

# REBEL CITY

London's anarchist paper | Issue No.7 | Free/Donation



## FED UP? THEN RISE UP!

**We don't need to spell out the reasons for Londoners to be fed up.**

- high cost of housing and social cleansing
- attacks on benefits, eg universal credit, the bedroom tax
- longest commute in Britain (107 hours per year spent on going to and from work!)
- large numbers of people on the minimum wage or below, zero hour contracts, and unacceptable working conditions
- the takeover of London by the rich and super-rich, and the marginalisation of the working class in their own city
- the increase in air pollution to life-threatening levels and the threat to green spaces from developers

Something has to give! We need to fight against all these attacks. However, some strategies are more effective than others. Relying on politicians, waiting to get Corbyn elected, expecting councils to make improvements on our behalf are a waste of time. Instead, we need to be taking charge of our own struggles, using direct action, mutual aid and self-organisation. In this issue of *Rebel City* we show how Londoners are doing just that.

*We have to go beyond just fighting to survive. We need a new city, totally transformed into something that human beings can actually live in, where they control what's going on, not Westminster politicians and bureaucrats, not completely corrupt local councils. We have to get rid of a system where the super-rich can invest in a carefree fashion and devastate the lives of the rest of us. That means fundamental social change and that means the creation of a free anarchist society!*

# Workers doing it for themselves



**The working class (all those who have to sell their labour and have no power over other workers) have been suffering one of the worst attacks on wages and working conditions in decades. Traditionally, workers have looked towards the Labour Party and trade unions to fight for their interests. However, it is now very obvious that such a strategy will get nowhere. The Labour Party in power have been more concerned to bail out banks and support the bosses. The traditional unions focus more on trying to get Labour elected than on supporting workers in effective campaigns. They have no strategy for organising workers in the increasingly precarious industries that most workers find themselves in and tend to completely ignore migrant workers.**

But workers have shown that they do not need the Labour Party or the traditional trade unions to fight back against the bosses. In London, several new unions have sprung up based on more direct participation of the workers. Already other 'rebel unions' such as United Voices of the World have won important victories (see Rebel City 5). In this issue we look at a new initiative from the Industrial Workers of the World and Angry Workers in west London.

## **Ditch the Fear: Join the IWW West London Organising Drive**

The establishment is shaken, it's time to dig deeper and to try out something new! The London IWW

invites you to take part in a six month organising drive amongst workers in warehouses and some of the bigger un-unionised workplaces in west London, mainly Greenford and Park Royal. This is a collaborative effort with AngryWorkers, a collective active in the area for over three years.

Most are migrant workers, mainly from eastern Europe and the Asian subcontinent. Our organising effort will not only focus on the miserable wages and working conditions, but also on the particular problem of workers as tenants, migrants and women. We will form teams of three, four people for each company, who will then visit workers regularly when the shift starts or ends and build relationships. We will have training sessions and discussions on how to approach workers and about the goals of the organising effort beforehand.

The area where we intend to organise is part of the so-called 'western corridor', a major logistical and processing hub, where 60% of London's food is processed, packaged and/or handled. We're talking about a large concentration of precarious work in the logistics and food-processing sector - over 100,000 workers keep the city ticking over.

This part of west London, the city's ripped backside, has a rich working class history of militancy which we are slowly unearthing: from the first strikes in Park Royal in the 1930s, to the early 'Asian' strikes and anti-racist actions in Southall in the mid-1960s and at Grunwicks in 1976, to the workers' self-management experiments at the Lucas plants in the late 1970s. We hope this tradition can be tapped into, learnt from and revitalised at a time when things look a bit bleak and discontent is building.

As AngryWorkers we organise weekly solidarity network drop-ins in the area, we try and organise two initiatives in larger workplaces and distribute 2,000 copies of our newspaper WorkersWildWest in the area. We have been involved in informal overtime strikes and slow-downs of temp workers in major supermarket warehouses, supported the Ealing hospital cleaners' strike and take part in local working-class campaigns, e.g. against the development plans of our local leisure centre. We hope that our experiences can contribute to the IWW organising effort.

There are various ways you can get involved: join an IWW organising team and visit a particular workforce regularly; help with translations, in particular Gujarati, Konkani, Romanian; help us out

with the weekly solidarity network drop-in or help distribute WorkersWildWest. Alternatively we are always interested in talking to people who want to set up similar initiatives in other parts of London.

*The situation in the local warehouses and factories is tense. The pressure at work itself is heavy enough, but the current political climate around Brexit and wider migration issues directly impacts on people. The work-mates from eastern Europe are pissed off, having worked hard for years, they are now seen as 'unskilled' migrants who everyone - from Tories to Labour- can hypocritically blame for the low wages. At the same time the state and bosses force the work-mates from south Asia to work 60 hours a week in order to raise their annual income above the official threshold to be able to keep their spouses here or bring them over. The main-stream unions are around, but they mainly help managing the divide between permanent and agency staff, between men and women. At a large food processing factory where fellow militants work, the GMB recently pushed for a wage agreement that gave women on the line a 15p increase - 15p above the bare minimum. Men who do loading got categorised as semi-skilled and get 70p more. The*

*sexist wage gap helps to maintain the low wage levels through divide and rule. Before the elections the GMB distributed leaflets supporting the £10 p/h bluff of Labour, three months later they push workers who have worked for the company for 20 years to sign for £7.65. Who is responsible for the low wages here?! Workers at the Tesco distribution centre where I work were fuming when Grenfell happened. There was a lot of deeper anger expressed at that moment. Things are tough here out west, but the increasing economic and political pressure on local migrant workers in the supply-chain of the city is about to blow the fuse. A collective effort of IWW and supporters can help workers to finally ditch the fear!*

## Get in touch:

[westlondon@iww.org.uk](mailto:westlondon@iww.org.uk)

## Find out more:

[www.workerswildwest.wordpress.com](http://www.workerswildwest.wordpress.com)

[www.angryworkersworld.wordpress.com](http://www.angryworkersworld.wordpress.com)

[www.iww.org.uk](http://www.iww.org.uk)

# Anarchists, community struggles and self-organisation

**In the aftermath of the Grenfell fire, there was considerable outcry, not just from the survivors, family and immediate community, but from a wide assortment of political groups, organisations and community 'leaders'. People joined protests at the Town Hall, wrote articles in their papers and organised stalls and demonstrations. Protests were swamped by placards from different political parties who appeared to be using the moment as an advertising opportunity. Political activists parachuted in from around London, and some even from outside London, eg Bristol, in order to help 'organise' the campaign. Others actually from the local area set themselves up as self-appointed 'leaders' and 'spokespeople' and politicians made sure they were seen at Grenfell. Even now there are over 80 different groups organising around Grenfell.**

We do not agree with the right-wing press when they say that all those people who joined the protest or came to help were there purely to 'hijack the tragedy for their own political ends'. Most people sincerely want to help and are very angry about what happened. However, anarchists would argue that the most important part of any struggle or campaign is 'self-organisation'. And this is in the end what happened. The Justice for Grenfell Campaign was set up and organised by the people most affected in the area. Meanwhile the survivors, inundated by requests for information by the press and others and by offers of support are overwhelmed to the point of anxiety. This has led

them to form their own organisation, Grenfell Unite, which is for the tower survivors only.

However, this does not mean that we just leave them to it. Those in power want to diffuse anger and contain the campaign. They don't want us to all come together. So though Grenville Unite must be led by the survivors and their families, there is much that the rest of us should be doing as part of a general movement for housing justice. Firstly, it is important to show solidarity. Taking the lead from the people in the campaign, we need to support their marches and protests and assist in any way we

...CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

can. Secondly, the causes of the Grenfell fire affect us all. Many people who initially came down to Grenfell to get involved in the campaign ended up going back to their own areas and organising for fire safety, for example meetings held by Lambeth Housing Activists (<http://housingactivists.co.uk/category/safe-secure-homes/>). And, it is important for all of us that the Grenfell Justice Campaign is a success because it helps build up the resistance to current housing policies. Those in power are hoping to confine the movement to one of tears and sympathy. They don't want a generalised anger at years of institutionalised neglect of working class communities.

Some people from outside the community were welcomed and accepted in the campaign. This was because they had links to Grenfell Tower before the fire. The Grenfell Action Group was affiliated to the Radical Housing Network and therefore RHN members had close personal links to some residents. It is this kind of long-term work which is critical for creating a situation where there is no division between the 'locals' and the 'outsiders'. And, the RHN is determined to make sure that the focus is on the wider social and economic causes of the fire as well as making links to the general struggle for housing justice.

Anarchists are directly involved in a number of community struggles. In these we are not the outside 'activists' who aim to recruit for our particular brand of Leninism. That doesn't mean we come to these campaigns without our own political

ideas. What we argue for is for those campaigns to be organised without leaders or hierarchies so that everyone participates in decision-making. We will also argue for tactics based on our experience that will most likely lead to victory, which includes many things from stalls and leafletting to direct action. The key thing is not to rely on politicians. They will only act if we have got the support and the militancy.

We do not try and take over the campaign or come and go according to whatever seems to be getting in the news. This is why there is a big difference between anarchists and activists from Leftist political parties. For example, in order to fight against a development proposal in east London a public meeting was called. A number of people came and put their name down to be part of a campaign. It was around the time of the elections. It was surprising how many people got involved from political parties, some of them candidates themselves. Statements were made to the press and photos were taken. And then, once the election was over, these same people lasted a few weeks and then were never seen again!

*The anarchist approach to community struggles means that we can make a positive contribution without taking over and trying to dominate. Instead we are just one part of a self-organising campaign. In this way we can help to build up strong, effective and resilient communities who take control of their own struggles, not relying on politicians or other self-appointed leaders.*



# Corbyn, Momentum, and Radical Politics: A Comradely Anarchist Assessment



**From day one of his 2015 candidacy Jeremy Corbyn has had a remarkable effect on what many people believe politically possible. Hundreds of thousands have joined the Labour Party and tens of thousands the Corbynite campaign group Momentum, the vast majority under 35. Thousands have actually gone out to take on the Tories and their ideology. With socialist rhetoric Corbyn's team have caused a shift in the general tone of UK politics.**

But beyond simply 'changing the conversation' Corbyn has energised millions who've grown up under New Labour's technocratic neoliberalism and Tory austerity. Originating in his first leadership campaign, Momentum claims to be a vehicle to fight for wealth and power redistribution 'from the few to the many', transform Labour into 'a more open, member-led party', and promote 'people-powered politics', attempting to ensure the success of Corbyn's aims and principles - some of which are broadly shared by some parts of the anti-capitalist Left. These principles have translated into some practical steps, though mostly events, electioneering, and manifestos rather than social activism proper.

So what's there to criticise? Much about Momentum sounds attractive: extending anti-hierarchical and direct-democratic practices into our workplaces and everyday lives, through self-organised political

activism focused on building with and within our communities at the grassroots level. So it might just be a question of Momentum transforming Labour by actualising their claimed principles in practical political ethics. But here's the problem: Labour can't be that, and Momentum is severely limited by Labour's parliamentary project, all because of one simple reason - managing capitalism and the nation state.

The brick wall that social democratic projects always hit is that there's no way to legislate away capitalism: the nation state came together under capitalism, is inextricable from the capitalist class and its interests, and is a self-reproducing hierarchical structure that only exists through exploitation and domination. Taking it over means following rules defined by the world system of capitalist exploitation and nation-state domination.

...CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

If a social democratic project was able to take power in the face of global capital it would have to play by these rules, one by one compromising every principle and policy under the threat of bureaucratic coups and capital flight, until at best it's left managing capitalism, racist borders and immigration controls, and indulging common sense nationalism, while opportunistically grabbing small reforms painted as big victories. Should Labour take power that'll be the fate of all the laudable principles and aims outlined above, the most radical dropped the quicker, the ones that don't change the status quo in the slightest (like job investment and nationalising public transport) celebrated as if capitalism had been defeated. The process has already begun with Corbyn back-tracking on opposing Trident, and now supporting immigration controls.

So should Labour and Momentum members quit and disengage? Most are (like me) seeing for the first time a mainstream political project talking seriously about building a free and equal society. And I'm not going to claim that governments can change nothing, or that new possibilities don't open up through them - they can and at times they do. But we're in different conditions now, and governments can only very rarely create the possibility for radical change. It's up to us to realise that possibility by organising to make the new society in the shell of the old. Change from the bottom is based on the foundations of grassroots organising, action and empowerment: change from the top, by contrast, is built on sand: it does not

empower people and any gains can be more easily withdrawn - 'what is given can be taken away'. By themselves parliamentary socialist projects are doomed to failure, and with that inevitable doom come waves of understandable disillusion. And that's the real danger: that all the hope and potential invested in Corbyn's Labour and Momentum is wasted in years of organising for a Labour government instead of real building from the grassroots, and is then totally lost with whatever compromises, coups, and failures inevitably follow from managing the capitalist nation state.

*So if we want to take back control with people-powered politics anchored in our workplaces and communities, then we need to patiently build solidarity networks among the oppressed, engaging in direct action and radical unionism, and rooting our politics in our locales. We need to build effective counterpower through direct-democratic assemblies, linking existing and future struggles, and empowering us for immediate action and eventual emancipation. Most importantly, this process cannot be reducible to Labour, Momentum, or electoral politics, it must be independent and anchored in popular institutions beyond the state. If we really want to build another world, where the free development of each is extended by the free development of all and everything is held in common for everyone, then electoralism is ultimately irrelevant to the broader project of dismantling the capitalist nation state from bottom to top.*

## Land Justice in the City

The UK has one of the most unequal distributions of land in the world! 0.6% of the population owns over 70% of the land. Over a third of this is in the hands of the aristocracy - a legacy of the Norman conquest. When people refer to 'land' most think of the countryside. Land rights movements have focused on gaining access to land for recreation purposes, eg the mass trespass of Kinder Scout, and calling for community buy-outs of the large estates in places such as the Highlands of Scotland. However, in the city, underneath the buildings and tarmac, there is also land and the struggles for access and community ownership are just as relevant in the city as they are in rural areas. The high cost of housing and other property is mainly due to the value of the land beneath it - in central London that can be up to 80% of the total cost of the property. The reason we do not have access to and control of housing, social centres, community gardens, parks and open spaces is because we do not own and control the land. Even land that is in public hands is not controlled by us, but by the State, which is more concerned to supporting commercial interests than public ones.

### Who owns London?

Four aristocratic families still own much of prime land in central London, such as the Duke of Westminster who owns billions of pound of real estate in Mayfair and Belgravia.

However, a new breed of landowner has come to London - overseas and institutional investors. The Duke of Westminster has been pushed down the list of top London landowners to number 20. The biggest landowner is now the Canary Wharf Group, owned jointly by the Qatar Investment Authority (the Qatari Royal family) and Brookfield Property partners (headquarters in Bermuda). Not only do they own Canary Wharf, but also the Walkie Talkie building and other office blocks around London. They are also buying up luxury residential properties in the traditional stomping ground of the Duke of Westminster.



## Anarchists and Land

Anarchists have always argued for land to be held in common. No one should be able to profit from land and we should all be able to make decisions about how land is used. There are several initiatives in London which are helping to build a movement for land rights. One is the Reclaim Holloway Prison campaign and the other is St Ann's Redevelopment Trust (see Rebel City 5). The aim of both campaigns is to take control of land, which was going to be sold off to private developers, and put together plans for alternative land use, one based on collective good rather than profit.

<http://reclaimholloway.strikingly.com> | <http://www.startharingey.co.uk/>

Private developers have a friend and ally in local councils, whether Labour or Tory. It is not just private developers that are the problem. One of the worst cases is in Haringey where the council is pushing through proposals to set up the Haringey Development Vehicle which proposes to hand up to £2 billion of property and assets to multinational property developer Lend Lease ([www.stopHVD.com](http://www.stopHVD.com)). Though the council will retain 50% ownership, campaigners are certain the power will lie mainly in the hands of Lend Lease, who have considerable experience in getting their own way.

Recently there has been a new initiative seeking to unite, in a common network, all the struggles which involve land, whether it be campaigns for social housing and lower rents, for more community and social spaces or to save parks and green spaces. A number of groups and individuals, including the Radical Housing Network and Community Food Growers Network, launched the Land Justice Network (LJN) in June 2017. This was on the back of the successful 'Land for What' conference in November 2016 (Rebel City 5). In this excerpt from the Common Ground statement, the aims are clear.

### *1. Distributed Ownership and Control*

Poverty and many of society's other problems come from our land not being shared fairly. We want our country to belong to all the people who live here and for them to have real control over the land.

### *2. Long Term Stewardship, Not Short Term Profit*

Land should be managed for the benefit all humans and nature, not be used just to make a profit.

The LJN is in the early stages of working together but there are already plans for workshops and actions. Check out the website and sign up to the mailing list at: [www.landjustice.uk](http://www.landjustice.uk)



## Islington Council Sell Off Park Space

Islington Council put in a bid to convert a former park-keepers hut into a private garden room. The hut at Dalmeny Park was sold for £10,000 to the owners of a nearby property. This was done without any public consultation or knowledge. Local Islington residents reacted in anger, 600 signing a petition.

As a result the Council backed down and was forced to throw out the planning bid.

In addition the council let out Caledonian Park to a funfair for two weeks, again without public consultation, robbing people of access to a large area of the park.

# The Grenfell Tower Inferno and Mutual Aid



*“Let me be absolutely clear: the support for the families on the ground in the initial hours was not good enough. People were left without belongings, without roofs over their heads, without even basic information about what had happened, what they should do and where they should go to seek help. That was a failure of the state, local and national, to help people when they needed it most.” Theresa May*

It's not often we quote politicians, but on the Grenfell blaze Theresa May was right. It was a complete failure of both the national state and government and the local state, Kensington and Chelsea Council.

They failed to provide anything like adequate provision to the Grenfell survivors, not just in the initial hours but for days to come. But it went beyond that. Both the national and local state were deeply implicated in the fire itself, with the cutting of fire services and the ignoring of repeated warnings by residents about the likelihood of a fire.

On the other hand, we had a great upsurge of grassroots solidarity and mutual aid, with volunteers from across London and as far away as Birmingham, bringing support and supplies, linking up with survivors and local community groups. They provided food, drink, clothes, bedding, toys and toiletries in vast amounts. When Camden Council ineptly moved tenants out of council blocks after panicking about fire risks, they again, like Kensington and Chelsea Council, treated them appallingly, failing to provide them with adequate information, and alternative housing, and generally treating them with the same contempt as Kensington and Chelsea Council. Local councils, whether Tory or Labour, have utter contempt for social housing tenants and for the working class in general. Camden Council failed to even provide water to the now homeless tenants, and this was left up to Grenfell volunteers who arrived to provide water.

There is a stark contrast between the response of the national and local state, and the emergence of grassroots voluntary organisations. This is not the first time this has happened after catastrophes, far from it. It illustrates the power of ordinary working class people to organise support networks. Another example is the creation of grassroots health centres in Greece with the collapse of the State's health services.

***We must look more and more to this kind of organisation in the future, based on the anarchist principles of mutual aid and solidarity, as capitalism seeks to strip away social services in line with its strategy of austerity.***



# Grenfell: a view from the 12<sup>th</sup> Floor

**Nine years ago, Lewisham Council did up the block of flats where I live. Council tenants got new gas central heating and new kitchens - all part of the plan to bring the flats up to the then-Labour government's Decent Homes Standard. They also said I'd get a new front door because my current one wasn't up to fire safety standards. I didn't get one, but I didn't think much about it. Until now.**

Now clearly there's no comparison between losing loved ones and all your possessions in a fire, and the council forgetting to put a new door on your flat. Nonetheless, the fire in Grenfell Tower has got me thinking, talking and sharing experiences of living in a high rise with friends and neighbours in Lewisham and beyond. Like how we've been checking in with neighbours to see if everyone is OK. "How old are your kids again?" "Your mum lives here too doesn't she? How's she getting on?" The kind of questions you ask when you want to know who might need help getting down the stairs in an emergency. We're also noticing things about our blocks that we'd just ignored previously - like an uncovered gas pipe running the length of a landing, inches above the front doors.

Like councils across the UK, Lewisham got themselves in a bit of a flap after Grenfell. And quite right. Within days, I had a leaflet through my door offering fire safety advice and reassurance, with a free phone number to ring if I had any questions or concerns. I tested it. The number didn't work. And I still don't have my fireproof front door. Although luckily my block remains in pristine 1974 condition, made of concrete and bricks without any firefighters masquerading as cladding to make it look more attractive to passers-by.

And I have a lovely view. I can see Crystal Palace TV mast and down along the A2 into the wilds of Kent. Another place I've seen time and again since the Grenfell Tower fire, as I look out of the window and wonder how so many working class people could be allowed to die, is Aberfan. Aberfan is a village in South Wales and the reason you might have heard of it is that on 21 October 1966, 1.4 million cubic feet of waste from the coalmines slid downhill in a matter of minutes. The village school was at the bottom of the hill. 144 people were killed. 116 were children.

Why build a village school at the foot of a slagheap? Why did the Charity Commission step in to slow down compensation payments (including examining whether parents had been "close" to their dead children)? Why did the National Coal Board refuse to bear the cost of moving other slagheaps in the area? The same reason that Kensington and Chelsea Council decided it wasn't worth the extra

two quid each for a sheet of fireproof cladding. That only ten households of the 196 from Grenfell have been permanently rehoused. That £10 million pounds of donations are still sitting in the bank accounts of charities rather than going to survivors.

*The people in Grenfell Tower died for the same reason as the teachers and children of Pantglas Junior School in Aberfan. It was too much trouble and expense to keep them alive and safe. Grenfell happened under a Tory government with a Tory council. Aberfan happened under a Labour government and a Labour council. Twenty years after Aberfan, Cyril Vaughan, a teacher at the neighbouring senior school at the time, said, "The lesson of Aberfan is never put your faith in experts or authority. Unless ordinary people take notice there will be another Aberfan". The Grenfell Tower fire shows that he was right.*



# A Sideways Look - TMOS

**One of the stranger things said in defence of the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation in the wake of the atrocity at Grenfell Tower is that it had tenants on its board. While this is true, it misses the point. A few token tenants sitting in a plush board room overawed by their surroundings does not make an organisation tenant-led. The accusations of bullying, incompetence and indifference levelled by the Grenfell Action Group at KCTMO have all been tragically borne out by events. But the KCTMO was set up to fail, badly run and subject to the whims of hostile governments of both shades. The Grenfell Action Group had made loud complaints that it was failing. No one was listening.**

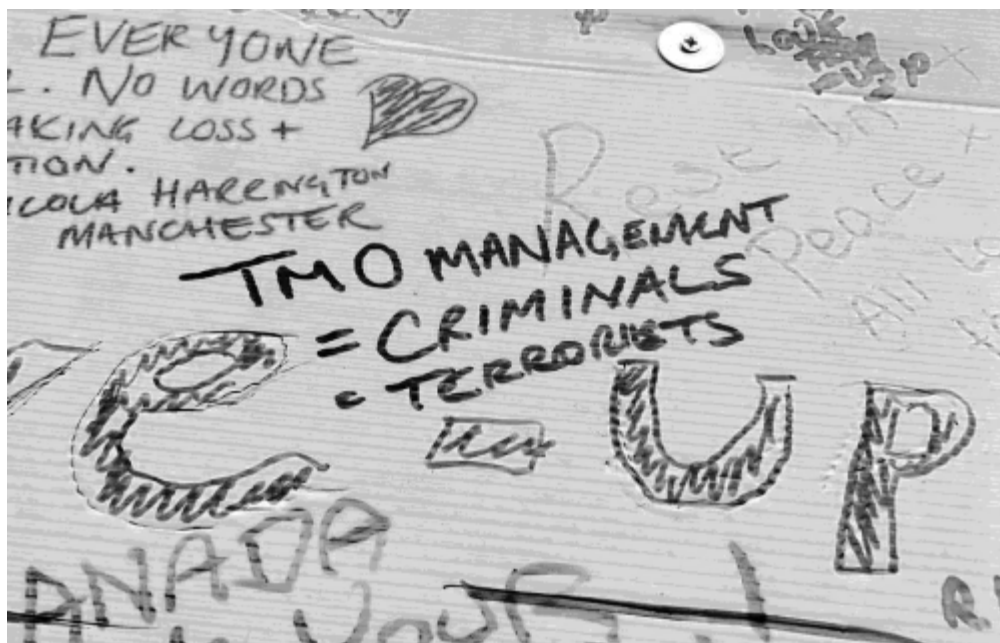
Tenant Management Organisations were formalised in 1994 by the Major government as part of its ongoing attack on council housing (This is nothing new - all governments in the last 35 years have attacked council housing). The idea behind them was that council estates were run in the main by indifferent bureaucrats unresponsive to the needs of their residents and, as selling estates off entirely was unpopular, and right to buy had not made much of an impact, giving tenants the right to manage their own estates was a political winner. Many of the earliest TMOs were co-ops which had been encouraged by certain councils such as the GLC and Islington, formally being recognised as TMOs after 1994. Labour nationally were lukewarm about the idea, but the idea at least allowed residents more say than if they had been run by the council.

In 1996, Kensington and Chelsea Council, a Tory council that did not like dealing with poor people in general and council tenants in particular, set up a TMO to cover the whole borough. It swallowed up a smaller Estate Management Board that had been working on Lancaster West, the estate on which Grenfell stands. After Blair got in, Labour ramped up central government attacks on council housing: they

gave all councils a choice of stock transfer, Arms-Length Management Organisation (ALMO) or the discredited Public Finance Initiative as the only way to access funds. Council housing was to go: the Blairite model saw councils as enablers, not providers. KCTMO became an ALMO as well so that they could access the funds offered by Labour.

There's a reason why the other TMOs did not take this route: there is a clear contradiction between being tenant-led and owned by the council.

*Social housing remains; a stubborn outpost, despite decades of government policies designed to destroy it. It's almost like it meets a need for affordable housing that the market cannot provide. Regardless of who owns it, people still see it as 'council' - brought home to me when I handed back the keys to my late dad's Housing Association place and was told "the council were in there straight away". Many councils are probably regretting giving away their stock to housing associations as they look at the bills for leasing private properties and bed and breakfast hotels. But, as argued elsewhere in this issue, there are reasons social housing is neglected and they have a lot to do with class.*



# Antifascism in the time of Trump



**We seem to be at a turning point for antifascism as it goes mainstream and is discussed on TV programs and in newspapers across the world. Sadly, it took the killing of Heather Heyer by white nationalists in Charlottesville, USA to bring this to the attention of the mass media. The ‘Unite the right’ rally, which ended in a car being driven into a group of antifascists, was a show of force for neo-nazis, the KKK and other groups in the USA who have been emboldened by the election of Trump. These groups did not spring out of thin air on the day of his inauguration, they have been growing quietly as the economic crisis has devastated working class living conditions and far right ideologues have used immigrants, refugees and Muslims as scapegoats.**

In the UK we have seen the murder of Jo Cox and violent street protests in Dover and elsewhere by the far right. Although the Conservative Party are willing to stoke anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiment for votes, the far right in our own country is not as numerous or as accepted by the ruling party as our USA counterparts. Instead the far right have been hit hard by antifascists on the streets in Dover, Liverpool and Croydon, as well as by the police in the proscribing of National Action as a terrorist organisation and the arrest of serving soldiers who were members. Although these have been successes, the far right are still organising underground and have held multiple conferences in London and elsewhere in the UK peddling neo-nazi ideas.

Antifascists in the UK should look to the USA as a warning of what can happen when neo-nazi ideas and street movements are not stamped out as soon as they emerge. We cannot let the far right spread, nor can we let them have successes in either marches or so called ‘intellectual’ conferences. Both need to be shut down for the safety of the working class at large, whatever their race, religion or sexuality.

*There is a solidarity fund currently accepting donations towards bail bonds for antifascist protestors held in the USA. Anyone with some spare cash is encouraged to donate to them or indeed your own local antifa crew. USA legal fund: <http://www.disruptj20.org/legal-fund/>.*

# Our History: the importance of memory

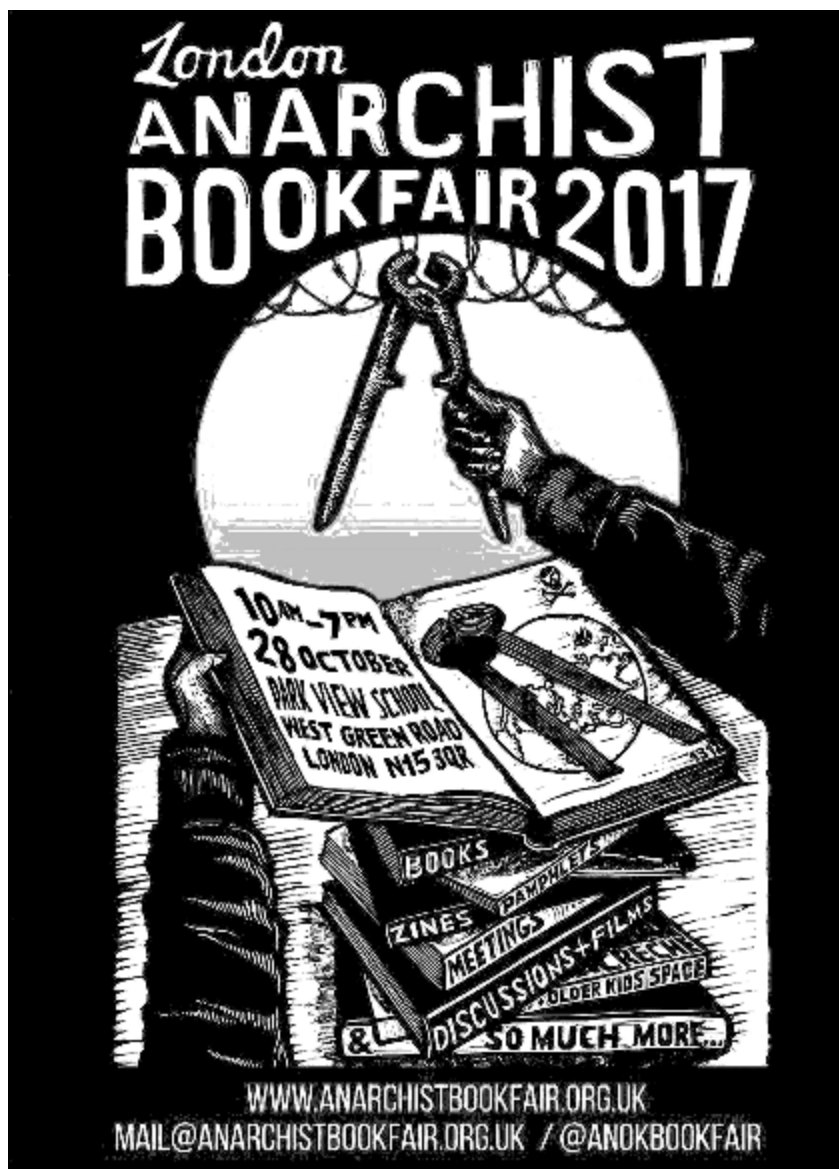


**What we are today is the result of our history. This is true for individuals as well as political traditions such as anarchism. There are many reasons why we are anarchists and not Bolsheviks or Labourites. It is not only because of the politics and practices today but because of what happened in the past. And, we can gain inspiration from the struggles that have gone before - yes, change is possible!**

As anarchists we can look at past events and see that there are certain patterns. All previous revolutionary events be it the Paris Commune of 1871, the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the May events in France etc. have developed similar forms of organisations - workers and neighbourhood councils, mass assemblies, factory committees etc. We can see time and time again that the society we want is prefigured in these new forms of social organisation that develop in times of heightened struggle. We can learn from this and see what we should be doing to bring about a new society. Equally we can see what we should not be doing when we see how vanguard parties from outside of the working class co-opt and sabotage struggles. The rise of the Bolsheviks in 1917 is a classic example of how not to bring about a revolution as a new class rule was established and the initial revolutionary gains were destroyed by a new bureaucratic class. Similarly we can cite the example of Mujeres Libres, the libertarian women's organisation in Spain in 1936 as both an example of and reason for the need for autonomous organisation of women. The experience of the Labour government under Wilson in the 60s, when practically every promise was broken, teaches us not to rely on a future Labour government under Corbyn to bring about change.

The powers that be tell us that the present situation is permanent, that it has always been this way and it will not change, that there are rulers and ruled, order givers and order takers. But a study of history can reveal that this situation has been challenged again and again, that large numbers of people have engaged in important struggles for freedom and emancipation in the past. As Hugo Dewar wrote in his poem Barcelona 1936:

***On the barricades all over town, not so long ago,  
They knew the time had come to answer with a simple yes or no.  
They too were storming heaven,  
Do you think they fought in vain?  
That because they lost a battle they would never rise again;  
That the man with the leaflets, the woman with a gun,  
Did not have a daughter, did not have a son?***



## Anarchist Bookfair? What the hell is that?

**The 37th London Anarchist Bookfair is on 28 October 2017 at Park View School, West Green Road, Haringey N15 from 10am to 6pm. But what is an Anarchist Bookfair and what's it for?**

Anarchy and anarchism generally get quite a bad press. Journalists and politicians know exactly what anarchism really means but they prefer to use it wrongly to mean chaos, disorder and mayhem. Anarchists want to abolish the very structure of land ownership, housing, work, prisons, relationships and the way we organise everything from child care to running the railways. This scares politicians and mainstream media who quite like the present system where they get most of the benefits and the rest of us get what's left at the bottom of the barrel.

Like all really good ideas, anarchy is pretty simple when you get down to it: human beings are at

their best when they live free of authority, deciding things among themselves, rather than being ordered about. That's what anarchy means - without government.

Throughout human history, people have always tried to live freely, sometimes on their own, sometimes in small groups and sometimes in great popular movements. Again, that's what anarchism is all about, celebrating and reinforcing all those attempts to build a free world for everyone, where everyone lives their full life, free from imposed authority.

...CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

And this is why we have a yearly Anarchist Bookfair in London. It's a place where people who call themselves anarchists can come together, discuss the issues that affect us and see how we can work together better. But, it's also an open and friendly space where anyone who knows a little bit about the subject, or nothing at all, can come along and find out more. There are over 100 groups who have stalls at the Bookfair and all are more than happy to explain what they do and why, and listen to your thoughts and questions as well.

There are 60 meetings on a huge number of issues catering for everyone, from those just wanting to find out what anarchists believe to people who have been involved for years. We have anarchists from Bulgaria, Tunisia, Burma and Syria talking about the situations in their countries. There are discussions about housing, work, mental health, welfare reforms and much more. There is even a meeting: "What have the anarchists ever done for us?"

We want the event to be as open and friendly as possible to everyone so we provide free child care spaces for kids from 2 to 12 including all day activities and the venue is fully accessible for wheelchair users and people with other disabilities. There is cheapish food and drink and a room just for films throughout the day and hopefully music as well. And there is loads of space to just hang out and chat to people you meet.

*In an article this size we can't tell you everything about anarchist bookfairs (they happen all round the country and world). For more information check out <http://www.anarchistbookfair.org.uk/> where there is a lot more information about this years London Anarchist Bookfair as well as groups doing good stuff, what we mean by anarchism and Bookfair around the world. Come along on the 28th and be part of something that is going to be huge.*

## Stop Killing Londoners: Direct Action Environmentalism

**The name of this new anti-pollution campaigning group is not just designed to grab attention, but reflects what is actually happening. A report by King's College, London gave a figure of 9,500 deaths caused by air pollution in 2015. Another study by the Royal College of Physicians in 2016 gives 40,000 deaths a year across the UK. Politicians and the car industry try and downplay these figures and say that no one actually dies of air pollution. However, the point is that air pollution has a serious impact on everyone's health, causing and aggravating asthma, bronchitis, emphysema and cancer, and is especially dangerous for the elderly and the young. In addition, the Institute for Public Policy has estimated that drastically reducing pollution would bring £800,000 of economic benefits.**

But despite having all the facts before them, the government has done little, putting the interests of the car industry ahead of public health. Targets have been set for the far distant future, eg banning the sale of diesel and petrol cars by 2040! Khan promises zero emissions by 2050!

But the situation is urgent - not just for people's health but for climate change in general. Stop Killing Londoners is demanding that measures are taken immediately: pollution to be reduced 80% by the end of 2018 and all the money saved by a clear air strategy reinvested in future clean air measures.

Rather than lobbying politicians they have adopted a campaign of direct action. They have already organised three events this year and are planning more.

'The road block disco is part of an escalating campaign to mobilise ordinary London communities to take matters into their own hands. We want people to adopt and adapt peaceful and creative direct action tactics to carry on the fight. We are aiming at London-wide actions involving ordinary people and small communities acting together to get the authorities to stop messing about and act on air



pollution' (Stop Killing Londoners Facebook).

Direct action is a tactic often adopted by anarchists. This is because we believe it is a strategy for winning. The environmental movement began to use direct action when it became apparent that the traditional methods were not enough. Thatcher's 'biggest road building programme since the Romans' was contested at Twyford Down with the campaign to stop the M3 extension which would destroy an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, two Sites of Scientific Interest and two Ancient Monuments. By 1992, the Twyford Down Association had spent years, with the help of Friends of the Earth, lobbying politicians and fighting court cases. But when the diggers began to move in, they realised that unless they did something drastic, they had lost their fight. Some of the residents, not your usual activists but often Conservative voters, decided to join forces with the Dongas, a group of young people living an alternative lifestyle near the site of the motorway development, and with Earth First! activists. It was not a question of people 'parachuting in' from outside but instead

was an alliance of all who cared about the environment.

They lost this fight but the result was that Thatcher's massive road building programme that she had launched in 1989 was in shreds. According to Earth First! this huge road building programme, "was slashed three times by a third and countless places were saved from the onward march of car culture".

The growing anti-fracking movement is using similar tactics. Local residents and activists are resisting invasion of our countryside by fracking companies. Camps have been established at places such as Leith Hill in Surrey and at Preston New Road in Lancashire.

*So whether on the streets of London or in the countryside, direct action is the way to win the battles for the health of both people and the planet.*

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

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



# Info on Rebel City

*Rebel City* aims to cover all issues of importance to working class Londoners. We argue for a radical transformation of our city.

Originally published by London Anarchist Federation up to issue 5, *Rebel City* is now collectively produced by a range of groups and individuals. Besides the AF, contributors include Haringey Solidarity Group, members of Solidarity Federation, the Industrial Workers of the World and Feminist Fightback as well as unaffiliated individuals.

Get involved. Contribute articles and information. Take bundles and distribute them among your neighbours and workmates.

16 pages of quality anarchist reporting and analysis. Get it at Housmans and Freedom Bookshops, your local social centres, or from a friendly anarchist in the street or contact us and we'll mail you a copy!

Contact: [rebelcitylondon@gmail.com](mailto:rebelcitylondon@gmail.com)

Thanks to Aldgate Press for printing and Dave A. for lay-out.

## DIRECTORY

### Get involved!

Here is a selection of campaigns and groups that are helping to make London the Rebel City.

### London-wide

Anarchist Federation: <https://aflondon.wordpress.com/>

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/London-Anarchist-Federation](http://www.facebook.com/London-Anarchist-Federation)

Anti-Raids Network: <https://www.facebook.com/antiraid/>

Black Lives Matter: <https://www.facebook.com/BLMLondon/>

Community Food Growers Network: <http://www.cfgn.org.uk/>

Disabled People against Cuts: <http://dpac.uk.net/>

Empty Cages - campaign to abolish prisons: <http://www.prisonabolition.org/>

Feminist Fightback: <http://www.feministfightback.org.uk/>

Freedom Bookshop: <https://freedompress.org.uk/>

Industrial Workers of the World: <https://www.iww.org.uk/londongmb>

Land Justice Network: [www.landjustice.uk](http://www.landjustice.uk)

London Anti-fascists: <https://londonantifascists.wordpress.com/>

Radical Housing Network: [www.radicalhousingnetwork.org](http://www.radicalhousingnetwork.org)

Reclaim the Power: <https://reclaimthepower.org.uk/>

Sisters Uncut: <http://www.sistersuncut.org/>

Solidarity Federation: <http://www.solfed.org.uk/local/south-london>

### Local Groups and campaigns

Friends of Queen's Market - Upton Park: <http://www.friendsofqueensmarket.org.uk/>

Haringey Solidarity Group - a local group that campaigns on a variety of issues, such as workfare, as well as producing a regular paper: <http://www.haringey.org.uk/content/>

Haringey Housing Action Group: <http://haringeyhousingaction.org.uk/>

Stop HVD - against the sell-off of public land: [www.StopHVD.com](http://www.StopHVD.com)

Housing Action Greenwich and Lewisham: <http://www.housingactiongl.com/>

Housing Action Southwark and Lambeth: <https://housingactionsouthwarkandlambeth.wordpress.com/>

North East London Migrant Action: <https://nelmacampaigns.wordpress.com/>

Reclaim Holloway: <http://reclaimholloway.strikingly.com/>

**Check the different organisations and campaigns for more events and actions.**