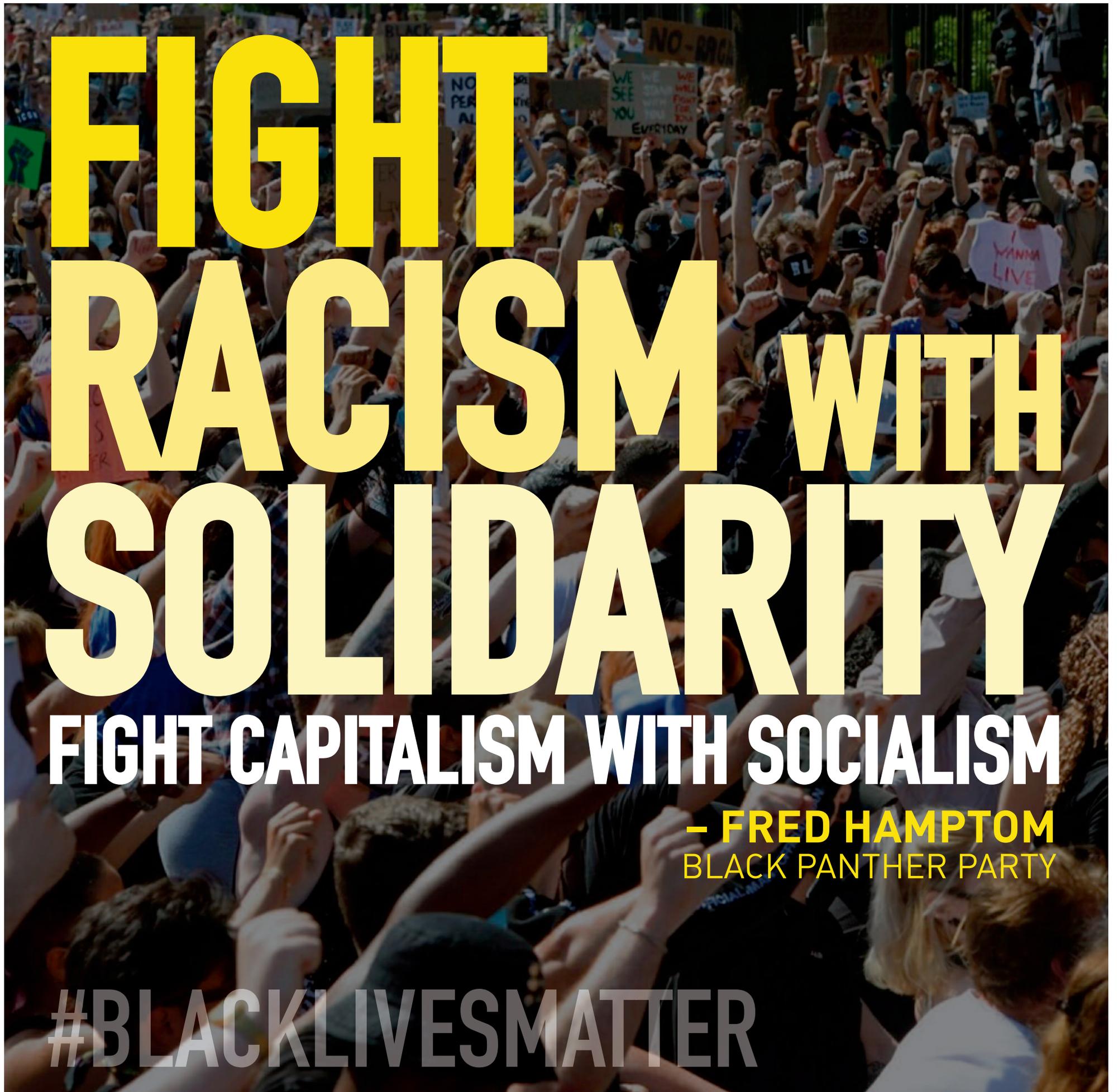


# thesocialist

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# FIGHT RACISM WITH SOLIDARITY

FIGHT CAPITALISM WITH SOCIALISM

– FRED HAMPTON  
BLACK PANTHER PARTY

#BLACKLIVESMATTER

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# CAPITALISM & THE STRUGGLE FOR BLACK LIBERATION

## FRED HAMPTON

BLACK PANTHER PARTY

"WE'RE GOING TO FIGHT RACISM NOT WITH RACISM, BUT WE'RE GOING TO FIGHT WITH SOLIDARITY. WE SAY WE'RE NOT GOING TO FIGHT CAPITALISM WITH BLACK CAPITALISM, BUT WE'RE GOING TO FIGHT IT WITH SOCIALISM."

#JusticeForGeorgeFloyd



## MALCOLM X

SAID IT BEST:

"YOU CAN'T HAVE CAPITALISM WITHOUT RACISM"

#JusticeForGeorgeFloyd



## ASSATA SHAKUR

"Nobody in the world, nobody in history, has ever gotten their freedom, by appealing to the moral sense of those that are oppressing them"

#JusticeForGeorgeFloyd



## MARTIN LUTHER KING

WAS RIGHT:

"THE EVILS OF CAPITALISM ARE AS REAL AS THE EVILS OF MILITARISM & EVILS OF RACISM"

#JusticeForGeorgeFloyd



## ANGELA DAVIS

"THE ONLY TRUE PATH OF LIBERATION FOR BLACK PEOPLE IS THE ONE THAT LEADS TOWARD A COMPLETE AND TOTAL OVERTHROW OF THE CAPITALIST CLASS"

#JusticeForGeorgeFloyd



## BOBBY SEALE

WAS RIGHT:

"WORKING CLASS PEOPLE OF ALL COLORS MUST UNITE AGAINST THE EXPLOITATIVE, OPPRESSIVE RULING CLASS... OUR FIGHT IS A CLASS STRUGGLE, NOT A RACE STRUGGLE."

#JusticeForGeorgeFloyd



## Organising against racism in Ireland: Interview with Cork BLM activist

The mass movement that was sparked by the brutal and racist murder of George Floyd received an echo across this island. From Belfast to Dingle, people marched and spoke out about the racism that Black people and people of colour face in Ireland today. SHANE FINNAN spoke to FATIMA GERALDO, an organiser of recent protests in Cork, for *The Socialist*.

**So, Fatima, can you tell me a bit about yourself? Your name and age, etc.**

"Hi, my name is Fatima Geraldo. I'm 18 years old and originally I'm from Angola, but I moved to Ireland when I was seven."

**In recent months you would have played a role in organising the Black Lives Matter protest in Cork. Do you think that there's been a big change in Cork or in Ireland since the murder of George Floyd? Do you think that white Irish people's**

**consciousness about racism has changed, and what impact have the protests had?**

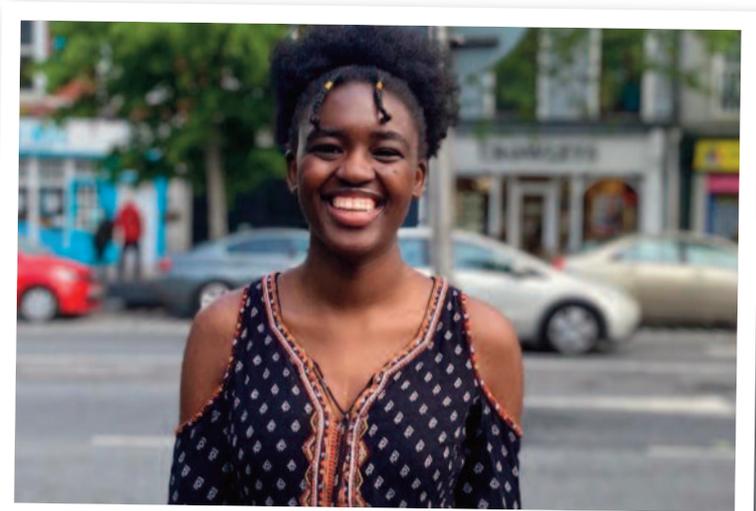
"Definitely. 100%. I just feel that most people didn't think that racism occurred in Ireland, or that they turned a blind eye to it because they didn't feel like it was their place to get involved. But now hearing everyone's stories like, people they know, people that are close to them – I think for them it has been really eye opening because I had friends texting me being like 'I'm so sorry. I didn't understand back then, I didn't see what you were going through - because I never experienced something like that.'"

Like – the global-warming protests. You know, I'm sure that many of us weren't aware the scale of it until people started raising awareness and then we became more educated. That's the same with the Black Lives Matter movement. A lot of people weren't aware of how big of a problem racism was in Ireland until the protests started happening, until they saw how many people were showing up for this protest movement. Then people were like "Yeah this isn't just

an American thing". Protesting definitely does have a huge impact on people."

**What other sort of actions can educate people as well as protest?**

"I suppose educating people about African history. I took history for the Leaving Cert and throughout my six years of secondary school, I'd say the only type of Black history that I learned about in school was the Civil Rights movement in the U.S. Even that was only a little piece of it. Everything else is mostly white history – or Irish/British history. I think we need to incorporate People of Colour's history, even Black history, something from Asia – stuff like that. Obviously, that will make the curriculum a bit bigger and I do see the challenges. But even in primary school, like history isn't a major subject like it is in secondary school. Even if we were to educate kids little by little as they grow up that would impact kids in so many ways. Kids are very aware of things that we might think they are not aware of. If you speak with kids, you'll find that they are fully aware about what is going on. All-inclusive history is



needed, not just one-sided history."

**That makes complete sense. Okay, thanks Fatima, anything else you'd like to add?**

"I suppose just a major thank you to everyone supporting the movement. A big shout-out to Socialist Party mem-

bers in Cork for being such a great inspiration for people to follow just by getting people involved. Even though social media may have got quieter, it's good to see some people are still fighting for the cause regardless. It's really meant a lot so I just want to say a big thank you to everyone."

# Britain: Tories responsible for Covid-19 disaster

By Daniel Waldron

**ACCORDING to official figures, almost 44,000 people in the UK have lost their lives to Covid-19 – the third highest death toll in the world, only topped by the US and Brazil, both under right-populist governments. While accounting for less than 1% of the global population, the UK has seen 8.5% of the world's coronavirus deaths.**

This disaster is rooted in the Tories' callous and profit-driven approach – a decade of deep cuts and privatisation in health and social care; ignoring warning of the need to prepare for a pandemic; and their belated introduction of lockdown measures, adopting a so-called 'herd immunity' strategy which put profit ahead of public health. A medical expert has said that half of all Covid-related deaths could have been prevented if lockdown had been introduced a week earlier.

The Tories' authority on lockdown measures was completely undermined when it emerged that Dominic Cummings – chief advisor to Boris Johnson – flagrantly breached the regulations, yet was

roundly defended by the government. Indeed, medical advisors who refused to defend his actions were dropped from government briefings on the crisis.

## Workers to pay for cost of crisis

Now, the Tories are rushing to re-open the economy rapidly and without measures in place to enforce safety measures in the workplace. Again, they are acting in the interests of bosses' profits, who will be able to act with impunity despite still high rates of infection and deaths. Already, the Tories have been forced to re-introduce a regional lockdown in Leicester.

Johnson – in his typically bombastic manner – has announced the government's plan to stimulate the economy through investment in infrastructure, with the highly original slogan 'Build, build, build'. However, he was at pains to stress that this will not be paid for through additional taxation on big business and the rich, bizarrely stating that he is "not a communist", as if anyone were under that illusion.

Having hypocritically taken part in the 'clap for carers', he has now suggested there should be a 'clap for bankers' who supposedly make the



Johnson is "proud" of his government's Covid record

NHS possible! The question, therefore, is how will investment and the cost of the crisis be funded? The an-

swer is, of course, off the backs of workers, with hints at further pay-restraint and austerity taxes.

## Starmer turns on Labour left

Meanwhile, Labour leader Keir Starmer is more focused on robustly taking on the left in his party than the Tory government. Rebecca Long-Bailey – the unsuccessful left challenger for the leadership after Corbyn's resignation – was sacked from her position as Shadow Education Secretary for sharing an article which pointed out the military links between the US and Israel, which supposedly constitutes antisemitism! Unlike Corbyn and from the opposite side, Starmer is clearly determined to bring the civil war within Labour to a conclusion and make the party again safe for the capitalist establishment.

## Political voice for the working class

People in Northern Ireland will be relieved that Covid infection and death rates have not, at least yet, reached the levels seen in much of Britain. However, the Orange and Green politicians are following the same path as the Tories and are risking a second wave in the interests of big business. Across Britain and Ireland, we need to build mass, working-class parties with socialist policies to fight for our interests when it comes to defending public health and people's livelihoods.

## Irish government fails to protect health workers

By Valerie O'Leary

**THE PROPORTION of healthcare workers contracting Covid-19 in Ireland is amongst the highest in the world. 31.8% of total cases of Covid-19 are associated with healthcare workers, while 1 in 10 of cases are directly associated with nurses or midwives.**

In comparison, the prevalence of healthcare workers amongst those who contracted the disease worldwide is between 5% and 10%. In Italy and Spain, two of the worst affected countries in Europe, the percentage of healthcare workers who contracted Covid-19 is 12% and 22% respectively.

These figures are a damning indictment of the Irish government's failure to protect healthcare workers.

### Why is Ireland's rate so high?

Ireland has one of the most privatised health systems in the world.

Over 85% of nursing homes are privately owned for instance. In order to make bigger profits, cost-cutting measures are implemented, including not investing in life-saving PPE and necessary testing.

Private hospitals and nursing homes are run for profit and therefore generally employ workers on lower pay and conditions. The sector is dominated by agency and precari-



ous staff. Staffing ratios are also kept to a minimum. A major issue was the lack of fully paid sick leave in the private sector.

In the context of this crisis it meant a real pressure on staff numbers in the private facilities and increased the pressure for workers to cut short sick leave and quarantine

times, putting patients and their colleagues in danger.

Adequate PPE should be provided for all healthcare staff as well as a programme of rapid testing. In addition, we need to demand better working conditions and pay healthcare workers. Paid sick leave and affordable childcare should also be immediately made available.

### Put healthcare workers in control

It is not just in the private sector where this reckless attitude to workers' and patients' safety. The INMO has shockingly highlighted that guidance from the HSE on the compulsory use of masks in healthcare was also delayed. The INMO nurses' union have stated that they had to 'lobby and cajole' the HSE to make masks obligatory. They report that infection rates reduced dramatically following the introduction of the HSE's face mask policy.

In order to protect the health and safety of health workers it is essential that the profit motive is taken out of healthcare.

We need to put an end to the two-tier health system that exists today and demand that private facilities are brought into democratic public ownership and control. We also need to see workers brought into the heart of the management of the health service and in the management of health and safety in the workplace.

## World economy scarred by COVID-19: IMF Downgrades Economic Prediction

By Manus Lenihan

**COVID-19 has hit the world economy even worse than expected, according to a report from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) released this month.**

### Predictions

The IMF's last forecast, in April, predicted that world growth would contract by 3%, which it described, in what must be the most-used word of 2020, as "unprecedented." This report revises that downward to 5%.

The predictions in the IMF report are not quite as severe as those of an OECD report earlier this month. The World Bank, on the other hand, predicts the fourth-deepest recession of the past 150 years — exceeded only by two world wars and the Great Depression. Its best-case scenario still has a global fall of GDP of 4% this year — twice as bad as that of 2009.

### Effects

The effect on workers' livelihoods is already colossal. According to the International Labour Organisation, the loss in work hours was equivalent to 130 million full-time jobs between Quarter 4 of 2019 and Quarter 1 of 2020. The IMF predicts that a decline in Quarter 2 will exceed 300 million.

80% of workers in the world have already been adversely affected, and 70% of schoolchildren have lost out on education.

Massive government intervention is the only thing that has kept this show on the road. Fiscal measures amounting to \$11 trillion have to date been announced worldwide.

### Struggle

The report tersely acknowledges "widespread social unrest" among a list of "downside risks" to the world economy.

This "unrest" — protest movements, uprisings and strikes — fundamentally reflects the inability of the capitalist system to deliver a secure and prosperous life for people, and the movements of recent years demonstrate that this is the case on every continent. But this "unrest" is more than an economic challenge. It holds the potential to mount a global political challenge that could overturn the capitalist system itself.

As the crisis outlined in this report unfolds, growing layers of people will see the need for a socialist alternative which, by fundamentally redistributing wealth and power, could harness the vast resources that exist in order to solve these problems.

# South: Historic government coalition faces crises & class war

By Mick Barry TD

**"The country was very united during the pandemic. The economic crisis that is coming could be very divisive" – Leo Varadkar June 30.**

140 days after the General Election a new government was formed by the two traditional right-wing parties Fianna Fáil (FF) and Fine Gael (FG), with the Green Party also part of the coalition. The General Election reduced FF and FG to an all-time combined low of 43% as voters expressed dissatisfaction with a joyless recovery, demanded real change and surged to Sinn Féin and a variety of parties perceived as anti-establishment.

The decision of the Green Party to enter government with FF and FG represents a certain betrayal of the vote for change and will serve to burn bridges between the Green Party and a significant portion of their voters, especially younger voters seeking action on the environment.

## Avoiding immediate austerity

The government has multiple pledges that it will avoid "austerity" by first borrowing and then increasing spending by the State. In part, this reflects a realization on their part that a 2008 / 9-style full frontal assault on the working class will go down like a lead balloon and could provoke an immediate confrontation between the classes.



Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael will lead a new government with the support of the Green Party

It also reflects an understanding that Irish capitalism has been partially floored by the pandemic and that the State needs to be employed as an actor to get it back on its feet.

This is not the Keynesianism of post-World War Two Europe which ushered in the welfare states under pressure from the labour movement. Instead it will focus first and foremost on pumping billions of euro of State money into reviving the damaged private sector.

## Bosses exploit the crisis

Even if the new Government seeks to avoid outright confrontation with the working class for now, the same approach may not be applied by their

backers in the boardrooms of big business. Operating on the basis that you should "never waste a good crisis" many employers are using the cover provided by Covid-19 to drive through policies they have wanted to implement for years.

One such employer is Aer Lingus, where the vulture capitalist owners are trying to cut pay by 70%, make 500 workers redundant, and ban industrial action for 20 months. Debenhams' decision to shut its 11 Irish stores and to force 2,000 workers out of their jobs has met with a militant response. The Debenhams workers have put down a marker and provided a preview of the kind of action other workers can

take as this crisis develops.

## Mass unemployment

The most important issue facing Irish society is now the issue of jobs. Senior civil servants have told the Dail's Covid-19 Committee that there will be 400,000 unemployed at Christmas (about one sixth of the workforce).

Young people can be an explosive factor in the developing situation. Having voted for change under the impact of the housing, mental health and climate crises in February, young people now have another powerful new reason to raise their voices – mass youth unemployment.

More than half of all young people aged 15-24 are currently unem-

ployed. Mass emigration of the youth has traditionally acted as a vital safety valve for Irish capitalism. This option is likely to be far less available in the next few years – and the lack of it could turn Irish society into a pressure cooker.

## A period of crisis & class war

This government comes to power against the backdrop of a developing world economic recession which some say could rival the Great Depression of the 1930s. For a small, open economy such as Ireland's, this recession will exaggerate weaknesses, cut off escape hatches and intensify pressures on government.

Sinn Féin have promised to organise the "most effective Dáil opposition" in the history of the State. They are likely to put on a "left" face to build support among working-class people but to temper that with signals to the capitalist establishment that it can lead the government after this one in a "responsible" fashion. Despite the fact that Sinn Féin are likely to grow their electoral support, such a balancing act will prove challenging in the context of very deep class divisions opening up in society.

No such balancing act will be necessary for the Socialist Party. Big opportunities will open up to connect with workers and young people and to play a leading role in the struggles that will erupt as Irish society enters a period of history characterized by the deep class divisions referenced in Varadkar's warnings.

## Green Party once again wrestles with its conscience... and wins

By Colm McCarthy

**ON 26 June the Greens announced that they had secured the necessary two-thirds majority to enter government with Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. In the end it was not even close, as 76% of their members supported the deal – a larger percentage than Fianna Fáil (74%), or a non-weighted measurement of the Fine Gael electoral college (68%).**

This result demonstrated the continued dominance of the neo-liberal wing of the party as embodied by its leader Eamon Ryan. Its vision of environmentalism is a minimal and pragmatic one that seeks technocratic solutions palatable to capitalism.

## Eco-austerity

Their failure to emerge from the 2007-11 government with any significant achievements has not fundamentally changed their world view. Whilst the Program for Government extracted some more environmental commitments than in 2007, these tend to focus on policies like the regressive carbon tax.

The bulk of the reduction in emis-

sions envisioned for this decade are due in the second half, after the end of the government's term of office, and in ways that aren't specified. The reality of a period of green-tinged austerity combined with wholly inadequate plans in areas like housing and health, could even damage support for climate action among certain sections of society.

## The coalition debate

The section of the Green Party opposed to the coalition deal faced numerous obstacles. These included significant pressure from the media, the political establishment and much of the environmental NGO sector who campaigned for the Greens to enter government. They also suffered from confused messaging and a lack of any coherent alternative.

For example, figures like Neasa Hourigan opposed the deal simply on the pragmatic grounds that it wasn't quite up to scratch in some areas, or that in some respects it promised too much! In an interview with Newstalk, Saoirse McHugh – one of the more radical voices opposed to the deal – outlined her preferences in the event

of a successful rejection of the deal as being either a "national unity" government of all major forces, illustrating that coalition with the right-wing establishment parties isn't on principle the difference.

From the point of view of the environment, however, this is a fundamental mistake as these parties explicitly represent an environmentally destructive capitalist system, and will naturally and forcefully oppose any meaningful attempts to curb that system.

## Green Party: no friends of the Earth

The looming end-of-decade deadline for achieving a 51% carbon reduction on the way to a zero carbon economy and averting a greater climate catastrophe has been a major driver of mass movements, particularly among school students internationally. This movement went into abeyance during the Covid-19 lockdown but will be back with a vengeance. Most of those school students in Ireland could not even vote last February and will not be in any way restrained from heeding fresh international calls to action.

In doing so they will be necessarily at odds with the Green Party in Ireland.



Green Party leadership contest: both supported the programme for government

# North: Resist sectarian turf war

By Kevin Henry

**I**N THE course of the Covid crisis, public parks have become an important place for exercise and, as the restrictions now ease, to meet friends and family. In north Belfast, some have sought to turn Grove Park into a sectarian battleground. A banner saying "Anti British GAA not welcome" was placed at the park's entrance and graffiti with the same message was also sprayed on a wall in the grounds. There have also been reports of a group of men gathering at the park and telling people wearing GAA tops to leave.

## Claiming public spaces

These are public spaces and people have the right to engage in cultural and sporting activities free from intimidation. This incident is one reflection of a process people across the North, particularly from working-class communities, will know all



Grove Park in north Belfast has become a site of sectarian intimidation

too well - the attempt to mark and claim territory. As is common, these actions can lead to tit-for-tat retaliation, with reports of young people attacking the small Protestant estate of Westland Drive. The marking of territory can lead to attacks to intimidate people out of areas, as one 'mixed' couple discovered recently in Coleraine.

This is the reality, decades into a so-called peace process which, rather than overcoming sectarianism, has in reality sought to manage it, with segregation in housing and education remaining the norm. Importantly, many working-class communities feel left behind, having not received the promised 'peace dividend'.

We need a socialist alternative that can actually overcome sectarian division by bringing working-class communities together in opposition to poverty and to fight for a better life for all. That requires common struggle in the workplaces, on the streets and in the communities against the bosses and pro-capitalist politicians

of all hues, particularly in the context of a new crisis for which working-class people will be expected to pay.

## Cross-community solidarity

If such an alternative is not built, we risk not just enduring division but a slide backwards, potentially towards conflict. The recent Life and Times survey gives a warning. In recent years, there was a decline in those identifying as Unionist or nationalist. In the last year, in the context of turmoil around Brexit and the border, these trends have reversed.

The current economic and social crisis will provide opportunities for sectarian forces to strengthen themselves and divide communities further. But it will also create the basis for common struggle which transcends division and shows that, united, the working class has the power to change society. Those in favour of the latter must organise to ensure those opportunities are seized.

# Tories put brakes on gender self-identification

By Thomas Carmichael

**T**HE SUNDAY TIMES recently revealed that the Tories are to scrap proposed changes to the Gender Recognition Act which would have allowed trans people to have their gender recognised through self-identification. This will come as a blow to all trans and gender non-conforming people in the UK.

Instead of the proposed changes, "protections" will be brought in to "safeguard" female-only spaces, such as changing rooms and toilets, reflecting the bogus myth that the right for trans people, particularly trans women, to self-identify could be abused by cis male sex offenders to allow them to access these spaces. These claims are not backed up by evidence. In fact, research has shown that there is no difference in the levels of sexual assault in bathrooms and so on between localities that have trans inclusive laws and those that don't.

A far more pertinent concern is that trans women will be the victims of sexual harassment or violence as a result of being forced into male changing rooms, bathrooms, prisons etc. In 2015, Vicky Thompson was found dead from suicide after being held in a male prison and subjected to transphobic abuse. In the UK, in 2018-19, there was a 37% increase in hate crimes against trans people, with as many 12% of trans workers reporting harassment or even physical violence in the workplace in the last 12 months.

The campaigns against the proposed changes were, sadly, not limited to the political right. A number of leading trade unionists have chimed in, and an appallingly transphobic cartoon on the issue ap-



#IAmWhoISayIAm

peared in the Communist Party-aligned newspaper The Morning Star, for which the publication later apologised. The reality, however, is that the discrimination faced day and daily by trans and gender non-conforming individuals is part and parcel of capitalism.

Capitalism relies on the oppression of women, a gendered division of labour, and the unpaid domestic labour, mainly of women, within the structure of the nuclear family. It therefore depends on an ideology of gender stereotypes and roles. Trans people, as well as other LGBTQ+ people, by their existence undermine this ideology and therefore face oppression in capitalist society. Socialists and the workers' movement must consistently oppose all forms of oppression born out of this rotten system. This includes fighting for the right of trans people to have their gender recognised through self-identification.

For a more detailed article on this subject, visit the Socialist Party's websites

## NORTH NEWS IN BRIEF:

### Covid-19 & class inequality

Unsurprisingly, statistics from the Department of Health and NISRA show that Covid-19 infection and death rates have been highest in the most deprived communities in Northern Ireland, following patterns seen elsewhere. Many low-paid workers in sectors like retail, food production and care were deemed essential and continued to work throughout lockdown, while cramped living conditions are also likely to have been a factor.

The pandemic has again highlighted the social inequalities created by capitalism. These are only going to be deepened by the global economic downturn and further austerity, if the bosses and politicians get their way. An organised, fighting opposition from the trade unions and working class is needed to turn the tide.



Meat workers have walked out

### Abortion rights: Full provision now!

New regulations which make abortion much more widely available in the North have passed their final hurdle at Westminster. This is despite

opposition from the Stormont politicians, including Sinn Féin, who supported limiting access in cases where fetal abnormality would likely lead to severe disability.

However, provisions to make these legal rights a reality are still not in place, with UUP Health Minister Robin Swann using the Covid-19 pandemic as an excuse for delay. Securing abortion access on the NHS for all who need it remains a key task for pro-choice campaigners.



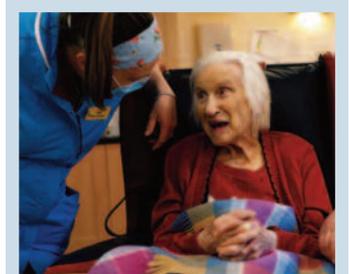
Abortion rights won through pressure

### Kick profit out of healthcare

Board members of the RQIA - the body which oversees the quality of health and social care in Northern Ireland - resigned as it emerged the Department of Health blocked inspections of care homes during lockdown. Almost half of all Covid-related deaths have occurred in care home settings, most of them privately run.

Meanwhile, it has been revealed that mask fit-tests carried out by a private contractor did not meet required standards, potentially putting health staff at risk of infection. Private firms will always put profit first. We need to fight to rebuild the NHS

as a fully funded, comprehensive and 100% public health and social care system, including bringing all private care homes 'in house'.



Care homes: almost half of Covid deaths

### Taxing approach to corporate handouts

The DUP, Sinn Féin and Alliance gave the Tories the power to implement their brutal welfare 'reform' policies in the North. In exchange, they were granted the power to cut corporation tax, deepening poverty and suffering so they could give more handouts to the fat cats.

It has now emerged that Sinn Féin suggested taxing people's text messages to fund this corporate bailout! This speaks volumes about the class interests the Stormont politicians represent. We urgently need an anti-sectarian, socialist alternative.



Former SF Finance Minister Mairtin Ó Muilleoir put forward the proposal

**IN THE early hours of 13 March 2020, Breonna Taylor, a young black woman and health worker, lay asleep in her bed when police executed a “no-knock” search warrant, writes SAM RODRIGUEZ. While the “search” yielded nothing, Breonna was killed in the process – shot by the intruding officers at least 8 times.**

**L**ATER THAT very day, President Donald Trump would declare a national state of emergency in the face of the worsening Coronavirus pandemic, just hours after Breonna – yet another unarmed black person and essential health care worker – was killed by state sanctioned police violence, a threat no less existential to black Americans. In the days and weeks that followed, the U.S. state continues to expose its complete unwillingness to tackle either. But as the pandemic tore through the black community, it left behind the kindling for an explosive re-emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement.

#### Enough is enough

Accounting for just 13% of the U.S. population, more than a third of those hospitalised with the coronavirus are black. Unemployment is highest amongst black workers as is the number of renters facing eviction as a result of the virus. Increased public ordinances and policing powers enacted under the guise of the country's

public health response have only exacerbated the harassment and targeting of black people by police. And while the wealthy deploy armies of lawyers to ensure their interests are represented in federal bailouts and hunker down in lavished summer homes, working-class people – and particularly the black working class – pay the price.

#### 8 Minutes and 46 Seconds

It is against this backdrop that the world watched in horror as four Minneapolis police officers knelt on the neck of George Floyd, an unarmed black man, for 8 minutes and 46 seconds – under suspicion of trying to use a counterfeit 20-dollar bill. Eight minutes and 46 seconds as he, like Eric Garner, begged to breathe. Protests exploded almost immediately in Minneapolis and quickly spread to every single state in the country, including even small rural towns, with solidarity actions in cities across the globe. When protestors burned down a Minneapolis police precinct in an act of political dissent, a stunning 54% of Americans thought the action was justified. With more than half a million people protesting on just a single day in June, it is believed that the BLM Movement is now the largest protest movement in US history.

When the BLM movement spontaneously emerged in 2015 in the wake of the killings of Michael Brown and Trayvon Martin, tens of thousands were propelled into action. After decades of misleadership and low levels of struggle, a wave of newly minted fighters forced the issue of racist state policing into mainstream discourse. However, the intervention of Democrat political figures seeking to placate the revolt for political gain, combined with a lack of clear demands or leadership, led to surface level policing reforms and a general demobilization over the past number of years.

#### A new generation leads

But the movement is sharper and more focused this time around. Young and working-class people of all backgrounds had their illusions of “change” shattered under an Obama



## Seattle in revolt: #JusticeForGeorgeFloyd, Autonomous Zone, Ta

By Darragh O'Dwyer

**THE BLACK Lives Matter rebellion erupted in Minneapolis but spread to every major city in the US. In Seattle, those on the streets were under no illusions that racist police brutality was a problem unique to the MPD, as only a month earlier SPD officers had brutally murdered Shaun Fuhr, a 24 year-old unarmed black man they chased down an alley and shot in the head.**

Similarly, the underlying class and racial inequalities that have fuelled the uprising are particularly striking in Seattle, where soaring rents disproportionately target people of color, forcing many out of their communities and leaving others homeless. As elsewhere in the US, black and latinx people have been inordinately impacted by the pandemic, contracting the virus at significantly higher rates than their white peers.

#### CHAZ / CHOP

This seething discontent at systemic racism expressed itself in a wave of daily demonstrations. Extremely heavy handed in their response, the SPD resorted to teargas, mace and rubber bullets – none of which was enough to suppress the determination of protestors. A stand-off developed in the SPD's East Precinct in the Capitol Hill neighborhood, with barricades and rows of armored riot police using vicious methods of so-called crowd control. Amongst those teargassed, was City Councilmember, Kshama Sawant, a member of So-





presidency; saw a so-called “recovery” which resulted in a greater concentration of wealth at the top and greater precarity elsewhere; four years of Donald Trump; the movement around Bernie Sanders; and now, a global health pandemic that has laid bare the cruelty of the country’s healthcare system and political leaders, who time and time again prioritize profits over people.

A dramatic shift in mass consciousness on the issue of racism has been provoked throughout US society with certain polls indicating as much as 76% public support for the protests.

#### Democrats offer no solution

While the Democratic Party poses as progressive and even as part of the movement, they are responsible for many of the bloated police budgets and underfunded housing and education in cities like New York, Chicago, Minneapolis and Seattle where they politically dominate. They continue to expose themselves as a pro-corporate party which puts profit before black lives. Presidential nominee Joe Biden has called for police to shoot protesters in the legs instead of the heart and Nancy Pelosi’s notion of solidarity goes no further than a patronising photoshoot wearing African kente clothing. As staunch defenders of capitalism, a system that thrives on racism, they offer no solution to tackling the real roots of black oppression.

Led primarily by black youth, the rebellion is a multi-racial, working-class revolt. The movement won the immediate indictment of Derek Chauvin, the officer that murdered George Floyd, and sparked a new wave of the BLM movement that is both more fo-

cused and enduring – and that, at its core, challenges more than just police brutality, but a system that relies on the brutal exploitation of black people. Calls to “defund the police” and to fund social services, of which black people are disproportionately denied, have spread from Minneapolis to New York City to Los Angeles to Dallas, Texas.

#### Defund the Police

As a global depression looms, likely to reap even greater havoc on communities of color, the radical wing of BLM are taking aim at the priorities state funding exposes. Despite thousands of complaints of police brutality over the last decade, New York City has a police budget of over 6 billion, and yet plans to cut over 1.5 billion from education, housing, parks, health and social services, in response to lost revenue as a result of the crisis. BLM’s campaign to defund the police is unquestionably a struggle against police violence, but also state racism, inequality and austerity which is rapidly spreading from the housing justice movement to the fight against cuts to education.

Only a mass, multiracial working-class movement that targets the capitalist system and all the inequality and division it breeds can unite people to fight systemic racism and the profit-driven system to which it is fastened. The potential of working people to fight racism was displayed when Minneapolis bus drivers refused to transport arrested protesters for the police and workers throughout the country who have taken part in walk-outs and other demonstrations to protest their workplace’s complicity in supporting systemic racism and the police.

## Tax Amazon, Defund the Police

cialist Alternative, the sister organisation of the Socialist Party, with members throughout the US on the ground building the BLM movement.

Yet such was the resolve of the protesters that on 8 June the police were forced to abandon the precinct. Activists and demonstrators then declared the six-block area around the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone (CHAZ), or, as it was later to be called Capitol Hill Organized Protest (CHOP), free of police and coordinated and controlled by the BLM movement. Free food, water, and medical supplies were made available alongside the organisation of daily events that ranged from film screenings to political discussions.

#### Movement learning lessons

On June 9, Kshama Sawant and Socialist Alternative organized a mass rally in the zone, drawing over 2,000 people to hear a range of activists speak about the need to continue building a sustained movement in order to fight racism and defund the police by at least 50% to fund services like affordable housing. They boldly marched to City Hall where Sawant used her key to allow protesters to enter and held a vibrant general assembly discussing tactics and strategy on how to link the struggle against racism to the taking on of the billionaire class.

As more people continue to draw radical conclusions about the connection between a system that has allowed Jeff Bezos to make billions during a pandemic and the systemic racism in US so-



ciety, the Tax Amazon campaign, launched by Socialist Alternative and a coalition of activists, unions and community groups, has become an exciting pole of attraction within Seattle’s BLM movement. In addition to defunding the police, the campaign seeks the introduction of a progressive tax on major corporations, the money generated from which would be invested in affordable housing to tackle Seattle’s dire housing crisis.

Tragically in recent weeks, a number of fatal shootings have occurred that appear to be acts of right-wing terrorism. Donald Trump had consciously stroked such sentiments in a number of tweets where he demonised CHAZ participants, claiming he would take back the city by force. On 1 July the SPD violently disbanded the zone and returned to their precinct. While hugely inspiring, isolated enclaves like CHAZ are likely to be temporary, vulnerable as they are from attacks from the capitalist state and right-wing elements.

#### Tax Amazon victory

Working-class communities of color, however, look set to achieve real gains at the expense of Bezos and the billionaire class. As the BLM movement and CHAZ played out, Tax Amazon gathered such momentum as to force the Seattle City Council to initially pass such a tax. While the movement must remain mobilized in case of any watering down or loopholes the establishment and big business may try to introduce it is nevertheless a testament to what an organized campaign of socialists and working-class communities can achieve.

As Kshama recently wrote in an article for the Nation: “It’s no accident this victory comes in the midst of the historic Black Lives Matter rebellion. The legitimacy of the status quo has been utterly smashed by the protest movement, the pandemic, and the deepening crisis of capitalism.”

## Ireland’s connection with slavery

Statue of John Mitchel, supporter of slavery, in Newry



By Ciaran Crossey

**THE ESTABLISHMENT in Ireland, North and South, like to put forward a sanitised version of their record on racism, both today and historically. It is suggested that the Irish ruling class never benefited from slavery, unlike those based in British port cities like Liverpool and Bristol. This is simply untrue.**

#### Perverse compensation

In 1833, after slavery was abolished across the British empire, the government compensated the slave-owners and not the slaves, transferring huge sums of money to already wealthy people. A compensation fund of £20 million was set aside for slave-owners, estimated to be the equivalent of 40% of the national budget.

One hundred and eighty people in Ireland were ‘compensated’, including the La Touche family of bankers and property developers in Dublin. Two members of that family received almost £7,000 (the equivalent of €1.1 million today) in compensation for the 385 slaves they had in Jamaica. The La Touche House office building in Dublin’s financial centre was named after these fine examples of heartless capitalism.

The College Green gate entrance to Trinity College is one of Dublin’s best-known images. Few know it was built in the early 17th century with money from tobacco, a slave crop. Larne Town Hall is also named after a famous slave owner.

#### Supporting US slavery

People from both sides of the sectarian divide in the North became involved in the slave trade when they emigrated to north America. Andrew Jackson is commemorated at his ancestral house outside Carrickfergus. Born of poor County Antrim parents, he went on to become US President. Records show he beat his slaves, including doling out a brutal public whipping to a woman he felt had been “putting on airs.” Is it really surprising that he is admired by Trump, who was the first sitting President to visit Jackson’s grave?

A hero of Irish nationalism, John Mitchel was a leader of the Young Ireland movement in the mid-19th century. He was jailed but escaped to America. Once there, he became a newspaper editor and a slavery advocate, describing black people as “innately inferior”. During the Civil War, he supported the Confederates. Due to his role in campaigning for Irish independence, at least ten GAA clubs are named after him, and there is a statue of him in Newry.

#### Remove slaveholder monuments

As with the statue of Edward Colston, which was dumped in Bristol harbour by BLM protesters, socialists support the removal or renaming of monuments to those who profited from and defended slavery, a horrific example of capitalist barbarism. This does not represent an erasure of history. It is a recognition of the crimes of the past. Ending the valorisation of those who engaged in slavery sends a message about the society we wish to live in today.

## North: Drop fines & prosecutions against Black Lives Matter protesters!

**ON 5 June, using the pretext of safeguarding public health, the Northern Ireland Executive rushed through an amendment to Covid-legislation the night before socially-distanced BLM rallies in Belfast and Derry, giving police the power to fine and harass protesters and threaten organisers with prosecution.**

Police targeted young people and people of colour, and acted in a generally provocative manner. Police, rather than protesters, put public health at risk by creating bottle-necks and coming into close proximity with people to issue fines while not wearing PPE. In contrast, no fines were issued to far-right demonstrators who would later gather in Belfast to supposedly defend monuments from a non-existent threat.

The same politicians who criminalised BLM protesters completely failed to enforce health and safety in essential workplaces during lockdown, and have rushed headlong to reopen the economy and reduce social distancing measures in the interests of profit. Their hypocrisy and the interests they represent are clear.

The Socialist Party believes this legislation is a dangerous threat to the democratic right to protest, which is essential for workers, young people and the oppressed to defend our rights. We call for it to be repealed, and for all fines and threats of prosecution against BLM protesters to be dropped.

# Israel: Hands off the West Bank!

By Seán Burns

**ISRAELI PRIME Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to proceed with plans for the annexation of up to 30% of the West Bank, beginning in early July. The annexation, even if of less than the area touted, would be a devastating blow to the Palestinian population's democratic and national aspirations, and mark a drastic escalation in the conflict. These proposals are being met with outrage from millions of workers and young people around the globe, and have sparked demonstrations of thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank and thousands of Jews and Palestinians in Israel.**

Netanyahu and his Likud party see Trump's presidency and the Covid pandemic as providing an opportunity to proceed with the annexation proposal. Trump's so-called 'deal of the century', announced in January, offered US support for this partial annexation of the West Bank by the Israeli state, with no right for a Palestinian capital in Jerusalem, along

with other provocations. This position is not linked to even a pretence of negotiation and political agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. If the plan is to proceed, it would reduce the area controlled by the Palestinian Authority further towards the status of a South African-style 'bantustan' - ie, a vassal state with no real control or autonomy.

#### Netanyahu hesitates

Detailed proposals for the annexation were meant to be announced on 1st July. However Netanyahu has since delayed, stating that they are waiting for a green light from the Trump administration. This hesitation reflects a nervousness about the instability that could be wrought as a result. Annexation could spark a wave of anger and revolt amongst the Palestinian and Arab masses, inside Israel and the broader Middle East. This could threaten US imperialist interests in the region.

#### No to state-sanctioned violence

The push for annexation has been combined with an upping of state repression, and attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinians in the West Bank



Annexation plans provoked large demonstrations of both Palestinians and Israeli Jews

and Jerusalem. The killing of Eyad al-Hallaq, a 32-year-old Palestinian man with autism, on 30th May sparked large demonstrations of both Israelis and Palestinians who

drew inspiration from the BLM rebellion in the US, with some using the slogan 'Palestinian Lives Matter'. Aware of the dangers of this development, Netanyahu was forced to call

an investigation into the killing and the role that Israeli police had played. This is an insight into the potential mobilisations that could happen and the opposition that Netanyahu could face, both inside Israel and the West Bank, if the annexation proceeds.

#### International solidarity

Internationally, it is the responsibility of socialists and trade unionists to oppose the annexation and to try to exert pressure on the Israeli and US regimes wherever that is possible. Our sister organisation in Israel / Palestine - Socialist Struggle Movement - has put out the call for solidarity demonstrations, demanding governments take the following steps:

- The immediate recognition of a Palestinian state
- The recall of ambassadors from Israel
- Strict sanctions against the Israeli occupation and settlements.
- Suspension and ban on any financial or military public and private aid and agreements that may be directly used to support the occupation and settlements.

## Brazil's three plagues: Covid-19, inequality & Bolsonaro



Far-right President Bolsonaro

By Amy Ferguson

**AS THE Socialist Party's sister organisation in Brazil - Freedom, Socialism & Revolution - has explained, the country is facing three plagues: Bolsonaro, the pandemic and social inequality.**

Brazil is now at an epicentre of the coronavirus crisis. The official number of deaths has surpassed the 35,000 mark and is only continuing to grow. Serious projections indicate that by August, the number of deaths from Covid-19 could reach 125,000. Working-class people are hit hardest, the majority of whom are black. This is partly due to the jobs they are performing, which put them at risk, and also to do with the lack of access to decent housing and sanitation.

In the midst of this pandemic, Brazil is heading for what is likely to become the worst economic and social crisis in its history. Forecasts are predicting that the collapse may exceed 10% of the country's GDP. There have already been 4.9 million jobs lost in the first quarter of this year. While coronavirus

is a central factor of this crisis, it is not the sole cause. Thanks to neoliberal policies that prioritise the profits of bankers, big business and speculators above all else, Brazil never recovered from the previous economic crisis in 2015.

Bolsonaro is attempting to use the shock and chaos of the current situation to further advance his authoritarian, reactionary and anti-worker agenda. Bolsonaro knows that his popularity has taken a hit, even among his base in the middle class and the traditional right-wing layers. Thus, he is accelerating his plans for a coup. He is arming his far-right supporters, undermining environmental protection legislation and attacking the rights of public sector workers.

Each day with Bolsonaro in the Presidency means thousands more lives lost and the suffering of millions of Brazilian people. For Brazil, building an independent movement of working-class people and the oppressed to take on Bolsonaro and his far-right cohort, and to fight for socialist policies, is a key priority.

## Yemen & Covid-19: Pouring oil on a humanitarian blaze



By Haritha Olaganathan

**AMIDST a drawn-out civil war with ongoing violence, Covid-19 has inflamed the "world's worst humanitarian crisis" taking place in Yemen. Even before the country's first confirmed case in April, half of Yemen's population of 28.5 million people were on the brink of famine, largely caused by the bloodthirsty Saudi Arabian regime's indiscriminate bombing of farms and food supplies.**

#### On the verge of disaster

Today, 2.4 million - one in two - Yemeni children under the age of five years old suffer malnutrition. It is further projected that up to

30,000 children will develop severe, life-threatening malnourishment in the next six months, 6,600 of whom are expected to die from starvation or preventable diseases in this time, according to UNICEF.

The complete lack of effective public health and water systems in Yemen exacerbates this crisis. Almost half of the country's health facilities were not operating before the pandemic, but any semblance of public health provisions have near-collapsed under Covid-19, with only 710 ICU beds in the whole country! Misinformation is rampant, and a general distrust in the state amongst Yemeni people prevents the sick and infected from accessing the limited care available to them in hospitals, which are perceived to be hubs of disease.

#### Coronavirus could devastate

There are currently 1,128 confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Yemen, although the absence of testing facilities suggests that the actual figure is much higher, especially as 304 people - 27% of those infected - have died as a result of the virus (John Hopkins University).

The inability of the Yemeni healthcare system to deal with the pandemic has driven almost 85% of its population to rely on humanitarian aid, which is incapable of providing the necessary relief to the millions of Yemeni people affected by starvation, poverty and disease. The current situation in Yemen is a horrifying exposure of the brutality and inhumanity of capitalism today.

# Aviation bosses declare war on jobs, pay & conditions

By Ruth Coppinger & Chris Stewart

**T**HERE IS no denying that aviation internationally has been hit by the Covid crisis. In Ireland, North and South, airlines, airport authorities and the aircraft manufacturing and maintenance employers see this as an opportunity to wage war on jobs, pay and working conditions.

## Bombardier jobs

The announcement that 600 aerospace workers are set to lose their jobs at Bombardier's Belfast site is a devastating blow to the region's manufacturing sector. The announcement came just a week after Thompson Aero Seating announced 500 redundancies, following 430 layoffs of mostly agency workers by the company in March.

Bombardier says it will be making some 2,500 redundancies across its plants worldwide in response to falling demand due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Bombardier, a billion-dollar company, is more than capable of keeping on their workers. Many of these workers have given decades to the company, only to be thrown on the scrapheap when enough profits can't be squeezed from their labour.

The aerospace sector alone accounts for some 10,000 jobs in Northern Ireland in direct and indirect employment.

## Airlines attack their workers

In the South a brutal assault on the jobs, pay and conditions of workers is taking place at Aer Lingus, Ryanair and CityJet the latter seeking to off-shore its entire workforce. The Dublin Airport Authority are looking for 1,000 redundancies and 20% pay cuts for remaining staff.

Aer Lingus workers had initially agreed a 50% cut, in recognition of the impact of the pandemic on aviation. However, management announced it would cut further to 30% of usual pay, along with mass layoffs.

On 9 June, a "secret" document of vicious pay cuts and drastic work changes was leaked to the media. Management said it would row back on aspects if unions accepted proposals within a week.

Disgracefully, the SIPTU leadership initially complied with this gun-to-the-head deadline, saying a ballot couldn't be carried out as things were so urgent. To the credit of the cabin crew, Fórsa insisted on a ballot and workers decisively rejected management proposals after which SIPTU belatedly announce they will ballot its members after all!



The duration of the cuts package is meant to be until the end of February 2022, but the preamble mentions changes will "last in perpetuity" and are "irrevocable". Long-standing Aer Lingus workers say cuts they accepted over 10 years ago in the last crisis were never restored.

These cuts are unjustifiable — Aer Lingus has been making profits now for a decade and has cash reserves of

almost €900 million to get it through what is clearly a crisis, but a temporary one. In 2018-19, the company made profits of €305m and €276m respectively.

## Put workers before profits!

International Airlines Group owns a huge range of airlines, from British Airways to Iberia to Aer Lingus and more. It has revenue of €25 billion.

The idea that the aviation industry, including Aer Lingus, can't weather this storm without pauperising its workforce is ludicrous.

Similarly, with Ryanair who are pushing to shed thousands of jobs. Since 2008 Ryanair has paid out to shareholders €6.8 billion in the form of dividends and share buy backs.

In response to the crisis some governments have been forced to intervene to protect their aerospace and manufacturing industries. The French government has announced a €15 billion intervention to support Airbus and Air France. In Germany the government has supported Lufthansa to the tune of €8 billion and taken a 20% equity share in the company which used to be wholly publicly owned.

Aer Lingus never should have been sold off to vulture capitalists. As an island nation, public control of an airline and connectivity is especially important. It should be re-nationalised now to save jobs but so that workers and the state can benefit from the profits when the crisis is over. Likewise with all the other companies in the sector North and South threatening jobs. With climate change, public control of aviation is also vital to implement the type of change needed, while guaranteeing a just transition for workers.

## Debenhams' dispute: Workers take aim at new government

By Cllr Kieran Mahon

**D**EBENHAMS' WORKERS protested outside the National Convention Centre and turned their focus for justice at the incoming Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Green Party coalition. Despite great adversity workers have kept Debenhams on the national agenda.

Under pressure from Debenhams workers in Cork, incoming Taoiseach Micheál Martin has given verbal sympathy for claims for a just settlement.

The "new" government is sitting on the unimplemented Duffy- Cahill Report, written in response to the looting of Clerys in 2016 and designed to give workers increased bargaining rights and the ability to recoup the value of assets shifted by the company. This should be implemented immediately and applied to Debenhams before any stock is sold on. The promised stimulus in July for the retail sector should not just be soft money for employers in the sector but used to invest directly in jobs including through public ownership of job shedding outlets like Debenhams.



Workers face job cuts and health risks

Workers have justifiably raised criticisms of the role of their union Mandate. In almost four months officially sanctioned actions have been at best sporadic with most of the protests being organised unofficially on the initiative of key shop stewards and activists. A clearer message is needed from the union on organising to prevent the disposal of stock including directing managers who are members of Mandate not to be engaging in stock takes.

As we go to press it is gearing up for a stand off between workers and the liquidator at the stores as KMPG attempt to move stock out. A general call for workers and activists to stand with the Debenhams workers if such a stand off take place should be made and widely supported.

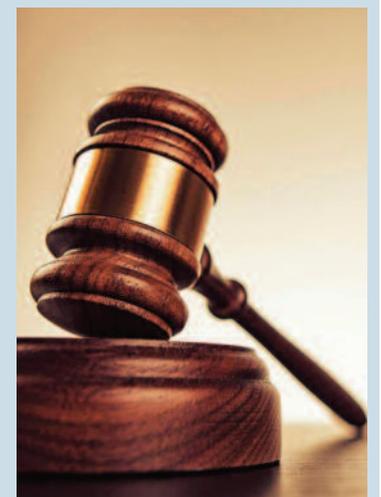
Debenhams' workers are leading a campaign that should give example and courage to all workers who will be faced with these questions in the coming period.

## Trade unions must fight to defend SEOs

**I**N A case of history repeated itself a High Court Judge Garrett Simons ruled in favour of a group of electrical employers in their efforts to strike Sectoral Employment Orders down as "unconstitutional". These SEOs in construction and other sectors provide for basic pay standard higher than the statutory minimum wage. The introduction of SEOs came after the Supreme Court in 2016 similarly ruled that their predecessor arrangement Registered Employment Agreements were unconstitutional.

It is absolutely correct to cite these rulings as evidence of the inherent anti-working class bias in the judiciary. This ruling, particularly if the government doesn't appeal it to the Supreme Court creates an opening for an employer offensive on pay and conditions. However if they go down that route likewise frees up the trade union movement to respond in kind. As Tommy Fitzgerald a Regional Officer said:

"Crucially, the absence of Sectoral Employment Orders would also mean that, for the first time in over 50 years, in huge sections of the construction sector there would be no



constraints, beyond existing industrial relations legislation, on workers taking industrial action to defend themselves. Such a situation would pose a considerable threat to many employers. In that scenario, Unite is confident in our ability to defend our members' terms and conditions using all means at our disposal."

The five construction unions have since announced a precautionary ballot of their members in anticipation of any attacks on pay and conditions.

# A vicious circle: Climate change & environmental catastrophe in Siberia

By Rob Jones (ISA in Russia)

**I**F SIBERIA were a country, it would be the biggest in the world, stretching from the Arctic to Mongolia and Central Asia, from the Pacific Ocean to the Ural mountains on the edge of Europe. It contains incredible nature and many endangered species roam its territory.

Yet capitalism, with its climate change and environmental disasters, is destroying it.

Since the end of May, twenty thousand metric tons of toxic diesel fuel have leaked out of a storage tank and into two rivers near the city of Norilsk in the Arctic circle. This is comparable to the thirty-seven thousand metric tons split by the Exxon Valdez off the Alaskan coast in 1989. The Russian government has declared a state of emergency in the region and said that the consequences will be felt, probably for decades.

## Zombie forest fires

On top of this, and still early in the year when many parts of Northern Siberia would still usually be snow-bound, “zombie forest fires” as scientists have named them, have been blazing over a huge area of Siberia. 2019 saw record high temperatures in Siberia, which led to huge fires not just across forests, but the sun-dried taiga region too. An area the size of Belgium was burnt, during which time, every month the equivalent of Sweden’s annual carbon emissions were pumped into the air. On the surface, these fires died down but



As the frozen ground warms much faster than expected, it’s reshaping the landscape, releasing carbon gases that fuel global warming

over the winter they continued to burn in the peat helped by the practically, and almost unheard of, snowless weather. Once Spring arrived, the fires rose again from their apparent death and have since consumed over 5 million acres, already almost as much as last year.

## Feedback loops

These however are not just a series of accidents that worsen the state of the global environment — there are catastrophic “feedback loops” in the whole situation, which threatens to dramatically escalate, and is indeed already worsening the climate crisis.

A large part of Siberia consists of permafrost — land that is frozen and never melts. Now, like the arctic ice, it is melting. As a result, there are many dangerous consequences.

The melting of the permafrost is making Siberia an epicentre of climate change. May 2020 globally was the hottest May on record. Temperatures in parts of Siberia were 10 degrees Celsius above the average for that time of year — some parts of the region were as hot as Barcelona, and in the capital, Novosibirsk, where the average May temperature is ten degrees Celsius, the weather was so warm this year people were sun-

bathing on the city’s inland beaches. Meteorologists warn of extreme weather events including an increased number of tornadoes and hurricanes, as well as hail, thunderstorms and sand-storms.

## Release of greenhouse gases

The real problem is that permafrost contains huge quantities of greenhouse gases, not just carbon dioxide, but also methane, an even more dangerous gas. Globally, it is estimated that there are 1,600 gigatons of carbon currently trapped in the permafrost, almost twice the amount currently in the atmosphere.

Until recently, the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), did not even take this into account when producing its forecasts. Scientists to some degree believed that the permafrost melt would be a slow and gradual process. Now, they are discovering that the process is happening very quickly. It is estimated that for every one degree rise in global temperature, permafrost releases the equivalent of about five years of coal, oil and natural gas emissions. The latest estimate is that the IPCC’s recommendations aimed at slowing down climate change need to be met eight years earlier than predicted to account for the permafrost.

It seems the whole process is one huge feedback loop. Higher air temperatures speed the melting process, which releases more greenhouse gases, pushing the temperature up even higher.

## Need for radical, socialist change

If there is to be any chance of halting climate change, radical measures have to be taken. The whole Arctic should be made into an international reserve, with mineral exploration and exploitation banned. The multinational companies who continue to pump out greenhouse gases should all be nationalized and placed under democratic workers’ control. Resources have to be provided to repair the damage to the environment across Siberia. This can only be done if the capitalist system is replaced by democratic economic planning and international cooperation as part of a global socialist society.

## Review: Planet of the Humans directed by Jeff Gibbs

By Michael Barker

**Planet of the Humans demands our attention and most of all it demands our action. This widely-watched documentary, directed by Jeff Gibbs and produced by Michael Moore, presents a dystopian overview of the destruction that capitalism has wrought on our planet. Importantly the film castigates the ongoing attempts by liberal environmentalists to prevent the consumption of our planet and concludes: “We must take control of our environmental movement and our future from billionaires and their permanent war on Planet Earth: they are not our friends.”**

Now if that was the only message that viewers took away from this documentary, I for one would be happy. But tragically, Moore and his environmentally concerned filmmakers, in telling an epic story of our times, get an awful lot wrong... very wrong.

Despite fingering the billionaire-class as the problem, the film simultaneously blames the daily inaction of ordinary people for the world’s problems. The closing sequence of the film ends with these words:

“we must at long last accept that it’s

not the carbon dioxide molecule destroying the planet, it’s us. It’s not one thing, but everything we humans are doing. A human-caused apocalypse. If we get ourselves under control, all things are possible.”

This was a bad ending for an otherwise interesting film, but it is a conclusion that flows from the population-obsessed narrative that undergirds the entire documentary. It is important to be crystal clear: population growth is not the problem facing our planet; the problem is capitalism. The conclusion presented within Planet of the Humans ends by blaming “us” as being the primary problem.

The suggestion that uncontrolled population growth is the elephant in the room misses the point, but it flows from the filmmakers inverted version of history. Population growth is in no way the elephant in the room. It is a right-wing ideological spectre that perpetually haunts the environmental movement to its detriment. It is not a new idea and it is not being suppressed by corporate environmentalists whose role in the green movement goes back to its beginnings.

All that being said we can still agree with the filmmakers that billionaire elites have always stood in the way of



building the type of democratic mass movements that can save our planet; and yes, “We must take control of our environmental movement and our future from billionaires”.

For all its many faults, Planet of the Humans has already helped start a conversation about the limits of social democracy, and for its many millions of viewers it will have posed the need for fighting for an alternative to the system.

We would say that we need a socialist alternative that puts power to de-

cide our collective future into the hands of ordinary working-class people. Tragically, if also typically for Moore, Planet of the Humans offers poor analysis and no way forward.

This documentary should be contrasted with the powerful and inspiring storylines of films like Salt of the Earth (1954), which exposed the destructive nature of class society and demonstrated that only workers’ solidarity could lead to a brighter future. But unlike Moore’s films, Salt of the

Earth — which was written by the same person who went on to write Planet of the Apes — was banned for decades precisely because of the threat it posed to the powerful.

So, while the title of Moore’s latest cinematic contribution may have aped its forerunners’ positive aspirations, it falls short, leaving its viewers as paralysed as the lonely orangutan featured floundering for its life in the documentary’s apocalyptic and depressing closing sequence.

# Gender violence in the spotlight

By Keishia Taylor

**I**N ONE June week in the south of Ireland, the stories of three victims of male violence appeared in the headlines. Jean Eagers was stabbed to death by a man long known to her in Dublin 15. Sonya Lee, who was left with permanent brain damage after an attack in 2018, saw her attacker and former partner sentenced to 11 years. Patricia O'Connor's murderer, Kieran Greene, who inflicted catastrophic injuries and conspired with her family to dispose of her body, had his sentencing postponed. In Belfast, Emma Jane McParland was stabbed to death by her adult son in April.

## Lockdown exacerbated a systemic crisis

The lockdown sparked a surge of "intimate terrorism" behind closed doors, but gender violence was already pervasive. More than half of femicides are committed by a partner or former partner.

A new USI survey has found that almost a third of women and non-binary students said they had been sexually assaulted during their time in college. One in three women are

beaten, raped or abused in their lifetimes around the world.

## Fighting sexism and abuse

In June, the sadistic abuse perpetrated by James O'Reilly against his younger sister and seven of his daughters over a 23-year period came to light. These phenomenal traveller women, indomitable survivors who successfully pursued a prosecution after suffering unthinkable physical, sexual and emotional abuse, were utterly failed by the state.

Speaking truth to power, Kathleen O'Driscoll pointed out that "all that time social workers, teachers, nurses, priests, nuns saw how we were living. No one ever came to us. I do believe we were let down because we are Travellers." This case illuminates the need for an interconnected struggle against all forms of sexism and abuse and against all forms of racism, as well as a struggle to end poverty and deprivation and class division.

## Global revolt against oppression

The Black Lives Matter revolt that has spread around the world has also put systemic racism in Ireland in the spotlight – including ingrained anti-traveller racism that encompasses



decades of abuse and abandonment by the state. The New York Times has documented that the BLM demonstrations in the US in June were likely the biggest in its history. They sparked demonstrations around the world. This new social explosion led by young people of colour is another wave of struggle against oppression following and building upon the global feminist revolt of recent years.

It's clear that the fight against all forms of oppression is energising and radicalising a generation of youth who themselves have no faith in a system of precarity regarding jobs and housing, and who will be the driving force of a working-class revolt against all inequality and in-

justice. There's never been a greater potential for a mass socialist-feminist, anti-racist movement, rooted in working-class struggle to emerge, and such a movement can and must build a powerful challenge to gender violence.

## System change & Socialist Feminism

Gender violence is rooted in the system's leaning on the patriarchal family structure – and with women's unpaid labour valued at ten trillion US dollars per annum globally by Oxfam, we see how this is ingrained in the capitalist status quo.

Misogyny and systemic sexism can be ended, but it goes hand in hand with ending the violent, unequal system that puts the profits above all

else. We must build a movement of young people, workers and trade unions against gender violence, abuse and harassment everywhere, including drastic reform of the court system, and for the conditions that provide for autonomy, such as a living wage and an end to precarious work.

We need investment in refuges and specialised services, free mental healthcare, free childcare, and mass building of social and affordable housing. This requires a challenge to the private ownership of wealth and a socialist struggle to rebuild society in the interests of the majority: socialising the wealth and resources and planning their use to meet people's needs.

## Hospitality jobs under threat – radical solutions needed

By Neil Moore

**A RECENT report commissioned by hospitality trade bodies warns that one in four businesses in the sector in Northern Ireland may never open again, potentially putting 16,000 workers out of a job. Economy Minister Diane Dodds was quick to respond, with the setting up of a Tourism Recovery Steering Group – made up solely of business and industry representatives, without even a token workers' representative. This approach by the Executive, of allowing the foxes to run the henhouse, is rotten.**

**Workers' control of health & safety** Bosses have proven their disregard for the health of their staff and customers. The push for a reduction of social distancing from 2m to 1m – embraced by the Northern Ireland Executive – is emblematic of this. The reasoning behind this is purely economic, with bosses presenting an engineer's report of how many people they can cram into a bar with 2m vs 1m social distancing as their key evidence!

Unite Hospitality NI, in which So-



cialist Party members play a central role, is calling for workers' management of health and safety – launching an initiative for elected and well-trained 'roving' representatives. Winning this would be huge – empowering workers to take health and safety into their own hands where bosses clearly don't care.

## Reject the 'new normal'

Under capitalism, a reduction in work spells disaster for workers as there are no serious opportunities for retraining or changing jobs in what could be the worst unemployment crisis in decades. The implementation of a reduced working week with no loss of pay is an immediate measure which could combat job losses.

If a company or the industry as a whole cannot sustain jobs, then nationalisation can provide a solution. We argue that workplaces and industries should not only be publicly owned but also placed under the democratic control and management of the workers within them – this would ensure that employment is not only secure but socially useful.

If the work isn't there even with restructuring, then what must be considered is retraining and redeploying workers into other socially useful jobs – of course, this can only be achieved on the basis of public investment and a democratic economic plan.

**This is an abridged version of a more detailed article available at [socialistparty.org](http://socialistparty.org)**

With the catastrophic global pandemic spiralling into economic crisis and mass unemployment, the spectacular eruption of the Black Lives Matter movement is a glimpse of the mass struggle to come. We need international revolutionary socialist organisation, struggle & solidarity!

Check out ISA's weekly podcast 'World to Win' Sundays 7pm  
ISA Facebook & YouTube

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INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

**Virtual Marxist University**  
online public rally & appeal  
2pm Saturday  
25 July 2020

Join the public rally with speakers from around the world and help us meet our international appeal to raise €90,000 to fund revolutionary socialist struggle in over 30 countries

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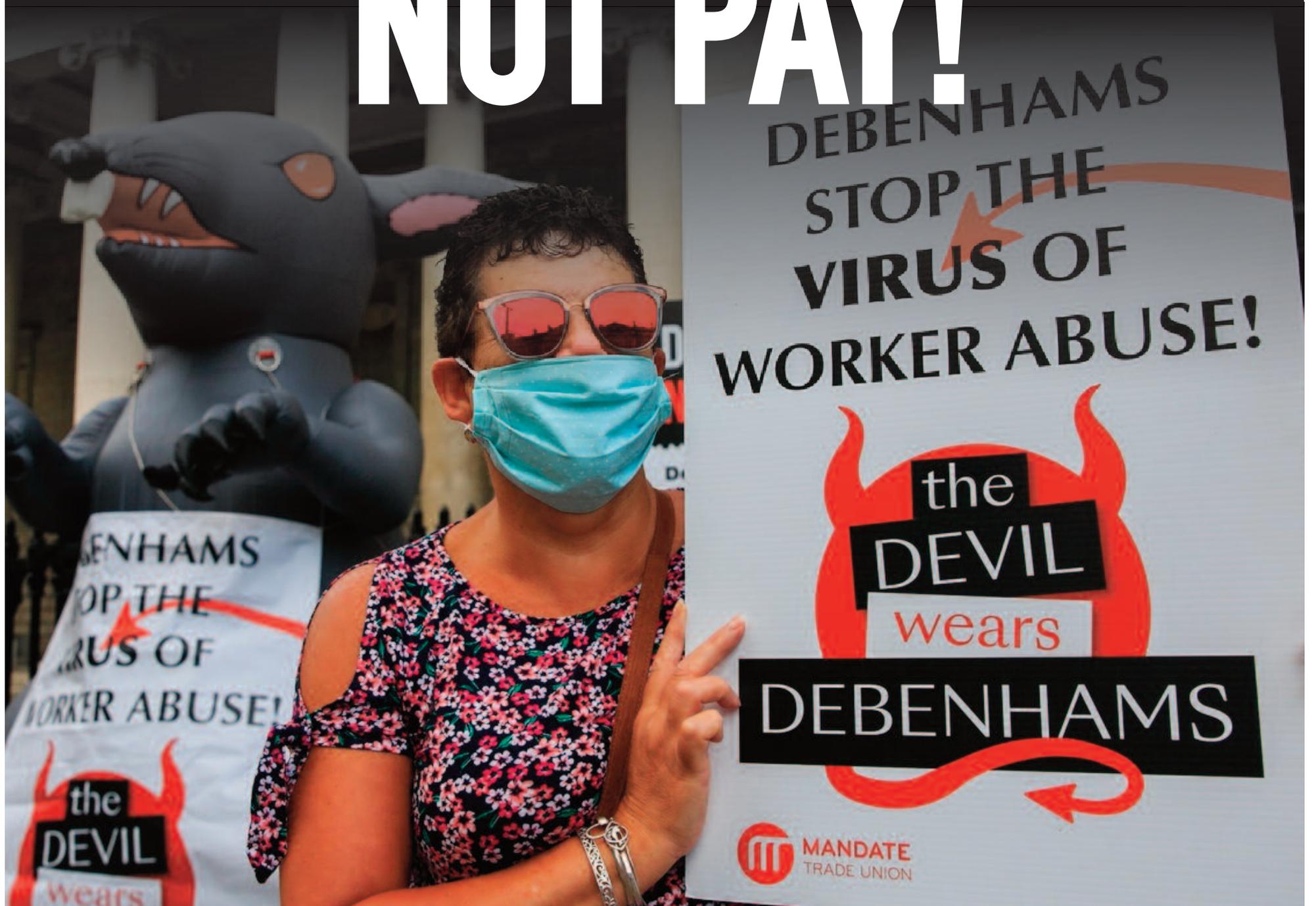
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## COVID-19 ECONOMIC CRISIS: WORKERS MUST NOT PAY!



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