and elsewhere.

Take the giant manufacturing and aviation firms declaring job cuts into public ownership, and reorganise their equipment and workforce skills towards green and socially-useful production.

Against the Tories, and against their planned "hard Brexit" and reorientation to a trade deal with Trump's USA, renovate the labour movement. Allow local Labour Parties to meet and decide politics, revive trade-union activity to fight for workers' rights.

In the Labour Party in the Corbyn years we failed to win a revitalisation and democratisation of Young Labour or of Labour Students. Labour's Black and Minority Ethnic sections also remain weak.

This means that local unions and Labour Parties must think about creating special youth and anti-racist campaign bodies accessible to the sort of young people who have joined the Black Lives Matter protests.

In Britain, Asian and Black African students do better at getting to university than white British students, and white British students have a higher school exclusion rate than any group of Asian students or than Black African students. That provides levers to combat racism in schools and universities, rather than suggesting it has vanished. (Across history, as for example Jewish migrants even in many countries with heavy antisemitism have shown, young people of immigrant background often do better in education than the stay-at-home population, despite prejudice and economic disadvantage, unless the disadvantage is overwhelming. That helps them fight discrimination for those coming after them).

Afro-Caribbean or "mixed heritage" students have a still higher exclusion rate. Non-white students on average do worse at university, and in jobs after university, than the white students (a middle-class minority) alongside them there.

The GCSE history curriculum of the biggest exam board, Edexcel, includes options on medieval English history, US history, China, the USSR, the Middle East, and the rise of the Nazis in Germany, but nothing about the slave trade, slave revolts, the British Empire, India, Africa, the French revolution, or labour history.

We now have levers to bring such issues into the labour movement, to renovate it to become more powerful and unifying, and to win increasing sections of the labour movement as vehicles for continuing and effective activity for the new young activists. □

Belly Mujinga

The TSSA transport union is supporting a petition calling for justice for Belly Mujinga, the transport worker who died of coronavirus after being spat at on the concourse of Victoria Station: bit.ly/belly-p □

Bomber Bolton cashes in

By **Barrie Hardy**

Things haven't been turning out well lately for Donald Trump in the run up to the US presidential election in November.

A pandemic that has claimed over 120,000 lives and is plateauing rather than declining. Major demonstrations against racial injustice and police brutality. An economy where unemployment rates have surpassed even those of the Great Depression of the 1930s.

On top of it all comes another book about chaos in the Trump White House. This time it's not second hand stuff from a liberal journalist, but a damning first hand account from right-wing maverick John Bolton.

For several decades Bolton has been the warmongering outrider of American politics. His appointment by Trump as National Security Advisor in April 2018 led many to fear that Bolton was close to achieving his desire to have the USA go to war with Iran. Bolton lasted longer than most, surviving in post for nearly a year and a half before Trump fired him.

In Bolton's opinion, Trump's foreign policy was not "hawkish" enough. Trump got rid of him because he didn't want another foreign military involvement on the scale of Iraq or Afghanistan.

Bolton's revenge on Trump for failing to start more wars comes in the form of a \$2 million book deal where the corruption, incompetence and ignorance of the Trump administration are laid bare.

Trump is soft on dictators. Turkey's Erdoğan is offered help to circumvent an investigation into money laundering conducted by the Southern District of New York. It involves sanctions busting with Iran, which contravenes US foreign policy.

With China we have Trump begging Xi to help him get re-elected by having China buy soya beans and wheat from US farmers. As if by way of exchange Trump gives

his approval for the mass internment of Uyghur people in camps as "the right thing to do" and a pledge not to raise the Tiananmen massacre because "it was years ago."

Trump also opined that journalists should be executed. No doubt he envied the fact that, unlike him, Saudi tyrant Mohammed bin Salman was in a position to do just that. That Trump only cares his own survival and that of his family of grifters is hardly a shocking revelation.

Democrat anger at Bolton for failing to testify to all this during the impeachment hearings is also understandable. He preferred to wait until he could cash in on his book, although the chances of the Republican Senate dethroning Trump even with his testimony would still have been slim.

Whether or not Bolton's book will cut any ice with American public opinion is another matter. Trump's core vote remains loyal despite the substantial lead in the polls Biden currently enjoys.

Nevertheless, many American voters are suffering from "Trump fatigue". They watch the half empty Trump rally in Tulsa and see it as akin to the gathering of a suicide cult. Unlike Jonestown where "Kool Aid" was passed around to largely unknowing victims, Trump's gathering had the coronavirus circulating, but the attendees were oblivious to the risk.

His diehard "base" aren't bothered by that, but voters who in 2016 were prepared to "give him a chance to shake up the system" are.

The hospital bills for Covid-19 are coming in, some of them running into seven figures. The lack of a socialised medical system is a key issue for socialists to campaign on.

Trump's rule has been socialism for the rich and capitalism for the poor. The corporations have seen huge tax cuts and bail outs, whilst millions of Americans are threatened with affordable health care being stripped from them if Trump gets a second term. □

New videos!

Watch Workers' Liberty's videos and playlists, and subscribe to [our youtube channel](#)! Many have subtitles, if desired. **New this last fortnight:**

- ["Do we need prisons?"](#) intro speech by Anita Downs in ["The state, crime, prisons, and police"](#) series
- ["Left Unity: is Momentum fit for purpose?"](#) intro speech by Ruth Cashman, Momentum NCG candidate
- [For one school workers union!](#) Learning from industrial unionism – introductory speeches
- [Cut the roots of racism!](#) Solidarity editorial
- [PJ, aka the Repeat Beat Poet, talks to Janine Booth](#) about George Floyd protests, police, and fighting racism □

Please watch and subscribe; like, comment and share!
All at: youtube.com/c/WorkersLibertyUK

On the Momentum Internationalists blog

Councils on the chopping block. Where is Momentum?

bit.ly/momcouncils

Trans-exclusionary moderate Labourism

bit.ly/te-ml

Expropriate the banks!

bit.ly/exprobanks

Scrap the fake seats on Momentum's NCG

bit.ly/momncg

The war on drugs is a poison

bit.ly/wadrugs □

Momentum poll: vote internationalist!

By Mohan Sen

The Momentum National Coordinating Group elections close at noon on 30 June.

If you haven't yet, please vote for and promote the candidates who have backed Momentum Internationalists' socialist platform – Ruth Cashman and Ana Oppenheim in London, Abbie Clark in the Midlands, Kas Witana in the North, and Nadia Whittome in the Office Holders section. Ana, Abbie and Nadia are on the Forward Momentum slate. (All NCG candidates at bit.ly/mmcandidates.)

The results are out on Wednesday 1 July.

In the contest between the two main slates, conservative-left and Stalinist Momentum Renewal and limited-reform Forward Momentum, both have a fair number of high profile endorsements. Forward Momentum has John McDonnell, but overall Momentum Renewal has more MPs and the like.

After some pressure, Forward Momentum produced a "Plan to take Momentum forward" (fwdmomentum.org/plan), which includes many good policies, but it has done little campaigning around its demands. In response to our complaints about agreed policies, including fighting for a sovereign Labour conference and public ownership of the banks, not being included, it said it would be producing a longer version. With a week to go there

is no sign of it.

If Forward Momentum lacks clarity, consistency and radicalism, Momentum Renewal stands for maintaining all the worst elements of the organisation and its culture and building on them.

It talks in the most insubstantial way about democracy in Momentum, about uniting the left and about a working-class orientation – but with little content, and a record that shows it stands for just the opposite. In so far as MR's political line is ever accurate, it is only by making occasional correct criticisms of Forward Momentum.

Smearing

In the election, MR candidates supporters have spent time and energy not on the battles going on now against racism, job cuts, the pandemic, or Starmer swinging Labour to the right, but on... smearing the AWL. They have organised around the anonymous Twitter account "Momentum Against the AWL", using it to fling accusations of covering up sexual assault, support for child abuse and Islamophobia. MAAWL has launched three anti-AWL pledges (yes, really) signed by almost all the MR NCG candidates and very few others.

See bit.ly/mmawl for our response to "Momentum Against the AWL".

With startling hypocrisy given the false accusations of Islamophobia and pro-imperialism, none of the MR candidates have signed the Uyghur Solidarity Campaign pledge for the NCG election. The reason is obvious: those behind MR sympathise with the Chinese state against the (Muslim) Uyghurs. (For more on this see "Momentum Renewal and Islamophobia" at bit.ly/mrislam)

This is not the only issue on which Momentum Renewal have refused to answer questions. Challenged about their record on Labour councils (nine of their 24 candidates are councillors), they dodge. Challenged about how they can claim to be for trans rights when their slate includes at least one straightforwardly transphobic candidate, they simply refuse to answer (while simultaneously calling Workers' Liberty transphobic!). □

Banned from hustings

A number of local Momentum groups have excluded candidates not on the two main slates from NCG hustings. Other groups, such as Leeds, are having no hustings at all.

That is bad enough. But the joint Camden/Barnet/Brent hustings excluded Ruth Cashman specifically, on the ground of her connections to Workers' Liberty. This was their justification:

"Objections were raised by individuals with varying political allegiances to inviting a Momentum Internationalist/AWL aligned candidate. Therefore all three Steering Committees were consulted over the weekend, and after consultation a democratic joint decision was made to uphold the objections."

A reminder that there is a lot of work to do to sort out the Labour left, and that the problem of hostility to democracy is not limited to the Momentum office. Does "varying political allegiances" include supporters of Forward Momentum? □

Defending democracy on the left

Clarion editor and Labour Days host Edd Mustill defends the AWL and a democratic culture on the left at bit.ly/right2org

The Anticapitalist Platform, organised by socialist group Red Flag, has also responded in a principled way to the smears against the AWL: bit.ly/acpstatement □

Recovery: green or fossil-fuel?



Environment

By Zack Muddle

Governments "have a unique opportunity today to boost economic growth, create millions of new jobs and put global greenhouse gas emissions into structural decline", so claims the [Sustainable Recovery Plan](#) (SRP), released on 18 June by the International Energy Agency and the International Monetary Fund.

Recognising that current decisions about investments and recovery will "shape economic and energy infrastructure for decades to come", the plan outlines possible "actions" over the next three years across "electricity, transport, industry, buildings, fuels and emerging low-carbon technologies" to boost economic growth, create jobs and build cleaner, more resilient energy systems."

It would reduce air pollution emissions by 5%, extend clean-cooking to around 420 million peoples, and give nearly 270 million people access to electricity.

Recovery from the 2008-9 economic crises saw the world's largest ever *increase* in emissions: from -0.4 Gt CO₂ in 2009 to 1.7 Gt CO₂ in 2010. The plan aims to sketch a *first step* in making "2019 the definitive peak in global emissions", and towards the Paris agreement's goals.

The cost, they model, would be \$1tn per year over those three years, 0.7% of global GDP, from both state and corporate spending, through government investments and policies.

SRP is limited in many ways, from the relative investment given to electric private vehicles and biofuels compared to rail or infrastructure to support cycling, to the net investment and the speed of the ambitions. If imple-

mented, it would likely not live up to its environmental aspirations until 2023, let alone laying the ground for fast enough reductions after.

Nonetheless, it would be much better than the trajectory the global economy is currently on.

The lion's share of rescue packages are going into propping up the [fossil fuel economy](#). The wealth and power of the fossil fuel industry remain intact.

It is not at all clear that, once implemented, the SRP would clear the way of future obstacles sufficiently to put the fossil fuel industry – or emissions – into "structural decline".

For fossil fuel subsidies – around \$320bn in 2019 – the direction of travel if anything seems to be in the wrong direction, SRP recognises. Despite many current opportunities to axe them, "there are few signs" of acceleration of such efforts – if anything the opposite.

Tellingly, too, "[s]ome governments have seen an opportunity in the recent low market prices to boost strategic oil reserves, with longer term benefits for global energy security, or to take other actions."

Forcing a "green recovery" is possible. It is very far from inevitable. The labour movement must organise and fight to make it happen. □

Antisemitism report due soon

By Dale Street

On 15 June LabourList [speculated at length](#) about the pending publication of the report of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) on allegations of Labour Party antisemitism.

The EHRC enquiry was launched in May 2019, to investigate whether the Labour Party (or its employees or agents) had unlawfully discriminated against, harassed or victimised people because they were Jewish.

It was triggered by a complaint made by the Campaign Against Antisemitism, with additional substantial submissions lodged by the Jewish Labour Movement and Labour Against Antisemitism.

Earlier press coverage suggested that the EHRC report would be published in early 2020. But now it seems that the draft report will be sent to the Labour Party and, in part, to named individuals later this month, with a further 28 days set aside for further submissions.

As the LabourList article puts it, "the party is prone to leaks, (so) more information may emerge" even before the publication of the report in its final form.

Still missing is widespread, substantive, and clear debate on the idea which has paved the slipway to launch antisemitic ideas into the left – the idea of Israel being not like any other state with misdeeds, but uniquely evil, uniquely and secretly powerful, and uniquely to be shunned. □

Continue fight on Brexit

On 30 June the current legal deadline to apply for an extension to Brexit will pass. We have suffered a defeat. But rules can be changed, and we should continue the struggle to prevent a No Deal or hard Brexit in the midst of the fall out from the pandemic.

150 people attended a meeting on 18 June called by Labour for a Socialist Europe and Another Europe is Possible to debate the issue on 18 June. L4SE will be launching more campaigning soon.

- More at labourforasocialisteurope.org
- Write to your MP through the AEIP website: bit.ly/aeip-mp
- Sign the petition on the Parliament website: bit.ly/parlex □

Scientists say "1 metre? Not yet"

By Martin Thomas

Boris Johnson announced on 23 June that he plans to let pubs and cafés reopen from 4 July with only one-metre covid-distancing.

The Independent SAGE group of dissident scientists said on 18 June that "until there is evidence that infections have dropped to much fewer than 1,000 cases a day [the current 7-day average is 1,205, falling slowly] [one-metre] is not safe in indoor spaces particularly in restaurants, bars, or workplaces..."

The official SAGE scientists in late May blocked government plan to reduce the virus risk rating from 4 to 3, and got that move delayed to 19 June. One of them, Calum Semple, has now given a sort of yes to one metre. But their [last report](#) warns that crowded indoor spaces like "choir rehearsals, religious settings, parties, bars, restaurants, and nightclubs" have often spawned infection clusters.

Zeshan Qureshi and others have done a big [survey](#) of all the evidence (22 June). They rate 2 metres only a poor guess, but warn that "relaxing the 2-metre rule, particularly for indoor settings, might... risk an increase in infection rates".

The risk is a lot more than from reopening shops on 15 June, and it is heaviest for pub and café workers, there for whole shifts day after day.

Around late March, many workers forced virus precautions at their workplace, or closed it, by using their legal right under laws like Section 44 of the Employment Rights

Act 1996 to withdraw from spaces of "serious and imminent danger". The same action can win again.

It is not, in law, "industrial action", so doesn't need a ballot or notice, and can be done even without a union (though a union can help).

Devi Sridhar, another scientist critical of the government, [dismisses](#) "pointless debates about 1 or 2 metre distancing", arguing instead that the key is better test-track-isolate.

There are [arguments](#) that even the best test-track-isolate could be only a minor help amid Britain's current infection numbers. In any case, the British government system is poor. The government's planned phone app has been ditched; as far as we know phone-app tracing has done well in no other country either; and Independent SAGE [reports](#) "public health teams reached... some 77,600 contacts [27 May to 10 June]... the Serco call handlers... fewer than 10,000... We have no idea how many people contacted are actually isolating".

Lockdown-easing has "worked", with only local virus-comebacks, across Europe, but it looks as if in Iran and Israel inept easing has led to full-scale resurgences, and the USA may have the same. Don't let the Tories put Britain in the same category. □

Release Assange!

Julian Assange is due to appear in court again on 29 June. At the previous hearing, on 1 June, his doctors said he was too ill even to go to a video-link room in Belmarsh prison, where he is being held. The actual hearing on the USA's attempt to extradite him will be on 7 September. Once in the USA, he risks jail sentences of up to 175 years for publishing official US documents. Whatever we think of Assange on other counts, the extradition must be opposed. Demand he's released, allowed proper medical treatment and a return to Australia! □

The rich history of BME MPs

11 June was the 33rd anniversary of the election of Diane Abbott, the first BME woman MP, as one of the first four BME MPs since the 1920s. On The Clarion website, Sacha Ismail discusses the history of BME people in Parliament and how it is intertwined with that of the British labour movement.

• bit.ly/bmempsclarion □

New audio!

Listen, download or subscribe to [Workers' Liberty Audio](#) recordings of our paper, other publications, and many meetings. **New this last fortnight:**

- Solidarity 552 [part 1](#) and [part 2](#); 551 [part 1](#) and [part 2](#)
- [For one school workers' union!](#) Learning from industrial unionism. Intro from a discussion
- [Lois Weiner: Where next for the US left?](#) George Floyd protests, Biden, more

See workersliberty.org/audio for links to the audio version. It can also be found through many podcast providers: search "Solidarity & More". □

The Fate of the Russian Revolution volume 2 The two Trotskyisms confront Stalinism



Featured book

For revolutionary socialists the long march through the 20th century and beyond has often been over uncharted, unexpected, terrain. Understanding and fighting to purge the labour movement of Stalinism has been key. This book documents crucial debates in the 1940s between the two main strands into which Trotskyism divided. 798 pages, £19.99

workersliberty.org/books

Abolish the police? Overthrow capitalism!

By Martin Thomas

The slogan-title of Alex Vitale's book is *The End of Policing*. His detailed conclusion in the text, though, is that "policing needs to be reformed", with "a larger vision that questions the basic role of police in society".

DeRay Mckesson and others, prominent in the Black Lives Matter movement, have circulated both [a range of police reforms](#), and a [narrower focus](#) on curbing police powers. In the second exposition, some of the demands advocated in the first exposition are criticised as worthless, notably police body cameras and better training.

In June 1917 when Lenin advocated revising the Bolshevik party program in the light of the rise of the Soviets (workers' councils), he [proposed](#): "a more democratic workers' and peasants' republic, in which the police and the standing army will be abolished and replaced by... a people's militia".

Vitale and Mckesson are not quite on the same lines as Lenin, and Lenin's terse formula needs some "unpacking" in the light of events.

The message of an older US advocate of "abolishing the police", Angela Davis, is vitiated by her longstanding support for full-on police states in the old USSR and in East Germany. The same cannot be said against Vitale and Mckesson.

They are on the left fringe of the Democratic Party. Vitale is a member of the Democratic Socialists of America. Mckesson backed Bernie Sanders for the Democratic nomination in 2016. Mckesson is also a top manager ("Chief of Human Capital") for Baltimore city schools.

They both want socialistic change. But in their writings that is a remote and vague idea.

The slogan "defund the police" is motivated heavily on the need to fund social provision. To them transferring a bit from the police budget to social budgets seems more within reach than "tax the rich".

Their perspective is for existing city councils (etc.), operating within the existing capitalist structure, to reduce the scope, powers, and funding of the police bit-by-bit to zero.

Lenin, by contrast, was writing in a time and place when the old (Tsarist) police force had *already* collapsed and dispersed (in the *February* 1917 revolution), and the "people's militia" (an old socialist idea) had *already* emerged in the Red Guards run by the Soviets. "The substitution of a people's militia for the police is... *now* being introduced in most parts of Russia", [wrote Lenin](#) in mid-1917, arguing that to *consolidate* that and forestall the *restoration* of a Tsarist-type police the workers must end the "dual power" and win a Soviet government.

In the period of "war communism", the Bolsheviks had hopes of rapidly moving to a full "withering away of the state" and the abolition of formal legal procedures. In

early 1918 the Soviets were asked to set up militias and "people's courts", on the sketchiest basis. Even after the deep socialist self-re-education the Russian workers had had in 1917, that over-optimism proved foolish.

The pressures of civil war made the informality not a democratic boon but the opposite. A more structured special police, the Cheka, set up in late 1917, spun drastically out of control.

By the end of the civil war, they tried instead a regularisation of the "police" and a simplification and cheapening of justice in the spirit of what the Bolsheviks saw as the most democratic and liberal ideas about law elsewhere.

The Cheka was abolished in early 1922. Its replacement was designated as a detective agency only. But then the Stalinist counter-revolution intervened, and turned its name, GPU, into a byword for despotism.

If an "abolition" of the police were possible within the USA's overall capitalist structure, it would lead not to liberty but to selected "police" functions being operated instead (and worse) by mafias or private security forces, as they were against strikes and unions by the Pinkerton Agency in the late 19th century USA.

We want to push back the scope and powers of the police, to demilitarise it, to decriminalise areas of life, to improve mental-health and school provision, etc. and to cut police funding *as a result*. A low-paid police *in the same class structures* will probably just be more corrupt.

The general formula remains one of struggle to impose democratic checks on the police under capitalism, and then to replace it under a workers' government by a public-safety service democratically controlled by communities. For a whole epoch, as the Bolsheviks realised, it will be important for that structure to be "professional" in the sense of regularised, trained, structured, accountable, not ad hoc.

[Rahila Gupta](#) of Southall Black Sisters explains that the "communities" also need to be revolutionised.

Instead of "boycotting" the police, she explains, "we negotiate the minefield of conflicting priorities of race and gender by engaging with the police to safeguard women, but every time the police fail to carry out their obligations or overstep the mark, we hold them to account..."

"The community itself is a problem, riddled as it is with conservative, patriarchal and religious values... Furthermore, communities cannot be held accountable in the same way as the state". □

The problem is not police training, police diversity, or police methods. The problem is the dramatic and unprecedented expansion and intensity of policing in the last forty years, a fundamental shift in the role of police in society. The problem is policing itself.

Alex S. Vitale

The End of Policing

What cops really do

"Crime control", writes Vitale, "is a small part of policing".

In the USA cops make many more arrests than for example in Britain, yet "felony [serious crime] arrests are a rarity for uniformed officers, with most making no more than one a year". Nor, these days, do cops spend much time on patrol or "on the beat", theoretically preventing crime.

The bulk of police time goes on humdrum work and trying to establish an overbearing presence in worse-off communities.

In the USA, a tenfold expansion of prison populations, a big expansion of federal funding for the police, and the development of ultra-militarised SWAT teams, started in the early 1970s.

Militarisation accelerated in the 1990s. So did the placing of cops in schools. That has been followed by a militarisation of schools (metal detectors, frequent searches, heavy video surveillance); vast numbers of student exclusions; many arrests in schools (92,000 in 2011-2), even for things like "using... phones, disrespecting teachers, and getting into loud arguments"; and students injured or even killed in schools by police violence.

Also since the 1970s there has been a "massive expansion of the role [of police] in managing people with mental illness". "Anywhere from 5 to 20% of all US police incidents involve a person with a mental illness... Two million people a year are admitted to US jails; of them, 15% of men and 30% of women have a serious mental illness".

Post-1970s policing has also created "a revolving door in which homeless people are arrested [usually for petty offences] sent through the jail and court system and then released back" to the streets.

The pattern of the police focusing heavily against sex workers goes back longer. In the 1960s it was "the norm" for those interactions to function through pay-offs and bribes. Even now, the policing of sex work yields many arrests but neither reduces the volume of the work nor makes it safer.

New York City spent a million police hours on arrests for marijuana possession during Michael Bloomberg's term as mayor in 2002-13. Now half of all federal prisoners are there for drug crimes, and \$50 billion a year is spent on "the War on Drugs", while US average life expectancy has declined since 2014, partly because of the toll of prescription opioids.

US cops have increasingly constructed big databases of gangs, adding names to them with little evidence, and following up with mass raids and arrests.

Border policing – including giving non-citizens jail sentences for illegal re-entry – and political policing complete the roster of staple police activities. Vitale comments: "There really is almost no reason to deploy armoured vehicles and snipers to manage protests, even those where some violence has occurred". □

US police history

The USA actually has fewer police in proportion to population than Europe. Police pay differs hugely across the USA, and is often relatively lower than European rates. However, the USA jails many more people than European countries. Its cops arrest more people, are much more militarised, and kill many more people.

Since public social provision is weaker in the USA than in Europe, often, as Vitale reports, "the primary face of local government in poor communities is the police officer, engaged primarily in punitive enforcement actions". Compare, for example, The Hague. In the city budget, public safety (not only cops) is 2.3%. The other 98% is mostly for welfare, sustainability and improving mobility. Despite many sallies of police reform over a century or more, the police in the USA are a stronger autonomous "corporate lobby" than in Europe.

The Paris daily *Le Monde* (18/6) reports, for example: "Bob Kroll, the boss of the powerful Minneapolis Police Officers' Federation [which is] a corporation or a lobby more than a union... has been the subject of 20 internal inquiries during his career, and faced sanctions after three of them... [He] has transformed his organisation... into a war machine against all change."

"When the mayor banned military training [for the police, Kroll] announced that the Federation would pay for it for its members".

Minneapolis city council members, interviewed on radio, have reported that 50% of cops sacked from the Minneapolis force for misconduct get rehired.

The USA has generally been closer to deregulated-markets "capitalist anarchy" than Europe, and police forces were formed there later than in Europe. The New York police force was first set up in 1844. Cops got their jobs by bribing city officials.

In 1857 the New York state legislature abolished the city police and created a new force. That led to street-fighting between the two police forces, controlled only by the army, and it was some months before the new force prevailed.

Cops being "on the take" "remained standard procedure in many major departments until the 1970s", and then declined but did not disappear, reports Vitale. □



Wake up Labour!

The Labour Party must restart decision-making meetings, to be a campaigning force in the crisis, and hold councillors and MPs accountable! Sign here: bit.ly/w-u-l

Allow online Labour meetings

Demand permission for formal business to be conducted by Labour Party units online: bit.ly/allow-meet □

Still only 40% of care homes

By Stuart Jordan

Almost a third of Covid-19 deaths, over 16,000 people, have occurred in care homes. Care workers are twice as likely to die of Covid-19 as the general public.

A little acknowledged but major factor in these care home deaths is the low pay and insecure employment of care workers. It is estimated that around 440,000 care workers have no rights to occupational sick pay. If they develop symptoms of Coronavirus or a member of their household develops symptoms, then they are faced with an impossible choice: take time off on Statutory Sick Pay (just £95.85 a week) or continue to work potentially infecting vulnerable adults.

A Unison survey of 2,600 care workers found 8 out of 10 would not get paid if they had to self-isolate. The survey found many care workers and their co-workers are not always self-isolating because of poverty and fear of poverty. A GMB survey found 78% of care workers feared getting a test in case it meant they had to take time off on Statutory Sick Pay.

In the words of Nadia Whittome MP: "Those least able to afford to self-isolate are working with those most likely to die if they catch Coronavirus."

But [care workers](#) have been organising with the [Safe and Equal campaign](#) and in their unions and have been winning victories.

Unison North West has won a number of victories, securing full isolation pay for care workers in Salford and a number of other local authority areas.

In Scotland the government announced on 24 May that it was introducing an "Enhanced" Statutory Sick Pay for care workers. The details of this scheme are yet to be confirmed.

In Northern Ireland, the Department of Health announced on 3 June that it would pay 80% wages for any care worker that needs to isolate following public health advice.

Infection Control Fund

In England in mid-May, the government announced a £600 million Infection Control Fund for care homes. Among other measures this money is for "ensuring that staff who are isolating in line with government guidance receive their normal wages while doing so". At the time of issuing this grant determination this included staff with suspected symptoms of Covid-19 awaiting a test, or any staff member for a period following a positive test.

Local authorities were supposed to write to the government by 29 May explaining how the money has been used and reporting any problems. These returns were supposed to be made public. Some local authorities have complied, others have not.

Safe and Equal are encouraging supporters to lobby councils and collating information to find out if the £600 million taxpayers' money is reaching the frontline and specifically ensuring that care workers do not miss out if

they need to self isolate.

So far, Safe and Equal have information on 65 local authorities with responsibilities for over 6200 care homes. Of these just 40% say they pay isolation pay.

The information from the councils is very confused. Very few councils appear to understand the connection between sick pay and infection control. Throughout the pandemic there has been a staggering failure by the work-from-home management class and their allies in the media and top ranks of the labour movement to grasp the fact that millions of low paid, precariously employed workers cannot afford to isolate on the government's £95 a week Statutory Sick Pay scheme.

The government and public health authorities obviously understand the connection very well but have tried to address the problem within health and social care as quietly as possible for fear of rousing demands from other sections of the workforce.

Only 4 of 65

Just 4 out of the 65 councils appear to understand that full sick and isolation pay is necessary to safeguard vulnerable adults from risk of infection. Derbyshire County Council is one of those four councils: "if care staff are paid their normal wages there is greater chance they will take the right decision to self-isolate rather than needing to work to maintain family income".

Overwhelmingly the response from councils is a lack of understanding and indifference.

Most councils are more concerned about the financial issues. Many say that the £600 million is not enough to pay sick pay.

It is not obvious that this is true. There are 440,000 care workers who do not have ordinary rights to paid sick leave. If all those workers work full time (which they don't) and are paid £10 an hour (many are paid far less than this) then it would cost around £330 million for all of them to take two weeks off work. The government money is more than enough to cover this expense.

The problem is that care homes are suffering from years of underfunding, they are paid per bed and many of their residents have already died, and crucially they are private businesses that prioritise profits above all else. The Infec-

What we demand in the crisis

1. Requisition key sectors
2. Fight for workers' control
3. Make the labour movement an essential service, fighting on the issues listed here
4. Defend workers' rights. Work or full pay! Cancel rent, mortgage, and utility payments.
5. Take care of the worst-off
6. Defend civil liberties
7. International solidarity ☐

• See full text at bit.ly/what-d

• Animated video of full demands: bit.ly/demand-video

es with full isolation pay

tion Control Fund money is enough for isolation pay but cannot compensate for years of underfunding and profit-extraction.

At the moment the infection control fund money can only be paid for staff who are awaiting a test result or have returned a positive test. Thurrock Council point out: "The risk of care staff returning to work whilst they should be isolating does not just relate to those who are isolating as a result of a positive test. The 'ask' should be broadened to include those who are shielding... There are a number of scenarios to be considered that includes zero hours workers and those staff who do regular extra overtime."

Thurrock may have added that the tests are notoriously inaccurate and care workers should be paid for following public health advice without the additional condition of producing a positive test. Also, Covid-19 is just one of many infectious diseases that can kill a care home resident. For these individuals to be safe, care workers need the same sick pay and job security that is enjoyed by substantive NHS staff. The government's concession on isolation pay should be a stepping stone to a bigger union drive to win decent pay, terms and conditions and job security.

All Council returns point to the huge obstacles the privatised and fragmented care sector presents to running a

safe service. After lobbying from Unison, Islington council have said they would like care homes to ensure full isolation pay but have no mechanism to force private businesses to grant this to their employees.

The picture that emerges is a system that is broken, with no accountability to users or the general public and significant difficulties trying to get it to comply with basic safety measures.

Last year firms running care homes paid £1.5bn in dividends, directors' fees and other forms of profit, as well as rents which are many times higher than those paid by non-profit providers (i.e. another form of directing funds to capitalists). Six of the 26 largest providers have owners registered offshore in tax havens.

Whilst the private care sector enriches a few extremely rich individuals, it is radically failing in its duty to provide even basic level of safe care to its residents. The sector is well overdue to be taken into public ownership and run for people not profit.

Safe and Equal are encouraging people to lobby their councils and MPs, and are building a network of care workers to campaign and unionise their workplaces. □

- Abridged. Full text bit.ly/40pc-isol
- See safeandequal.org to get involved

Specific demands



Debate

By Becky Crocker

Dan Katz's [debate piece](#) (*Solidarity* 522, 17 June) is self-contradictory and unclear. It says Workers Liberty's programme to tackle racism combines the "specific demands against racist activity by the police, state bodies, and racist groups, and in opposition to racist government policy, with the idea of a united workers' movement which fights for basic, fundamental rights". But, [like the editorial](#) in *Solidarity* the week before, it offers no specific anti-racist demands.

It says, "In order to win the trust of black workers, white people in the unions and Labour Party must be seen to take up anti-racist concerns". But follows with, "So black and white workers' unity in common struggle on basic questions is a big part of the fight against racism". The second sentence almost directly contradicts the first. Is this article saying that we should raise specific demands to address anti-racist concerns? Or that addressing "basic questions" is enough?

The lack of clarity leaves us to guess the author's answer. The thrust of the piece is that addressing so-called "basic" questions is enough. The emphasis is on "workers'

unity on key questions: homes, jobs, education". It even says these basic questions "are also anti-racist questions", implying that no specific anti-racist demands are needed.

So clarity is needed. It is not enough to pay lip service to the idea of specific anti-racist demands while making arguments that imply that "all-class" issues are sufficient to fight racism. If we can agree that we need specific anti-racist demands *and* demands that unite the working class and promote class struggle, let's develop and push some of the issues emanating from the Black Lives Matter demonstrations inside the labour movement. □



Archiving audio

As *Solidarity* goes to press, we have [online](#) 182 tracks from meetings and publications. We add more every week. Many of them are relatively "timeless", but almost half of them are recordings of *Solidarity*, stretching back to #496. This week we will begin removing older issues of *Solidarity* from [our podcast feed](#). All content will remain [online on SoundCloud](#) where it can be searched through and listened to. □

- Podcasting and more: workersliberty.org/audio
- Our SoundCloud: soundcloud.com/workers-liberty

Ballot to enforce lockdowns



Debate

By Stuart Jordan

Solidarity is confused about the purpose of lockdown and in a muddle about what to do about the reopenings. The [editorial of 17 June](#) headlined "Still an emergency" argues "Solidarity is against *rushed* lockdown-easing, not *all* lockdown-easing [their emphasis]... We want workers' control over reopenings, not opposition to *all* reopenings [my emphasis]"

The problem is that the emergency exists because "infections are still running high", significantly higher than any other European country. If physical distancing, washing your hands, use of PPE and following isolation rules are sufficient for reducing the R rate then lockdown is unnecessary. If the infection rate is too high then these measures do not work.

Workers' Liberty is fond of quoting Lenin: "A 'negative' slogan unconnected with a definite positive solution will not 'sharpen', but dull consciousness, for such a slogan is a hollow phrase." The negative slogan in this case is the number of imaginary adversaries that the writer has invented in an attempt to define a position: people who have forgotten we are living through a global emergency, people who are in favour of indefinite lockdowns, people who are anxious, people who are not anxious enough. The attempt at a positive solution i.e. "workers' control" is contentless. The editorial dodges the central issue: if lockdown easing is being rushed then workers should oppose lockdown easing until such a point when we judge that it is not being rushed.

The editorial actually argues the opposite: "the official reopening of shops in England from 15 June, following the gradual reopening of cafes and pubs for takeaway in recent weeks, will probably 'work'."

The reality is that no amount of workplace workers control is going to make a workplace safe if there are large numbers of Covid-19 infected people out and about.

It is difficult to judge what the "safe" level of infection is for reopenings. A central obstacle to making this judgement is that the authoritative scientific body, charged with sifting all the evidence, operates in secret and its advice is filtered through the government who have their own agenda. We know that this body has been ignored and some individuals have been sidelined for speaking against the government.

To add content to the workers' control slogan we should demand transparency: that the SAGE committee advice is made public. We should demand access to the best scientific advice as a basic health and safety measure. This would not make reopenings risk free (these are live experiments) but it would make it safer. We have no faith in the government to act in our interests. The biggest safety threat within our workplaces is the general rate of infection, not the number of pedal bins or the number of

bottles of hand sanitiser.

Workers Liberty has rightly said that it should not pose as amateur epidemiologists. But this does not mean collapsing into de facto support for the government's pandemic response, nor conceding that this is terrain where workers cannot act. We need workers control not simply of "how" lockdown easing happens but "when".

I have previously argued for national unions to ballot members so that they have live mandates for national strikes over workplace safety giving workers the power to enforce lockdowns against government advice, and win demands such as making the SAGE advice public. Some arguments have been made against this proposal but none offer an alternative strategy.

The lockdown easing may "work" but we have a duty to prepare workers for the eventuality that it will not and to advocate effective independent working-class action to take power out of government hands and into the democratic control of the organised working-class. □

Fight step by step



Debate

Yes, we have demanded publication of the scientific evidence throughout. The government has now published a lot of the [SAGE documents](#). The "[Independent SAGE](#)" scientists have reported against reducing covid-distancing from 2m to 1m indoors just yet.

But dissident scientists like Independent SAGE have not opposed lockdown-easing. They have argued for improved test-trace-isolate.

Lockdown-easing has "worked" everywhere in Europe since 7 April. It looks like the "extras" now eased off made no big difference. Otherwise infection would be spreading now as it did in February or early March from small numbers.

To judge by death statistics, the UK is now where Italy and France were in late May. Those countries eased lockdowns from 4 May and 11 May respectively. That makes a case for experiments in easing in the UK now, unless we rate the social and health costs of continued lockdown very low.

We campaign for workers' control to make bosses comply with expert advice on reducing risk in the workplace. Our best weapon there is refusal to work on grounds of health and safety.

A while back Stuart wanted the school workers' union NEU to ballot, presumably in time to have a result and strike to stop school wider-opening on 1 June. But what would ballots be for now? The demand that workplaces *shouldn't have* reopened at a date maybe two months earlier than the strike is unlikely to unite workers. □

Martin Thomas

• Abridged. More: bit.ly/step-within

"Not my business, is it?"



Diary of an engineer

By Emma Rickman

This week's "Diary of an Engineer" tells a disturbing story about the racism which still needs to be dealt with in sections of our class, the working class.

A conversation from the fitter's office on my first week back on normal shifts. There are five people in the small cabin.

J: So he (S) texted me – "J, do you know this kid up your way? The really dark one?" I say "Well you have to give me a bit more to go on there pal, like what does his face look like? Have you got a photo?" He sent me this photo of this kid, laid out on the ground

J shows D the picture on his phone, who whistles and laughs

D: What's that about, then?

J: Went at him with a baseball bat, didn't he?

D: Fucking hell, he looks a bit out of it -

J: Well you'd know wouldn't you -

D: (Laughs) Yeah, yeah I've taken a few baseball bats in my life, J...

J: Apparently S woke up, heard this kid, said he wasn't really with it, slurring, and S grabbed a cricket bat – or baseball, I dunno – and "clock!"

(J drinks some tea)

So the neighbours called the cops – they're the ones who called the cops on S once or twice – cos they're hearing all this...

I: What, so S has clocked him on the front doorstep?

J: Yeah so they tell S they've called the cops and he goes and has a go at them, for not cleaning the blood off their front gate before the cops arrive!

D: It's amazing what you can get done for today, innit

J: Well actually S texted me – you should see the texts – I deleted them right away cos if anyone saw them, on his phone, on mine, he'd definitely get done. "J I've just clobbered this..." He's got to be careful with that, I deleted the texts right away.

Me: What was he doing? This guy S hit?

D: He was bothering the house, shouting at the kid's windows, bothering his kids.

L: If anyone was bothering my house he'd get more than a bat, I'm telling you now...

I: They'll send you on all kinds of courses for it now – training where you get "told off for being bad."

Later I talk with one of the apprentices:

Me: First day back, and someone's beaten up a black guy on their doorstep

J: I don't think it's racism though – the guy was attacking his house, he's entitled to defend himself

Me: He could've killed him, it's not right. And why was he at S's house? A stranger, nothing to do with S, middle of the night, sounded drunk -

J: Yeah but S didn't hit him because he's black, he hit him because he was bothering him, that's not racism -

Me: J said he sent him a text he had to delete or the police would "have him". I don't know what was in the text but it must have been racist or J wouldn't have deleted it.

J: I didn't see that part. We don't know for certain

Me: You sound pretty casual about this

J: It's not my business, is it?

Me: I thought S was a nice guy, one of my favourites

J: S's alright, he is a good guy. □

• Emma Rickman is an engineering apprentice in a Combined Heat and Power plant.

Stop Wabtec job cuts!

From Off The Rails

Bosses at the Wabtec rail refurbishment factory in Doncaster have announced a plan to cut 450 jobs in several waves, starting in August and running through to March 2021. The cuts would halve the workforce.

The plans are now out for consultation, and responding should be quick and easy: not one job should go! RMT [rail union] has already issued a statement opposing the cuts. Now we need shopfloor organisation to prepare action to resist them.

Wabtec is based in the USA, where it is one of the 500 biggest firms in the country, with a turnover of \$8 billion. Its books must be opened so unions can scrutinise bosses' financial case for the job cuts.

Britain needs an expanded, green rail network to confront the climate crisis – there is no shortage of work rail engineers could be doing. If Wabtec don't back down, then in a more rational world, the government would step in, take the factory into public ownership, and ensure production meets social need.

Sadly we don't live in that world, but if Wabtec workers stand firm, supported by the rest of the labour movement, and prepare to take whatever action necessary, then perhaps we can impose a small degree of that rationality on the chaos of the market. □

Subscribe to Solidarity

Trial sub (6 issues) £7; Six months (22 issues) £22 waged, £11 unwaged, €30 European rate.

Visit workersliberty.org/sub to subscribe

Or email your name, address and postcode to us at awl@workersliberty.org, or phone 020 7394 8923.

To subscribe with a standing order: £5 a month, or pay us more to support our work. Forms online, as above. □

Back to "conditionality"



Diary of a Jobcentre worker

By Adrian Noble

Some staff have spent the last couple of weeks calling the new Covid-19 claimants offering voluntary job support, work all staff are or were meant to be moved onto. But now we're being told that it's not voluntary for 18-24s, and that besides, "conditionality" – meaning regular phone appointments, mandatory work search activity and sanctions – is returning in July. Confusion and indecision reign.

Meanwhile our existing vulnerable claimants from pre-March have been left to rot, in many cases with no contact

or support in three months. They are the lowest priority in management's eyes, with all efforts on trying to find the new claimants non-existent jobs as soon as possible. Some of the more supportive staff are working through calling them, but this off their own initiative with no steer from management.

The tidal wave of new claims for Universal Credit has slowed to a trickle. The number of unemployed claimants has doubled since March. Every work coach has a caseload of over 300, a massive and entirely unsustainable increase on pre-pandemic levels which were already very difficult to manage. My diary was booked out over a month in advance as it was.

The management has finally sent equipment out to staff sent home due to vulnerability to coronavirus. About a third of staff are now working from home. Social distancing means there are no free desks in the jobcentre for them to return to.

Staff haven't forgotten the massive office closure plans of recent years. The only other jobcentre in the local authority shut a couple of years ago, so we've gone from three to one in 15 years. Remaining jobcentres have been at or past capacity for some time now. They recently got phones and lots are chomping at the bit to work, but the union has advised members not to use them yet as management haven't put a plan in place for how the colleague can notify a colleague for support if a claimant mentions suicidal thoughts. On the plus side, management have taken social distancing at the office seriously.

Senior management clearly have absolutely no idea what they are doing, as plans are ditched as soon as they are started. A few weeks ago, at the jobcentre a third of work coaches were trained to do back office benefit processing work, but as soon as the training was completed the plan was ditched. □

• "Adrian Noble" is a Jobcentre worker

£3,657 towards £10,000

Donations from David, Mark and Andrew and one other bring us up to £3,657 towards our £10,000 target by 22 November. Our supporters have been out at more Black Lives Matter demonstrations this week and report good responses, so circulation of our paper is increasing again from lockdown lows.

Our small reprint of our 2001 pamphlet *How to Beat the Racists* has also attracted interest, and copies are now with all our branches ready for the next demonstration or public sale. We are still waiting to find out when the industrial estate where our office is located will go back to 24 hour operation. Keep making your transfers or donations by PayPal, or send cheques to our office address. www.workersliberty.org/donate □

Stop this deportation!

By Emma Dalmayne

A vulnerable 21-year old Black autistic man named Osime Brown, was jailed in 2018 and informed he will be deported to Jamaica upon his release.

Osime is currently serving a five year prison sentence in Stoken prison for the theft of a mobile phone.

A witness for the defence stated in court that Osime did not take part in the street robbery that was carried out in front of him by several youths, and said that in fact he had tried to stop them from taking the phone from the victim.

It has since been found that Osime was convicted under "joint enterprise", a discredited legal rule that has resulted in many unjust convictions, mainly of young black men.

Osime's health has suffered while in prison to the extent of developing a heart condition that has required urgent surgery. A loop recording device has been put into his heart and he is now on medication, tires easily, and collapses often due to stress.

Osime is having meltdowns and displaying serious self-injurious behaviour due to depression. Osime is also Learning Disabled, has PTSD and dyslexia.

He has suffered racial abuse whilst in prison and is unable to comprehend the distance of Jamaica from the UK. He has asked his mother, who lives in Dudley, Birmingham, which road he should walk down from Jamaica to come and see her.

Osime has no support or family network in Jamaica and came here aged four.

There is a petition with over 19,000 signatures appealing to the Home Office to allow Osime to stay in the UK with his family. He has been failed by the government and deserves to be given support upon his release. To send him back to Jamaica will result in his death. □

• Sign at bit.ly/osime-b

Anti-racism on the Tube

On 18 June, the *Tubeworker* bulletin sponsored a meeting to discuss the Black Lives Matter struggle. The discussion was led by Glen Hart, chair of the RMT's Black and Ethnic Minority Members Advisory Committee. Here is a summary of the discussion at the meeting.

Some workmates and fellow union members have been making "All Lives Matter"-type arguments in response to the recent movement. Declaring that "Black Lives Matter" is not about suggesting other lives matter less, but merely affirming people of colour's rights to equality and justice in the face of ongoing racism and systemic oppression.

The issues raised by the protests are not just problems in the USA. They affect us too.

Britain has its own history of police violence against people of colour. And just as America must reckon with its history of slavery and segregation, so must Britain confront a history of slavery and colonialism.

Although we're brought up to believe the police "protect us", their history shows that, as an institution, their role is more about protecting property than people. We need adequate funding of mental health and community services to push back the role of the police.

Racial inequality is also something we experience directly in the workplace. 30.5% of the overall TfL workforce is BAME. In 2019, a white TfL employee earned on average 9.2% more than their BAME workmates. This figure is based on directly-employed workers' salaries only; if outsourced workers were included, it would be even higher.

Outsourcing itself can act as a form of discrimination; by outsourcing sections of the workforce with high concentrations of people of colour and migrants, such as cleaning, catering, and security, TfL/LU have created a situation where the majority-BAME/migrant sections of the workforce are those with the worst terms and conditions.

BAME workers have been disproportionately affected by Covid-19. This is because BAME workers are more likely to be in higher-risk, frontline jobs, with inadequate PPE, as the tragic murder of Belly Mujinga shows. Some

TfL bosses have spoken up in support of BLM; they should start by addressing racial inequality in their own company.

As workers and trade unionists, we need to organise.

Our unions must support BLM protests, and help develop a wider working-class anti-racist programme that demands equality in jobs, housing, services, and education. We also need to confront far-right counter-protests, and persuade white working-class people drawn to them that their interests lie in common struggle with workers of colour, rather than the toxic politics of nationalism.

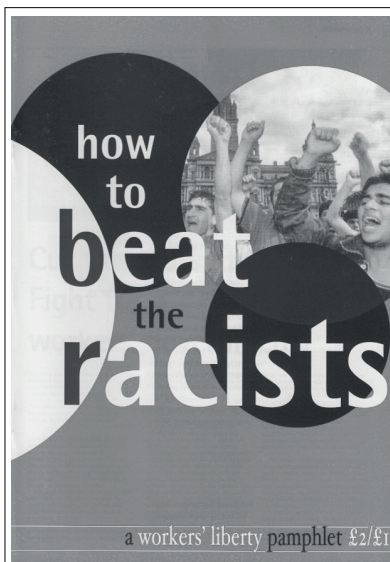
There is work to do within our unions, too. RMT, the majority union on LU, has never had a black person, or a woman of any ethnicity, in any officer role (Regional Organiser, Assistant General Secretary, or General Secretary). In Aslef, TSSA, and Unite too, the higher up the union hierarchy you go, the fewer black and brown faces you see.

Our unions must be more reflective of the workforces they organise. A good starting point is for BAME committees within unions to have more power to organise campaigns, rather than merely being "advisory".

We understand that some workmates have concerns about large demonstrations at a time when virus transmission is still a risk, and welcome creative thinking about ways to take action whilst maintaining social distancing. But we also defend the right to protest, and think it's important to remember that it's failures of government policy that are to blame for the high death toll, not anti-racist protests.

The 18 June meeting attracted a number of new workers who had not previously attended *Tubeworker* events, including unaffiliated activists and socialists from different backgrounds and tendencies.

Tubeworker, running since 1991 fortnightly, 3-weekly, or monthly, is – we believe – the longest continuously produced socialist industrial bulletin in British labour history. □



Published in 2001 after the far-right BNP more than tripled its votes in the election, fuelled by Labour, this pamphlet aims to convince labour movement activists of the importance of fighting racism, anti-racists of the importance of the labour movement – and fighting to transform it. Two decades later, this message is as relevant as ever.

workersliberty.org/pamphlets

Scrap health surcharge for all

After Johnson u-turned on charging migrant health and care workers to access the NHS: scrap the health surcharge for all. Petition: bit.ly/scrap-sur

Contact us

☎ [020 7394 8923](tel:02073948923)

✉ solidarity@workersliberty.org

✉ Write to us (industrial estate now re-opened): 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG

👤 Solidarity production team: Cathy Nugent, Martin Thomas (editor), Sacha Ismail, Simon Nelson, and Zack Muddle

Solidarity



For a workers' government

BAME PEOPLE AND COVID-19

By Sacha Ismail

Public Health England has published a report, *Beyond the Data: Understanding the Impact of Covid-19 on BAME Groups*, bit.ly/phereport.

It summarises multiple ways in which the Covid-19 crisis is far more of a crisis for black and brown people (and some other ethnic minorities, like Travellers) in the UK. It confirms that the Tories' sacrifice of many thousands of lives to the interests of profit and their neo-liberal and nationalist ideology is not just an assault on the whole working class but specifically racist.

However, the report's recommendations are extremely limited compared to the reality it depicts and the conclusions it half-indicates.

One piece of research *Beyond the Data* reviewed found that higher excess deaths due to Covid-19 were 1.5 times higher in Indian populations than in white British; 2.8 times higher in Pakistani populations; 3 times higher in Bangladeshi; 4.3 times higher in black African; 2.5 times higher in black Caribbean; and 7.3 times higher in other black.

Another piece found that, accounting for various other factors, people of Bangladeshi ethnicity who became ill from the virus had twice the risk of death when compared to people of white British ethnicity. People of Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, other Asian, Caribbean and other black ethnicity had between 10 and 50% higher risk of death. And so on.

The report makes clear biological differences are a minor factor. There are major cultural and ideological issues involved, including the impact of racism and discrimination on people's mental health and on the likelihood of accessing the services and support they need to stay safe(r).

People of Indian background are on average economically better off than white British people. But 16pc of doctors are Indian, and Indian over-65s are much more likely to live with younger people, including children.

For most BAME people, the impacts of racism as such and of cultural and occupational factors are heavily intertwined with questions of deprivation and class-based inequalities.

The report reiterates that most people in most BAME groups live and work in worse conditions than white British people, leading to worse health in various ways; and that such disadvantage is associated with greater likelihood of Covid-19 diagnosis, illness, complications and death. It is also associated with other health condi-

tions which increase the risks from Covid-19.

Other issues the report emphasises include the concentration of BAME people in jobs with a higher risk of exposure (mostly not well-paid and secure ones like doctors); poor housing, particularly overcrowding; and the impact of the gutting of public services.

The authors hosted consultations involving 4,000 people. They summarise the political thrust of the contributions as follows:

"Stakeholders felt that the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on BAME groups presented an opportunity to create fast but sustainable change and mitigate further impact. Change needs to be large scale and transformative. Action is needed to change the structural and societal environments such as the homes, neighbourhoods, work places – not solely focusing on individuals. There is a legal duty and moral responsibility to reduce inequalities."

Large scale and transformative societal change is exactly what is needed. Unfortunately but unsurprisingly, the report's recommendations do not measure up. Several are to do with further data collection and research – fair enough, but very limited. They include no class-based measures, beyond a few vaguely-worded aspirations, and the substantive changes that are included seem likely to be ineffective without them.

The report does not advocate clear immediate demands such as guaranteeing decent sick pay for all, abolishing "No recourse to public funds", reversing council cuts or building council housing – all of which would make a major difference. The crucial issue of sick pay is not even mentioned.

Almost all the problems the PHE report identifies highlight the need for a strong labour movement that can fight and win changes, from workplaces to communities to government. Yet the "stakeholders" PHE consulted included "faith groups" and "business leaders", but not trade unions – the largest organisations of BME people in the country.

Whatever this says about Public Health England, it also reflects how by its passivity the labour movement has made itself marginal at a time when it desperately needs to become central.

Socialists and antiracist campaigners must incite the labour movement, unions and Labour Party, to take up this research as an educational resource and banner, for discussion and campaigning around clear demands. □

• Abridged. Full text bit.ly/phe-bame