



RESISTANCE

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Mourn the Dead and Fight Like Hell for the Living!*

The devastating fire at Grenfell Tower led not only to a collective feeling of grief throughout the UK but also to anger. Ordinary people stepped in to help those in need, long before the government or council offered any meaningful assistance. The occupation at Kensington Town Hall and marches and protests throughout the country expressed people's outrage, fueled by decades of neglect and mistreatment by those with power.

The same capitalist system, with its endless pursuit of profit and its casual disregard for the lives of working class people, continues to take its toll across the UK. People die within days of having their disability benefits stripped away, are killed by illness or injury at work, fall victim to the cuts made to the NHS, are kicked out onto the streets by landlords, or driven to suicide by poverty and isolation. This shouldn't just make us sad, it should make us angry. These aren't natural disasters, but events caused by people who have the power and wealth to make decisions with horrendous consequences for the rest of us.

The murder of an anti-racist and anti-fascist protester at Charlottesville in the US caused equal outrage, both at the white supremacists and at Trump. The racist and fascist response to economic and social problems is a real danger and is being challenged by grass roots movements around the country.

We call this paper Resistance for a reason. There are plenty of people across the country already resisting (and winning). Acts of resistance can always use our support, but we need to go beyond support to really make an impact. We need to follow the examples of those fighting back, learn from them, and look for our own ways to fight for a better life. The opportunities are everywhere: in our communities and workplaces, in the streets, in the forests.

After all, what better time is there to fight than now? The political establishment is in tatters. Our leaders are still clueless about Brexit. Trust in the corporate media is at an all-time low. The UK economy continues to underperform, burdened by unnecessary cuts and uncertainty. In other words, our rulers have no idea what they are doing or where to go next. It's up to the rest of us to start organising to create the society we want to see, before they get their act together! The information in this paper should help get you started; we'll see you out in the streets (or in the pages of the next issue).

** Mother Jones, US miners' organiser*

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Topple Trump



The murder of Heather Heyer by a neo-Nazi was horrifying but not surprising. The Ku Klux Klan, the neo-Nazis and the alt.right have increased in confidence under Trump and indeed in his rambling and incoherent speeches he refused to completely condemn them. Heather's murder was not an isolated incident. It follows the shooting of a member of the revolutionary union, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in Seattle, the double murder on the Portland train, and many other incidents around the country.

As the General Defence Committee of the IWW stated: "Fascism is a deadly threat to all of us. There is no escape from the demand that we confront it. Politicians, the police, and the university will not save us. We cannot vote our way to safety. As always, police aided and protected the fascists, while permitting and assisting wholesale violence against counter-protesters. University officials refused to use campus security to protect students and others from a gang of hundreds of fascists".

Far from intimidating people the attack appears to have led to a strengthening of the movement against the growth of the far right. When the far right tried to rally in Boston shortly after Charlottesville, they managed barely a hundred supporters. They were surrounded by an angry crowd of 40,000. Trump labelled these as "anti-police agitators". A demonstrator was quoted as saying: "Our generation has been radicalised by police murdering people of colour. And cops shut down a massive section of Boston and protected about 25 rightwingers while 45,000 people joined counter-protests. I think for a lot of people it's clear what side the police are on. It wasn't on the side of the people protesting white nationalists even though Marty Walsh [the mayor of Boston]

talked tough earlier in the week".

This massive response threw fear into the far right. As a result 67 rallies across 36 states organised by the hate group Act for America were cancelled. Many actions in solidarity with the Charlottesville attack took place around the USA, and around the world. In Asheville, North Carolina a crowd gathered and tore down a statue of the Confederate general Robert E. Lee. San Francisco dockers called for a strike against a far right rally organised by the Patriot Prayer group.

The movement that is developing in America is radicalising. It sees how the police protect far right rallies, is increasingly aware that the police are a murderous and racist institution, and increasingly sees now that the whole problem of racism and white supremacy is a result of the system itself. For too long the alt.right and their allies in the KKK and the neo-Nazi groups have been tolerated and have become more and more confident under a President who is himself a racist, xenophobe and misogynist. Now they are starting to panic as mass resistance to them grows. They can be swept back, Trump can be overthrown. It all depends on mass action rather than waiting on possible impeachment.

Anarchism in the Age of Trump

Over the last couple of years, we have been hearing a lot of talk about how we have been ‘living in surreal times’. Hell, it’s even got into a TV ad. People are referring to the rise of populism throughout the world, in particular to the narcissistic orange clown now at the head of the United States, to Brexit, and to Marine Le Pen's battle for the French Presidency.

But, really, is this any different to much of what we’ve already had under capitalism in the past? In the first half of the 20th century, we went through two horrendous world wars, not to mention a number of devastating local wars. We had authoritarian regimes in many parts of the world and fascist governments in Spain, Italy, Portugal, Germany, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. And let’s not forget mass unemployment. Is this really that different to what is happening now?

Alongside the rise of right populism - Front National, UKIP, etc. - we’ve also seen a surge of left populism. In the United States, we have it with the Bernie Sanders movement within the Democrats; in Britain, it’s Corbyn-mania.

If there’s one thing that unites the followers of both Sanders and Trump, it’s a feeling of powerlessness. Their supporters agree about how international free trade pacts have subjected their lives and livelihoods to forces beyond their control. Services are cut or not adequately maintained. Many face problems over jobs and housing. Whole cities are swamps of unemployment. Factories and, indeed whole industries are closed down. All of this without explanation or accountability to communities.

People at the receiving end feel they have no voice, that no one speaks for them, and that they’re valueless. One way of dealing with this chronic alienation is to rise up and elect a political outsider, who describes the world as a horrible nightmare that only they can save us from. But there are much better ways!

As the Black Rose Anarchist Federation in the United States says in *Beyond Protest in the Age of Trump* (<https://itsgoingdown.org/beyond-protest-age-trump/>):

“We have been engaged in protest actions across the nation, mobilizing large numbers of people; but this is not enough. Now is the time to build and strengthen groups in our schools, communities, and workplaces, to not only resist the far-right agenda, but to move on the offensive while building bottom-up popular power in the process. There are three ways we can do this, and all of them are necessary: 1) maintain the protest mobilizations, 2) engage in efforts to criticize the right and put forward alternative ideas, and 3) build collective sites of popular power for resistance, as well as going on the offensive towards a more free and egalitarian society”.

In Greece, we can see how new systems of organisation are being developed. The horrendous economic situation there has generated momentum as more and more people feel sickened and disgusted by the efforts of capitalism, under

both right and left-populist rulers. As a result, many projects are being organised by anarchists, and receiving widespread support.

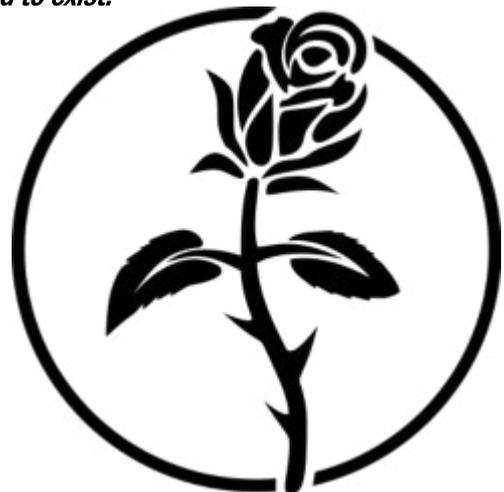
One such project is the Self-organised Health Structure of Exarchia (ADYE) in Athens. As well as using medicines donated by local pharmacies, ADYE uses funds from the bar upstairs and other donations to offer diagnosis and treatment for common ailments, in addition to a full range of dental services. Of course, more complicated cases are referred to hospitals in the area.

In another part of Athens, near the Acropolis, another anarchist clinic offers free dental care, whilst the garden of an occupied mansion has been turned into a vegetable patch, offering food to the area’s residents. Food distribution to needy families by anarchist groups takes place regularly. Some of the food is provided through cooperation with local farmers, and language classes are arranged for the children of the many migrants and refugees who live in the city.

The Notara Social Centre, which was founded in September 2016 by anarchists, provides temporary accommodation, basic medical treatment, clothing, and information for up to 130 refugees and migrants each day. This is one of several such centres, which together form a network of anarchist-run dining collectives providing food for local people.

Achilles Peklaris, a journalist and anarchist activist, said that Notara: “is far more organised than the camps run by the government”. ‘When you mention the word “anarchy”, most people think of chaos and disorder’, he told Al Jazeera. ‘But if your world view depends on a leader to tell you what to do, then we feel sorry for you’.

These are words of advice and concrete examples of practical organising that need to be taken up in Britain. Whatever government rules us, we must organise to both resist and to exist.



Latest Battle Against the Racist Vans

If you haven't seen our previous coverage of the fight against racist vans, then an introduction may be in order. The Home Office vans transport teams of the UK immigration enforcement on legally dubious raids to harass people of colour, break up communities, and detain migrants. All so those in power can continue to blame a section of the working class for the problems with jobs, housing and healthcare that the decisions of the rich and powerful have caused.

Across the country many working class communities are no longer putting up with these attacks, and are successfully fighting back. In many areas things started with spontaneous shows of strength from locals as they confronted and forced out the Home Office teams. Other tactics have varied from sabotaging of the vans themselves to the publication of posters and leaflets giving advice to those targeted by or witnessing a raid. Activists even managed to surround a moving van with bikes, slowing it down and advertising its presence to those around them.

This resistance - and a distinct lack of snitching - appears to have left the Home Office without any easy targets to bump up their numbers. As a result they've turned to an unlikely source of collaboration, homelessness charities. At least two in London, Thames Reach and St Mungo's have taken up the offer. This is penalising people who followed all the rules when coming to the UK, only to fall on hard times (like many of us have). It also means that many of the most vulnerable in our society will be too wary to seek help.

Initially the charities downplayed their involvement, saying they only acted to help rough sleepers looking to voluntarily return home. However as more detailed information has been exposed about forceful detention they've found themselves in hot water. A campaign of 'subvertisments' across bus stops, tube trains and city walls is gaining them a great deal of attention - and starting to lose them donations. We can only hope they learn that no one likes a snitch.

Link: <http://antiraids.net/>



Organising at Work



Bogus self-employment? Outsourced and underpaid?

OK, so your working conditions are crap and going downhill fast. It would be easy to think that you're stuck with them, but you're not. Of course, you'll have to fight to change them, but change them you can. Here are some practical tips to get you started.

Ask questions and listen to the answers

Talk to your colleagues. Ask about their concerns and pay attention to what they say. This might be the first time that anyone has taken their concerns seriously. Meetings might be good, but nothing beats a good ol' face-to-face chat. Some of your workmates will be content with just having a moan, but some will be prepared to do something. Start with them, however few. You'll have to be discreet though - management will be quick to spot a 'potential troublemaker'.

Map your workplace

Knowledge is power. Well, not quite, but it's a good start. Go about finding out as much as you can about your workplace and your employer. Start mapping your structure: distribution by location, by mother tongue, etc. Get copies of your employer's policies and procedures, including typical contracts. Then you should find out about your employer's business - where is it vulnerable? Is public image a concern?

Organising and the balance of power

Organisation doesn't need to be bureaucratic, but it must exist. Initially a contact list and somewhere to share information may be all you need, and you can

work up from there. The purpose of organising is to change the balance of power to your advantage. Going to a disciplinary with a workmate is important, but solving individual problems won't improve your working conditions. The only thing that's going to do that is making management understand a concern relates to everybody, and that there will be problems for them until that concern has been resolved.

Find natural organisers and get your colleagues involved

Every group has its movers and shakers, and the groups that form at work are no different. If you've managed to get these workers on board, you've come a long way, but you should be wary of the supervisor who is 'everyone's friend', they are not, they will side with management.

Most of your workmates will develop through active participation, so when someone shows an interest, suggest something practical they can contribute, such as finding out a piece of information or translating something. Make sure to take interest in the outcome, but don't patronise and don't overwhelm. With workers new to action, start small and scale up!

Start with small victories

Confrontation with the boss is inevitable. However, small victories will help to build confidence in the group and draw in others as more of them realise that it pays to fight. Every positive action makes it possible to win greater victories. Organising is about tipping the power balance in your favour.

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Be prepared for setbacks

When the time comes, the boss isn't just going to roll over, so it's better to be prepared for setbacks. It's unlikely you'll be successful first time, so be patient and remember that bosses and organising opportunities come and go. An unforeseen event could prove to be a valuable opportunity.

Retain your sense of humour

Remember that you are trying to create a better future. Use your imagination: cartoons, songs, joke, stories - you get the idea. Try to accentuate the positive and remember to share your vision and your conviction that you will win.

You are not alone

There are now numerous fighting unions across the

UK that you can join for support, advice, and solidarity. Look for branches of the Industrial of the World or the Solidarity Federation (SolFed) near you. In London, look out for United Voice of the World (UVW), IWGB and CAIWU as well.

Want to know more?

The AF pamphlet *Work* is available free on our website afed.org.uk. As well as a deep look into what work is and does, it includes practical steps to win in your work place. Libsoc rants also looks at this on youtube (search libsoc rants work).

We also highly recommend the Solidarity Federation leaflets 'Stuff Your Boss (doesn't want you to know)' and Health and Safety, both available from them at solfed.org.uk.



From Bristol to Berlin, the Gig Economy Fight Back Continues

In Resistance 161, we reported on Deliveroo workers in London fighting for better treatment. Since their victory that fight has continued to spread. In January, Deliveroo trainers in Bristol joined the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) union, and went on a one-day strike. The company quickly gave in, handing the riders numerous improvements to safety and working conditions.

Up in Leeds, Deliveroo attempted to punish seven riders who were attempting to organise, firing two and reducing the others to zero hours a week. This only caused more problems for them, however, with the IWW and Plan C joining forces and 100 riders descending on Deliveroo's HQ! In the face of this, the company reinstated the seven couriers, having already given in to their demands: allowing riders breaks and the option to work for other companies.

In Berlin, Freie Arbeiter Union (FAU), an anarchist union, has been helping to organise food couriers who are facing issues that will seem familiar to anyone who works in the gig economy. "Slowly the conditions are getting worse", said one rider. "They pay you one Euro less every month, or they make you wear a uniform when they didn't before. They just don't seem to consider our situations".

Another spoke up about hours: "They used to guarantee hours, but they've stopped doing that now. We have to spend hours at home, just messaging other riders to get more hours, and we'd like pay for those administrative hours".

Amongst other demands, the group in Berlin wants more transparency about working hours, and a guarantee that each rider receives enough hours to make a living. They launched their campaign in May, with a demonstration that saw dozens of riders cycling through the city as a bloc. More action is promised until victory is theirs!

If you're a Deliveroo rider and want to improve things for yourself and your colleagues, the IWW and IWGB are linking up to organise riders across the UK. You can follow the struggle in the Rebel Roo Bulletin, published by Plan C at <http://www.weareplanc.org>.

Struggle For the Soul of Pride

In the decades since the first Pride marches of 1970 there have undoubtedly been massive gains made in the fight against persecution. Pride is, and should always be a celebration. A celebration of diversity, of power and of how far we've come. It seems however that many of those in positions of power would rather we forgot HOW we've made it this far - and how far we have left to go.

The first Pride was the anniversary of an anti-police riot. We should never forget this. It was lesbian, gay, trans and queer people (and many of them people of colour) out in the streets of New York fighting for the right to exist. Every step we've made since then has been no less of a struggle. We've fought the government, we've fought major corporations, and fought the world's largest religions. We've clashed with homophobes and transphobes on the streets, in our work places, even within our own families. We've proved beyond all doubt that we are powerful, and that we can change the world without any help from on high. This is what they want us to forget.

Pride should be for us, all of us. Everyone one of us that has faced persecution for not fitting into a narrow definition of normal. Normal sexuality, normal gender, normal relationships. So why do we feel like outsiders? Why does Pride seem so unrecognisable in many cities. It's all expensive wrist bands, unaffordable drinks and corporate sponsorship. As if it's not very possible to be queer and poor. It's all tacky merchandise, and rainbow flags hanging from the windows of banks. As if we were a harmless tourist attraction, rather than a movement fighting for justice. Most of all it's police and politicians. Wanting to act like the battle is over. That they aren't still KILLING US for being queer. That LGBTQ people aren't on the receiving end of far more brutality and cold indifference from the state than our straight and cis neighbours. That trans women aren't forced into men's prisons, that

they aren't stripped and beaten by the cops. "The struggle is over!" they say, "Buy your vodka, dance for an evening and then life can return to normal". They've forgotten one key thing though - we've spent our whole lives fighting against normal.

In London, Lesbians and Gays Support the Migrants took the front of the march from under the noses of the police. In Bristol 100s of anti-police and anti-racist leaflets were handed out by local queers. In Nottingham marchers carried placards opposing prison and deportations, and praising queer and trans people of colour, whilst in Manchester last year the group Direct Action for Trans Health blockaded the police as they attempting to join the parade. Many marchers across the UK also expressed solidarity with Istanbul Pride, the previously large scale march which has been violently prevented by the Turkish police for the past three years. More recently in Glasgow, five people were arrested when they protested against Police Scotland leading the Pride march there. And do you know what the organisers of Pride Glasgow did? They went and issued a statement that they were "extremely disappointed" with the protestors!

Across the world the battle to keep pride relevant to our past and present struggles remains. To remind people that we're not 'putting too much politics in pride', we're rallying against those that want to drag the politics out. So however you celebrate next time Pride comes to your town, make sure you never forget where it came from.



Because They Were Poor: The Grenfell Fire



It is a truly terrifying thought but the Grenfell Action Group firmly believe that only a catastrophic event will expose the ineptitude and incompetence of our landlord, the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO), and bring an end to the dangerous living conditions and neglect of health and safety legislation that they inflict upon their tenants and leaseholders. *Grenfell Action Group, November 2016.*

The people who died and lost their homes – this happened to them because they are poor. *Akala, rapper, poet, and local resident.*

Regeneration is a euphemism for ethnic and class cleansing. *Ishmahil Blasgrove, writer and local resident.*

A long-time radical housing activist, Anarchist Federation member, and very angry Londoner does what no public inquiry has ever managed: put the blame for an atrocity where it truly belongs, and not taking decades to do so.

Guilty: Boris Johnson. When Mayor of London, he put through cuts which led to the loss of 552 firefighters and the closure of 10 fire stations, including the one closest to Grenfell Tower. This was despite pre-election promises not to do so. When questioned over this at the Greater London Assembly, he said: 'Get stuffed'. The loss to the fire services meant a slower response time to the fire, with firefighting teams having to be called in from outside London.

Guilty: Kensington and Chelsea Council. And not just one executive who was forced to resign! The council repeatedly ignored warnings for years from residents about fire hazards. They attempted to shut down a blogger, Francis O'Connor, member of the Grenfell Action Group (GAG), after he warned about fire hazards at Grenfell. They sent a lawyer to threaten him, which he ignored. Nicholas Paget-Brown, then leader of the council, attended a private dinner to which he was invited by organisers of the MIPIM (property developers' event) conference in 2015. The council has had plans to cleanse the residents and build luxury flats in the neighbourhood for the last three years. Paget Brown then tried to put blame on the residents by falsely saying that they objected to water sprinklers. The council has also been caught attempting to label as 'intentionally homeless' those

Grenfell Tower survivors who do not wish to be rehomed hundreds of miles away.

Guilty: Kensington and Chelsea Tenants' Management Organisation. The 'arm's length' body set up by Kensington and Chelsea Council to manage Grenfell Tower ignored tenants' warnings. It was handed £11 million by the council to manage the block, and in 2015-2016, its bosses got a grand total of £650,794 in salaries!

As GAG wrote: 'We believe that the KCTMO have ensured their ongoing survival by the use of proxy votes at their Annual General Meeting that see them returned with a mandate of 98% in favour of the continuation of their inept and highly dangerous management of our homes,' and that 'it is our conviction that a serious fire in a tower block or similar high density residential property is the most likely reason that those who wield power at the KCTMO will be found out and brought to justice! The Grenfell Action Group believes that the KCTMO narrowly averted a major fire disaster at Grenfell Tower in 2013, when residents experienced a period of terrifying power surges that were subsequently found to have been caused by faulty wiring. We believe that our attempts to highlight the seriousness of this event were covered up by the KCTMO, with the help of the RBKC Scrutiny Committee, who refused to

investigate the legitimate concerns of tenants and leaseholders'. This was written in November 2016!

KCTMO was given a 'deficiency notice' last year by the London Fire Brigade after an audit at another of its properties.

Guilty: Gavin Barwell. Now Theresa May's Chief of Staff, the then Housing Minister in 2013 promised to review Part B of the Building Regulations 2010, relating to fire safety, but the review never happened. This was after a fire at another tower block, Lakanal House in Southwark in 2009 that killed six people. Instead, housing ministers have sat on it for four years!

Guilty: Brandon Lewis. Another Tory Housing Minister, who sat on information about fire risks at blocks like Grenfell because it would 'discourage building'. He waved away suggestions about installation of water sprinklers in 2014, saying it was 'all red tape'.

Guilty: Rydon Group Ltd. Despite already making tens of millions from public projects, Rydon decided it needed to squeeze every last penny of profit out of the Grenfell redevelopment that it was in charge of. Even if it meant risking residents' lives, they installed cladding

panels that posed a fire hazard and were already banned in the US and Germany. Not that they are the only corporate contractors who are responsible, but many others, including the cladding manufacturers Arconic, who also put profit ahead of lives. Rydon are set to start a £65 million housing contract with Ealing Council, just a few miles from the site of the atrocity.

Guilty: The Conservative Government. As well as back-bench Tory MPs who voted against a motion to make 'homes fit for human habitation' in 2016, with a clause to undertake regular electrical checking. Among these were 72 MPs who are also landlords, including the present Police and Fire Minister Nick Hurd. The then Local Government Minister Marcus Jones said it 'would result in unnecessary regulation and cost to landlords'.

But GUILTY most of all is the whole class system: capitalism itself. It has unleashed its worst on the working class across the globe, with vicious attacks on the services we rely on, on the income we need, on our very lives. All of this has been done in the pursuit of profit - sacrificing out wellbeing and our survival, to make the obscenely wealthy even wealthier. This system should be sentenced to death.

Four Ways You Can Support the Survivors of Grenfell

Amplify Their Voices

You would hope that those most directly impacted by the atrocity at Grenfell would be listened to the most. Unfortunately, many reporters are spinning their own twisted narratives on events, or are cutting short interviews that breach the 'official line' on events. We need to keep spreading the survivors' words far and wide, in whatever medium possible. As well as social media, read up on the Grenfell Action Group (GAG) website (links at the bottom). GAG was formed in 2010 in opposition to developments which were, and still are, considered a 'gross overdevelopment of an inappropriate site' that would destroy one of the few local green spaces. There are also statements released by the Radical Housing Network (RHN), which GAG has been a part of since 2014.

Contribute to the Fighting Fund

The RHN is raising money for the Grenfell Action Group Fighting Fund, to cover legal fees and other organisational costs in what is likely to be a long campaign for justice and peace of mind. The link to the justgiving.com page is at the bottom, but if you want to avoid the website's fees, you can make a direct transfer with the following info...

Reference: GAG
Sort code: 08-92-99

Account number: 65779994

Act in Solidarity – Not to Take Control

Kensington has welcomed hundreds of people who have volunteered their time on the ground to offer aid and assistance. Less welcome are those activists who have descended upon the residents as soon as Grenfell hit the news, looking to 'organise' them and run things on their behalf. The response to this has mainly been 'have some decency, and back off!' They have been through a horrendous trauma and have already proved themselves more than capable of being leaders in their own struggle. What they need is support, not someone telling them what to do and how to do it. If, like most people, you genuinely want to help, the Grenfell Support page has an up to date list of ways to do so.

Keep up the Pressure

We need to keep pressure up on the politicians and corporate leaders responsible at every level. History has taught us that those responsible will often try and 'ride out' the anger rightfully aimed at them for years, or even decades, in the hope that it will eventually subside. But we need to show them that it won't subside, that we won't relent until we have justice. There are many ways you can do this, from letters and tweets, to vibrant demonstrations and

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direct action. Show them that this is not something we will let them hide from.

We leave the final words to one of the residents: *"We welcome the government intervention, but we want to see all levels of the council held to account. We need resignations from those responsible for planning. We need dignity for the victims and real respect for those who live in social housing. We won't feel justice has been done until there is a complete criminal investigation and we know who is*

truly responsible imprisoned just like we witnessed entire families imprisoned in the fire".

Links:

<http://radicalhousingnetwork.org>

<https://grenfellactiongroup.wordpress.com/>

<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/grenfellactiongroupfightingfund>

<https://grenfellsupport.wordpress.com/>

Edinburgh Mothers Fight the Benefits Cap!

Government Cuts

The recent introduction of an upper limit on the amount of money someone can receive in benefits has been a direct attack on people up and down the country. This benefits cap limits families to a maximum £384 per week. At the same time it places a two-child limit on Child Tax Credits. These cuts have led to families losing hundreds of pounds from their already tight monthly living allowance. This is causing starvation and homelessness - literally putting babies onto the street!

Social Cleansing

At the same time as this is happening, house prices in Edinburgh have been purposefully inflated by the SNP and Labour coalition in the council. This has been undertaken through a combination of mass-gentrification and social cleansing projects. Housing schemes are sold to private developers for "regeneration". The area is demolished, fewer houses are built than were originally in the space, and only a third to a half of those are given over to social housing.

In 1994, Edinburgh had 62,500 council tenancies. Today it's only 19,842. Getting a new build council home is made difficult and often requires an interview. Only people deemed "suitable" are given a new home - a sly way of moving poor people out of an area while only giving new houses to those with stable jobs. At the same time, older properties stand empty for months or even years, because 'they require repair before being suitable for habitation'. Despite this claim, locals say that most of these empty properties require only minor repairs and decoration. The real reason they stand empty is to help prepare the area for the next big council sell-off to private developers.

"Go sleep in the park"

Pilton is a housing scheme in the North of Edinburgh. In this one area alone the benefits cap has caused an uproar as it hit 11 families, who between them have 42 children. These families

face imminent eviction if they cannot find hundreds of pounds per month to make up for shortfalls in housing benefit. One mother of three, Melissa Gaynor, was receiving housing benefit of £785 to cover the costs of a suitable family home. When the benefits cap caused her to lose almost £400/month she went into arrears on her rent. As the problem grew she spoke with the council, looking for help. They gave her the option of going into a B&B.

These B&Bs are terrible doss houses, with reports already in circulation of a family of four being forced into a single chronically damp room with no kitchen or laundry facilities, only a kettle. One young girl suffered huge trauma and fear to the point of wetting themselves regularly. On top of this are all the other problems of extreme poverty, including people those with acute mental health needs and or addiction problems receiving no support, antisocial behaviour, and frequent police violence at all times of the day and night. Placing families in these B&Bs used to be banned, only used in the direst of circumstances. Last year there were 10 families in total placed in B&B accommodation. Now, with arrears finally catching up to people since the cap was introduced, a single area of Edinburgh is going to top that figure in a single month.

Understandably, Melissa refused the B&B, fearing for her families' safety. The council showed no compassion and said that she could take what was offered or she would have to take her family and go sleep in the park. This was widely seen as unacceptable by people throughout the city.

Mothers Fights Back!

When Melissa had to go back to fight the council, people across Edinburgh turned up to demonstrate at the council offices. At the same time practical help was given in calling the emergency housing unit and helping advocate for the situation. No suitable options were given at this time and Melissa was forced to move in with her mum, overcrowding

the home. That said, this was not the end of the matter, only the beginning.

The next day we went in solidarity with a delegation of the Pilton mothers to the City Chambers, to press the issue to the councillors and demonstrate the level of support those facing eviction had. While some of the mothers were able to get into the public galleries, much of the space ended up being taken up by men from the various socialist parties keen to put their banners where the local press would see them. Anarchist Federation members and other local anarchists waited directly outside the chamber, trying to help the rest of the delegation get into the public gallery.

Inside, the council opened their new session with a gold sceptre, a gold bejewelled sword, and a bloke in a fancy suit being given a huge golden necklace. While those of us in the corridor used our bodies and prams to block the way, the mothers and families in the gallery section made sure their concerns were raised - asking that the council use the powers at their disposal to make discretionary payments to cover the shortfall. Having hit the point home the procession continued, followed out by councillors of all the different parties.

Those from Labour and the Conservative Parties were callously indifferent and refused to discuss the option of covering the cost for housing. The Greens made well-meaning sounds yet were still willing to take part in a charade that is leaving people homeless, mothers and children on the street. The SNP tried to blame Westminster while withholding discretionary payments, turning to leave when their tricks were exposed. Lefty men carried on taking up space that should have been prioritised for the mothers, claiming their opportunism was solidarity. However, through all this, the mothers themselves

stood up and cried shame on the council and showed that they are ready to fight. This struggle isn't over and it won't be until everyone has a decent place to call home. The mothers themselves have drawn up a list of demands that over the coming weeks:

Edinburgh Council must:

- Pay full discretionary housing payment (DHP) to completely cover rent
- House homeless families in decent flats in suitable areas - not in substandard hostels/ B&B's
- Build more social housing
- Ensure temporary accommodation meets acceptable standards
- Immediately repair empty houses - temporary accommodation flats are lying empty

The Scottish Government must:

- Allocate sufficient funds to councils to cover full discretionary housing payment for the benefit cap - just as campaigners won for the Bedroom Tax

The Westminster Government must:

- Scrap the benefit cap

Updates

- One of the Pilton mothers have been given a temporary home that will lead to a council home. This is directly thanks to the protests, the struggle to ensure everyone gets suitable housing continues
- Mr Justice Collins ruled that the benefit cap was: "causing real misery for no good purpose" and unlawfully discriminates against single parents with children under two years old who do not have easy access to childcare that would allow them to work.



Rent Strike in Toronto

Earlier this year two hundred renters went on strike in Toronto's Parkdale neighbourhood. The strikers demanded that their landlord, MetCap Living, withdrew its applications for rent increases above the provincial guidelines (totalling 15% over three years), and carry out the necessary repairs on their homes.

According to Ontario law, the increases sought by MetCap are allowed, once they have been approved by the Landlord Tenant Tribunal. But the tenants opposed the increases on the basis that the landlord is trying to price residents out of their homes. As the law allows landlords to raise rents as much as they like once the rental unit is vacant, this provides a financial incentive for landlords to evict longer-term tenants.

Around 90% of Parkdale residents rent their homes, but in all of Toronto, Parkdale is where residents spend the greatest proportion of their household incomes on rent, at nearly 50%. And so, amidst soaring rental prices and rapid gentrification of their neighbourhoods, residents rose up in defence of one of the last remaining working class neighbourhoods around downtown Toronto, and called a rent strike.

Two months on, the rent strike had grown to more than 300 tenants from 12 apartment buildings, all demanding that the application for rent increases for six mid-rise apartment buildings be withdrawn.

As well as the rent strike, activists pursued other actions in the hope of getting the applications withdrawn. Parkdale residents headed to the annual general meeting of the Ontario Landlord's Association. However, on learning that tenants were coming the meeting was disbanded and cancelled.

Darren Shaw, MetCap Property Manager, ran into a group of strikers who tried to deliver a letter to him demanding necessary repairs be carried out on their neighbours' property. The tenants' bedroom had become uninhabitable due to water damage from flooding every time it rains. However, Mr Shaw wouldn't comment, refused the letter, and ran away, calling the police.

Tenants also occupied the personal office of John Tsangaris, Vice President of Operations for MetCap, after he refused to listen to their demands.

In mid-August tenants claimed they had won the rent strike with several significant concessions, including a lower rent increase. One tenant was quoted as saying "We won this strike because we refused to play by the rules. Parkdale came together as a community and organized to defend our homes and we came out on top". The rent strike is a powerful weapon, as students at University College London confirmed in June when they were awarded a £1.5m pledge following five months of action.

As the rent strike stated: "The organizing of hundreds of working class people in Parkdale, including us and our neighbours, has shifted the balance of power between landlords and tenants in Parkdale in our favour".



Say No to Prisoner Exploitation!



International Workers' Day (May 1st) saw the UK's first national day of action against prisoner exploitation. Simultaneous pickets happened outside outdoors store Blacks in several cities, including Bristol, Bath, Liverpool, and Manchester. Blacks are known to stock and sell products from Maypole Ltd, which uses prison labour to make trailer boards for outdoor companies. The message that picketers wanted to get across was that shops like Blacks and Millets should stop stocking Maypole products until it stops exploiting prisoners. Simply put: 'Stop prisoner exploitation'.

But it's not all just surrounding the abhorrently low pay prisoners get for their work - a meagre £6 to £25 for a full working week. Prisoners have no rights to organise, no contracts, no sick pay - they have no use of the gains that workers have fought and died for over the centuries. And if a prisoner refuses to work, they are punished via the IEP (Incentives and Earned Privileges scheme), losing visits and time outside. They are the ultimate captive workforce for capitalist industries and have been used to break strikes, while simultaneously taking jobs out of communities and into prisons.

'If we can get stores like Millets, Screwfix, and Blacks from using Maypole Ltd or another company that uses prison labour, then we can make any private business think again about whether or not to use prison labour,' said one protester. 'If we can achieve this, then this will be a great step to getting rid of the prison system itself, which will be all the better for the working class'.

Expect more direct actions like these, after the first ever No More Prisons conference for the prison abolition movement took place earlier this year in Manchester. Groups such as IWOC (Incarcerated Workers Organising Committee), Manchester No Prisons, Leicester Prison Resistance, Empty Cages, and Smash IPP were all able to attend, as well as groups representing LGBT and women prisoners, and those against migrant detention centres. The conference was well-attended and allowed for action planning of the protests in May.

But why should we fight the prison system?

The UK has the most privatised prison system in Europe, and since the early 1990s, when the first private prisons were built, prisons have increasingly been used to line the pockets of both companies and individuals. Prisons have always been for those in power, being used as a long-standing tool of social control and repression against working class communities.

With the building of privatised mega-prisons in the UK, we are seeing the expansion of industrial prison complexes, resulting in companies getting cheap (if not free) labour. At the same time, pressures on poorer communities are increasing, with benefits being stripped, and both zero-hour contracts and gig-economy dominating our working life. This will lead people into desperation and, ultimately, to more people having to commit 'crimes' to survive, therefore increasing the number of prisoners. The companies that use prison labour will profit from those who are trapped inside the system.

Another area of concern is that the new prisons are being built out in the countryside, with few transport links, while the older-style city prisons are being shut down. This will lead to further isolation of prisoners from their loved ones, leading to potential mental health issues and a greater lack of outside support.

Thankfully, the resistance to the prison system has begun, with the No More Prisons conference, picket lines, and

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unionising of prisoners and migrants in detention centres. Further actions are planned for this year, and planning for the next conference is already under way.

If you want to join in, then please help by raising awareness of why prisons are harmful, and join your local prison abolition or solidarity group, such as IWOC, Empty Cages, or ABC (Anarchist Black Cross). If there isn't a local group, then why not start your own? Take to the streets and to the internet to protest the exploitation of prisoners. More information can be found at the websites listed below. If you know anyone inside, let them know of these groups, as they can help them to receive support, and offer it to other inmates.

The latest issue of our magazine Organise! (issue 88) includes a comprehensive list of anti-prison campaigns in

the UK, along with interviews, and an in depth look at the movement. Pick it up from your local radical retailer, subscribe, or download it from the Anarchist Federation Website.

Links:

ABC - <http://www.abcf.net/>

Anarchist Federation - <http://afed.org.uk>

Empty Cages - <http://www.prisonabolition.org/>

IWOC - <http://incarceratedworkers.noflag.org.uk/>

Manchester No Prisons -

<https://www.facebook.com/manchesternoprison/>

Smash IPP - <http://smashipp.noflag.org.uk/>

Struggling for Our Families and Our Lives

When we're deciding whether or not to have children, where and how to bring them up, when, and with whom, we're influenced by social forces which are outside our control. These forces dictate who has more freedom to make these choices, according to how they want to live. For everybody to enjoy this freedom, for reproductive justice, we require access to legal abortion, free childcare, free healthcare and education, the ability to leave an abusive relationship, and access to stable housing and secure, well-paid jobs.

Recently, we've seen increased repression of reproductive justice around the world. The most obvious example of this is attacks on access to abortion. In 2016, the Polish government attempted to pass legislation that would ban abortion in all circumstances. They only backed down after a strike by thousands of women across the country. In the USA, it seems attempts to end funding for Planned Parenthood, which provides abortions as well as other reproductive healthcare services to people on low incomes, will soon be successful. Here in the UK, abortion clinics are being targeted for harassment by anti-choice religious groups and right-wing newspapers.

Since 2008, governments across Europe and in the USA have been using the financial crisis to impose harsh austerity measures on the working class people least responsible for, but most harmed by, the crash. Times of austerity often mean increased social conservatism, with the right winning elections by promising to defend 'traditional family values'. But

they are talking about defending a very specific type of family - a white, heterosexual, wealthy couple, who can afford to pay for childcare and own a home in an area with well-funded schools and hospitals.

Whilst our bosses, landlords, and MPs are protected from the effects of austerity measures, working class people in the UK are struggling to raise their families in the face of cuts to the services they are forced to rely on. Since 2010, 763 Sure Start children's centres have closed, 34 domestic violence refuges have closed, and Rape Crisis has a

budget shortfall of £10 million. Combined with cuts to benefits, this leaves victims of gendered violence trapped in dangerous relationships and homes.

Companies like Sports Direct, who use zero-hour contracts and pay poverty wages, leave many families without a reliable income. Schools in Derbyshire, near a Sports Direct depot, reported sick children coming into school because their parents were afraid that taking time off to care for them would result in their hours being cut. Whilst the company



bowed to pressure and gave its in-house staff proper contracts, agency workers were kept on zero hours.

More people than ever are now living in privately rented accommodation, suffering rip-off rents that mean families are living in poor quality, precarious housing, often many miles from supportive communities, or else they are being discouraged from having children altogether.

Oppressive laws disproportionately affect the poor as well. In the north and south of Ireland, it is working class women, non-binary, and trans people who struggle to afford travel to England for a safe, legal abortion.

All these problems are worse for migrants, who are now at risk from increased gate-keeping in the NHS. After a trial at St George's Hospital, 20 NHS hospitals will require a passport and utility bill before treating patients, leaving many without access to sexual health and maternity services. Migrants also face the constant threat of deportations, which leave families divided across continents.

We cannot, and should not, expect the state to support our struggle for reproductive justice. In the face of these attacks on our everyday lives, on our choices, and our families, we must build working class solidarity. We need to work together to defend our local abortion clinics from harassment by bigots, resist immigration raids which violently split up families, band together against landlords and their bailiffs, and stand up to fascists when they attack our communities. We should support doctors who refuse to check the immigration status of their patients, and make sure other parents know that they aren't required to give schools census information about the ethnicity of their children. We should be active in our unions and workplaces, organising against precarious work and low wages with our fellow migrant workers.

In the fight for control over our bodies and our lives, we can only win if we stand together as a class.

See: <http://www.feministfightback.org.uk/> for examples of the struggle for reproductive justice.

Anti-Fracking Round Up



A host of energy companies, backed up by central government, are hell bent on bringing fracking to the UK. However, with it comes the potential for ground water contamination, massive disruption to rural communities, a mass of carbon emissions, and even (as seen in 2011) earthquakes. This has led to huge opposition to the numerous sites across the countryside where permission has been granted for test-drilling.

Leith Hill

After battling the local community in the courts for six years, Europa was granted planning permission to drill in Bury Hill Wood. However their plans were thwarted for the past 8 months due to a camp - and fort - built in their way. The eviction of the fort took two days, and both locals and activists from further afield have vowed to continue the fight to protect the woodland. A new camp has sprung up nearby, with new plans to further frustrate Europa's efforts.

Preston New Road

Having had their friends in Westminster overturn a local council decision Cuadrilla were looking to spend July getting their Lancashire drilling site built. Instead they've faced an entire month of opposition and setbacks thanks to the 'rolling resistance' coordinated by Reclaim the Power and other anti-fracking groups. People took part in protests and actions every single day. They chained themselves to barrels, and to each other. Parked vans across

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the road, climbed on top of lorries, built barricades, held carnival processions, had picnics on the roadside. From veteran eco-activists to local families a huge alliance was built. The site ground to a halt, and rather than building up essential relationships with other organisations Cuadrilla started hemorrhaging support.

One of the first groups to abandon the Frackers was North Wales Police, who refused to send more officers to police the site with the commissioner saying: "let Cuadrilla pay for their own security". Next up was haulage company L & M transport who has promised they: "will never knowingly work for Cuadrilla or any agents involved with Cuadrilla or the fracking industry again". Quickly followed by the operators of the crane on the site whose statement read: "Understanding more the impacts and effects that this has had on the local communities, the management made the decision to have the crane removed from site". Cuadrilla certainly won't be winning over the local residents after they breached planning restrictions to sneak some of their equipment onto the site during the night.

The entire month saw a fierce crackdown from Cuadrilla's private security with numerous instances of violence against those who posed no threat to them. The police present either ignored these

assaults or carried out their own. This seemed designed to break the spirit of the campaigners early on, but instead only added fuel to the fire. It has also painted the company as not only immoral, but desperate.

Barclays

Fracking is an expensive and potentially risky business that requires a lot of investment. So campaigners have also been targeting the financial muscle of the industry. Barclays was one of the more high profile targets, with a series of protests, and a roof top occupation that saw its central Bristol branch closed for an afternoon. It has since announced it is selling its 97% stake in fracking company Third Energy. A group representing UK fracking companies had already announced that it was a huge struggle to get any investment. They believe that winning public support would be key to improving the situation, so it looks like things can only get worse for the fracking frackers. Frack 'em.

P.S. A recent survey by Heriot-Watt University has said that fracking in the UK may produce far less gas than expected, with little profit return.

<https://reclaimthepower.org.uk/>

<http://frack-off.org.uk/>

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