

# JACKDAW

Revolutionary class struggle news

**BACK ON THE STREETS!**

Issue N° 8 FREE

## IT'S OPEN CLASS WAR with attacks on multiple fronts

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC has shown that it is the working class which pays for the periodic disasters of global capitalism. It was the working class which paid for the 2008 Banking Crisis through austerity and it is the working class which is paying for the present global pandemic through, first, higher infection and mortality rates and, second, through the economic fall out of the pandemic. It was the ruling class which brought about the banking crisis by its anything goes approach to finance and it is the ruling class which failed to prepare for pandemics. It is the working class, though, which suffers.



Health Workers have been in the front line of the struggle against the pandemic. During the first wave, health workers did not have the Personal Protective Equipment which they needed and many of them became infected with Covid-19 and died. They have been told that they can only have a 1% pay rise because money is tight. Serco, meanwhile, has had £37 billion of public money for providing a failed test and trace service. A clear case of wealth extraction from workers to the ruling class.

Fire and Rehire is another example of wealth extraction. Workers are being told that they must sign contracts with worse terms and conditions or face dismissal. "Essential workers" who have worked throughout the pandemic are being told that they must accept less for more while shareholders continue to collect their dividends while hiding at home. This is even happening in companies which have done well out of the pandemic, like Jacobs Douwe Egberts (JDE) in Banbury.

The Anarchist Communist Group recognised very early on in the pandemic that workers faced increased risks from infection at work and started the Not Safety, No Work campaign. Workplaces have been recognised as vectors of disease transmission but workers have had inadequate protection. Too many workers are forced to work in unsafe workplaces when they could easily be working from home and too many workplaces do not take health and safety seriously enough, especially if health and safety gets in the way of making a profit. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has been shown to be ineffectual by the fact that it has not prosecuted one company for breaching Covid-19 regulations. The ruling class has been given de facto immunity from prosecution for failing to control a communicable disease while members of the working class get fined for minor breaches of Covid-19 regulations.

The governing party has a big enough majority in Parliament to

make opposition parties irrelevant. It would seem that the only effective opposition can take place on the streets through protest. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill anticipates this by taking away the right to protest effectively and removing the ability to take direct action.

All of these issues are linked. They are all acts of Class War! The working class must organise as a class and fight back!

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**VOICE OF THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST GROUP**



# Kill The Bill

The police, Crimes, Sentencing and Courts Bill is a vicious attack by the State on the right of people to protest, picket or assemble. What it amounts to is this: if anyone complains about a protest, or the police decide they don't want you to have your demo or picket, then that's it. It's illegal, and refusal to comply with police orders could see you doing serious jail time at Her Majesty's pleasure!

This bill allows the police impose severe restrictions and noise limits on protests, marches and pickets. This means that if any type of protest is seen as 'annoying', 'noisy' or causes inconvenience in some way, then it will be criminalised. Failure to follow police imposed conditions (even if you're not aware of those conditions) will be a criminal offence – in other words big fines or prison.

But it's not just about

protests and pickets. The bill also toughens up Stop and Search powers, allowing them stop and search you, with or *without* any cause for suspicion. Stop and Search is a racist practice by the police, which mainly targets young black men. This aspect of the bill then gives the cops more powers to be racist.

In a direct attack on Gypsy, Roma, Travellers (GRT) the bill also beefs up the already draconian trespass laws, and will give the police powers to seize vehicles/homes. In short, it criminalises the way of life of GRT people.

## Resistance

The regime here in Britain, with its compliant media, is quick to point out authoritarian governments (for example Myanmar, China, Belarus, and elsewhere) as long as it doesn't damage business. But the Police, Crimes, Sentencing and

Courts Bill is straight out of the dictator's playbook, and it must be resisted.

Over the last couple of months, there has been resistance, with several national days of action and demos in scores of towns up and down the country. For now, the bill is in parliamentary committees but it will be back soon, possibly with some of the harsher edges taken off to make it more palatable to any wavering MPs.

Nevertheless, however they soften it, this will still be a vicious piece of legislation that gives the State and its police more powers to bring the basic human desire to rebel under the heel. So we have to keep building that resistance and not lose momentum. Get in touch with your local Kill The Bill campaign and get involved. Or if you can't find one, get in touch with us and we'll see what we can find.

**"However they soften it, this will still be a vicious piece of legislation that gives the State and its police more powers to bring the basic human desire to rebel under the heel."**

## The new Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill says:



**You're  
nicked,  
sunshine!**

# Resist Fire and Rehire!

The bosses haven't wasted any time in using the pandemic as either a smokescreen or an excuse to cut their labour costs and increase profitability through the immoral and exploitative practice of Fire and Rehire. This is a process whereby those working for a company are sacked and offered their jobs back on worse terms and conditions. The most notable example is the sacking and rehiring of British Gas workers. In spite of the best efforts of the GMB Union, British Gas has carried out this process, leaving many of its workers doing more for less. Many British Gas engineers have left the company and customers are reporting difficulties in having basic maintenance carried out. However, British Gas shareholders and executives continue to enjoy handsome rewards.

Sainsbury's are planning on firing and rehiring their Argos workforce as do many other companies. Unite the Union has resisted a number of attempts by the bosses to fire and rehire. In Leicester SPS Technologies had threatened to fire and rehire its workforce, with many workers facing the prospect of having to lose £3000 a year. Unite balloted for strike action and the workers went on strike. In April, Unite negotiated a deal with the company which reduced the proposed reductions by more than a half and 90% of the workforce accepted it.

Also in Leicestershire, Brush Electrical engineers, based in Ashby, have been threatened with the sack if they refuse to accept cuts in their pay and conditions amounting to £10,000-£15,000 per year. Workers' response has been to go out on strike until August or until the owners, the venture capitalist firm, Melrose, see sense.

Unite is involved in another fire and rehire dispute in the Midlands. Jacobs Douwe Egberts (JDE) in Banbury, which produces coffee, is also firing and rehiring its workforce but Unite members are resisting this and achieved a big enough turnout in a recent strike ballot for strike action in June. JDE claims that the Banbury factory needs to modernise and become more competitive. However, JDEs efficiency drive involves increasing the salaries of management while the workers face losing up to £12,000 a year. JDE has done very nicely out of the pandemic as more people have spent time at home drinking coffee. What JDE is doing is pure greed and we back the struggle of the JDE workers.

The Anarchist Communist Group sees Fire & Rehire as an act of class war which must be resisted.



## No Safety? No Work!

At about this time last year it began to become apparent that the more general opening up of the economy and allowing the low paid back into work places were causing problems for many "key workers". Reports were appearing of high infection rates in food processing plants and logistics centres. It was also assumed, justifiably as it transpires, that these high infection rates were probably caused by workers who had become infected but who couldn't afford to self-isolate because they and their families would not be able to survive on Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). Stories were also coming out about problems in educational settings where education workers were being required to attend work places which were known to be "vectors of transmission". The Anarchist Communist Group decided to start the No Safety? No Work! Campaign and invited like-minded people to get involved. The aim of the campaign was to give workers the knowledge which would allow them to challenge bosses who were not doing enough to ensure that their premises were Covid secure.

If you are concerned that where you work may not be as safe as it should be and that your health and wellbeing are threatened by the ease with which Covid-19 can be transmitted in your workplace, there are two main things which you can try to do as long as you can do so without drawing attention to yourself and being earmarked for persecution or the sack:

- 1) Make sure that there is somebody in the workplace who has responsibility for Health and Safety.
- 2) If your workplace has 5 or more workers, it must have had a Covid-19 risk assessment carried out and written copies of this assessment should be available to the workforce. If your workplace does not have one of these, you should ask your union rep, if your workplace has a union, or your line manager why no risk assessment has been carried out.

If you would like more information, email [safetreturn@riseup.net](mailto:safetreturn@riseup.net) or text HELP to 07377544051

Find us at [nosafetynowork.org](http://nosafetynowork.org)

[facebook.com/NoSafetyNoWork](https://facebook.com/NoSafetyNoWork)

@NoSafetyNoWork on Twitter

NO SAFETY  
NO WORK





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## Scotland Stand-off

IN SCOTLAND IT feels as if politics are in something like suspended animation. The big dividing line has long been the constitutional issue, independence, but the recent Holyrood elections showed just how closely down the middle the country is divided on the issue. Pro independence parties (the SNP and the Greens) have a majority between them in the Scottish parliament, but neither the Unionist nor the pro-independence side would be confident of winning a referendum on the issue this year, as the polls teeter right on the 50% mark.

Both sides, therefore, will want to play the referendum long; the Nationalists needing to develop their case on the currency and on border issues should a post-independence Scotland rejoin the Single Market, and the Unionists needing to develop a positive case for the Union within a post-Brexit UK. This is something Unionists have not done, relying in the past on playing on fears of change and disruption, a tactic they can no longer use given that it is Brexit and a Johnson-led UK that has driven pro-independence sentiment upwards in the years since the Brexit referendum in 2016. The biggest change has been that women, who in the Independence Referendum were more likely to have a more risk-averse attitude and therefore be less convinced by the pro-independence arguments, are now slightly more likely to buy into Scottish independence than men, perhaps demonstrating that for a significant number at least, the risk now lies in staying in the post-Brexit Union.

This is borne out by attitudes towards the economy. Whereas seven years ago, during the independence referendum, for many the economy of an independent Scotland was a hard sell. Now, however, the public seem to be looking around the world



## WHO WE ARE...

The Anarchist Communist Group (ACG) is a revolutionary anarchist communist organisation who seek a complete transformation of society, and the creation of anarchist communism.

This will mean the working class overthrowing capitalism, abolishing the State, getting rid of exploitation, hierarchies and oppressions, and halting the destruction of the environment. To do this, we believe it is important to be organised.

We are committed to building an effective organisation that works towards the common goal of anarchist communism, in cooperation with other working class organisations and in grass roots campaigns.

We strive to base all our current actions on the principles that will be the basis of the future society: mutual aid, solidarity, collective responsibility, individual freedom and autonomy, free association and federalism.

If you want to join the ACG, then look first at our **Aims & Principles** on our website [www.anarchistcommunism.org](http://www.anarchistcommunism.org)

You can also drop us a line at [info@anarchistcommunism.org](mailto:info@anarchistcommunism.org)

at pretty much every nation-state in deficit, and realising that deficits really aren't the cataclysm they were made out to be by the Unionists in those pre-Brexit days.

So, the idea that has been put about by some that the UK government may want to call the SNP's bluff and bounce them into an early referendum is far-fetched. That would be an extraordinarily foolhardy gamble for the Unionist side to take. Indeed, the pressure on the referendum coming earlier rather than later is more likely to come from the pro-Independence side, who will not allow the SNP to kick the referendum too far into the long grass.

The Labour Party in Scotland had a bad election in May. It's share of the vote and number of seats fell for the fifth devolved election in a row, to an all-time low. Their support is soft, too, having been prepared to lend their votes to the Tories in the list vote element of Holyrood's convoluted two ballot paper electoral system.

These are the issues that manage to seep into every issue in Scotland. The recent action in Kenmure Street, where the neighbourhood in Pollokshields turned out to prevent immigration officials from carting away two Sikh men in a dawn raid, for example, was rewritten by the SNP as a pro-independence issue, underlining what they see as a different attitude towards immigration between the Scottish political culture and Priti Patel's UK-led "hostile environment". The SNP also tried to play down the role of Police Scotland in the raid, blaming Immigration Control and saying Police Scotland were put in a difficult position. (A version of events that

nobody who was there on the day would recognise).

Similarly, as Glasgow comes out of lockdown, only now catching up with the rest of Scotland and joining what is known here as Level Two, there is some uncertainty around public services run by the City Council's SNP administration. There was a series of confused and contradictory announcements about whether some libraries in working class areas such as Maryhill would reopen at all. The initial public outrage was tempered, though, when it became clear that the Labour Party were playing a prominent role in the anti-closure campaign. Pro-SNP partisanship and the weakness of Labour's support has perhaps led to a more muted campaign than might have been expected.

As anarchist-communists, we have to negotiate this situation. We need to show our working-class communities that there are bread-and-butter issues away from the constitutional debate (which will run for as long as the Scottish Government feels able to hold off the referendum). We have to show that parliamentary politics will swallow up all working-class energies and interests if we let it, but that our power lies precisely in side-stepping those vested interests and building our own autonomous, horizontal, participatory and self-organised community solidarity. Our demands, our action, our struggle have to be by and for our own working-class communities, and focussed on building working-class self-confidence and in the process community solidarity.

**REVOLUTIONARY CLASS STRUGGLE NEWS**