

REVOLUTION

MARXISTSTUDENT.COM

ISSUE 12

STUDENTS STRIKE BACK!

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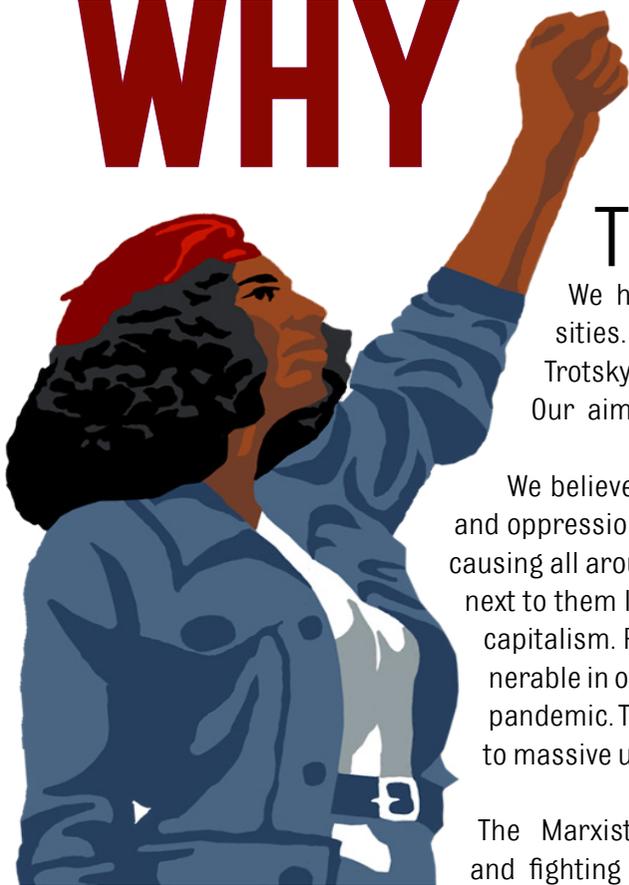
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WHY WE FIGHT



The Marxist Student Federation is a group of young revolutionaries, working to build a revolutionary party across the world. We have 38 Marxist Societies across the country, in various Universities. These societies discuss the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky as well as getting involved in local campaigns and movements. Our aim is to build an alternative to the world we see around us now.

We believe that the capitalist system is responsible for massive exploitation and oppression of workers and youth. We can see the suffering that capitalism is causing all around us. A huge section of the British population are homeless, while next to them lies enough empty homes to house them easily. This is a product of capitalism. Racist and homophobic policing which leaves some of the most vulnerable in our society being attacked by those who proclaim to protect them is a pandemic. This is a product of capitalism. The handling of the coronavirus has led to massive unemployment and avoidable deaths. This is a product of capitalism.

The Marxist Student Federation is discussing the issues of capitalism and fighting against all the effects of it. Join us in the fight for socialism.

STORIES FROM THE FRONTLINE

FIGHTING FOR A RENT STRIKE IN BIRMINGHAM

ZARA PREECE

Marxist Students at Birmingham are running the 'Student Justice Now!' campaign, aiming to radicalise and organise students against the crisis in education and student housing. The most recent event of the campaign was an organisational meeting, where comrades attended a talk/discussion which gave us all a better idea of how to practically and efficiently spread the message of the campaign.

The meeting hosted many students that will form the nucleus of a rent strike movement. The consolidation

of this core group was an important step towards the goal of organising a rent strike, and has given us a solid basis upon which to organise and agitate.

The next planned meeting will take place on 16th November, and aims to continue building a radical student movement. As we mobilise and give more responsibility to participating students, the campaign should expand accordingly, and draw in more radical students that want to fight back against the marketised education system they have been pushed into, as well as corrupt

landlords. This group will reflect the feelings of anger felt throughout the student population, and we aim to direct this anger towards linking the radical student movement with the wider labour struggle.

We will continue to help to organise the growing movement and provide political education as a guide for the organisation to expand and to establish and consolidate the forces of Marxism. We will continue to grow our group and our campaign, and we will continue to fight back against the exploitative system we live under. ■

BUILDING THE FORCES OF MARXISM IN LEEDS

JUSTIN ATKINSON

Leeds Marxist Society has had an amazing start to the first term of the 2020/21 academic year. Despite COVID considerations preventing us from holding meetings in person, we have adapted ourselves to online work, and held well-attended online weekly meetings.

Our first meeting of the term on 'What is Marxism' was attended by over thirty people. Although social distancing has limited our capacity to promote our ideas on campus as we normally would have, we've still been actively promoting Marxism in Leeds, both digitally on social media, and physically through poster campaigns on the University of Leeds campus. In addition to our online weekly meetings, we've also been educating our members

through regular reading groups on the classic texts of Marxism. So far we've read The Communist Manifesto, and are working our way through The State and Revolution, with many more to come.

We've also taken part in the Marxist Student Federation's activity nationally, with many members taking part in the MSF's national meeting

on Black Liberation, as well as the recent Revolution Festival.

Aside from serious political education, the Leeds Marxist Society has also held online socials.

The Leeds Marxist Society has had great success spreading the ideas of Marxism on campus so far this year, and we hope to continue to do so through this term and beyond. ■



CAMBRIDGE STAFF DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

ALEX BARRY

Last month comrades in Cambridge launched the Cambridge Staff Defence campaign to organise and protest against job losses at one of the richest universities in the world.

In the midst of a global pandemic, Cambridge University has been

quietly pursuing ruthless job cuts to low-paid non-academic staff. This is despite the fact that the college have billions of pounds in combined assets and savings, and gives bosses 6 figure salaries.

As Marxists we say NO to union busting, precarious contracts and

worker's redundancies! Students, staff and workers have united to organise and fight.

We contacted union representatives and reached out to comrades to spread the word and tell vulnerable staff to unionise, organise and defend themselves. We launched campaigns on social media to reach wider layers of workers and youth, and co-hosted public meetings to discuss plans and tactics.

Now two-thirds of colleges have confirmed they have no plans for redundancies, but our campaign won't be slowing down. While workers are on precarious contracts by exploitative institutions they'll always be at risk. Fight for student-staff solidarity, and fight for socialism! ■



BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The working class remembers. And from this history, we have learnt the truth: that the rule of a minority over the majority is the most barbaric form of life. And we must fight to abolish it – completely.



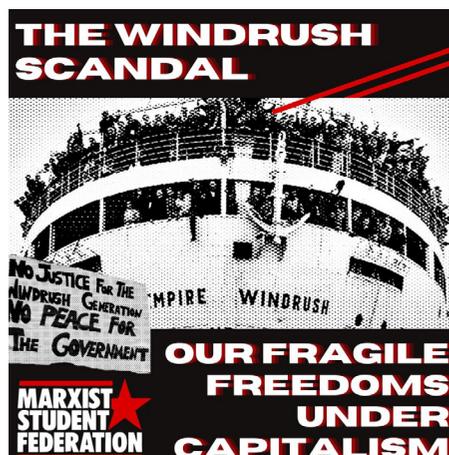
Over the course of Black History Month, the MSF produced a collation of different posts on social media, to analyse and understand the history of the struggle against racism, and how we can fight it today.

It began with an article and infographic explaining the origins of slavery and black oppression. It traced back the material roots of racism, and how slavery formed an integral part of the beginnings of capitalism. This explains why despite the abolition of slavery being nearly 200 years old, its legacy underpins all the structures and institutions under capitalism today.

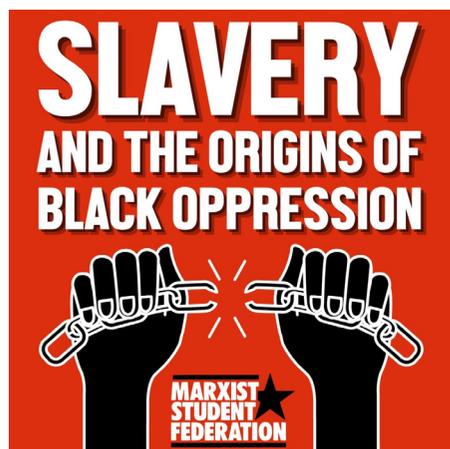
We also posted about the history of anti-racist struggle - the contributions of the Black Panthers, Malcom X and Martin Luther King in particular. A huge number of significant black civil rights leaders drew anti-capitalist conclusions over the course of their political lives. Unfortunately, many of these leaders were assassinated by the ruling class as they began to pose a greater threat. Crucially, the ruling class was fearful of their appeals for the working class to unite.

day Windrush scandal, there are countless examples that show how institutional racism continues to oppress black people in the UK today.

Lastly, we posted an infographic titled 'How the working class can fight police terror'. We know that the fight against police brutality is connected to the fight against capitalism as a whole. In fact, you cannot have one without the other. The fight against racism is the fight for socialism. Join us in that struggle! ■



We produced material on racism in the UK, which tends to be clouded by events in the US. From Stephen Lawrence to the modern



TELL

THE

TRUTH

On 28 September, the Tory government banned using 'anti-capitalist material' in English schools. This was announced as part of a wave of restrictions on teaching, under the guise of stopping young students from being radicalised.

What is becoming clearer and clearer is that it is the situation itself that is radicalising young people. The onslaught of crises, attacks, and material deprivation is leading people at younger and younger ages to question the system. Alongside this, students are being forced to re-enter schools and universities, to the detriment of their health. With every reckless decision that the Tory government makes in favour of profits over lives, this mood of anger and dissent grows. The Tory government and the capitalist establishment can try their hardest to keep young

people from questioning their system. But the reality of the situation means that attempts to curb the growth of revolutionary moods is futile.



The Marxist Student Federation (MSF) has launched a campaign to counter these latest restrictions. The Tories want schools to lie or omit parts of

history and current events in order to protect the profits and privileges of the powerful. We will not be kept in the dark! Throughout November and December, the MSF will be campaigning to tell the truth about economics, history, and politics. And we need your help! November will see a huge social media campaign. We will post short videos, written contributions, and pictures from textbooks to expose the lies and omissions made by the current curriculum. Hundreds are already involved, with Marxist students sending in exposés on the reality of the Monarchy, the Iraq war, the partition of Ireland, and many more important issues. Join the campaign, and tell us what you have been lied to about in school! Write a short piece, or send in a video to contact@marxiststudent.com ■

THE IRAQ WAR

by Jack Currie,
Stockport Marxists

Starting in March 2003, the Iraq War was the result of years of tension between Saddam Hussein, the then president of Iraq, and the United Nations over the rejection of UN weapons inspectors in Iraq. The American Congressional legislation of the Iraq Liberation Act 1998 solidified the United States' goal to seek a 'transition towards democracy' in Iraq, which has been under the autocratic dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and the Ba'athist government since 1979. War was the result of a case against Iraq, which claimed that the country had ties to Al Q'aeda, who were responsible for the September 11 attacks in 2001, and that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, which was later proven to be false. American and coalition troops (most notably the UK, Poland and Australia), against the authorisation of the UN security council, invaded swiftly using a combined land and air strike campaign. Airstrikes were said to kill/injure many civilians.



The war officially ended in May

of the same year but a counter insurrection of Iraqi locals fought against the western occupation for nearly a decade afterwards. Years later, the UK Iraq inquiry concluded that the UK and Blair actively undermined the UN security council. Why is it that school students aren't taught about this very recent conflict that still affects Iraq to this day?



The motives of the Iraq war were not the "liberation" of the Iraqi people, they did not see it this way, or the dismantle of possible WMDs, that was proven to be false. The true purpose was to maintain the oil supply that Iraq had in the Persian Gulf to the world economy. Imperialism is the fallout of the colonial past and capitalist nations today continue to oppress the old colonised nations. The truth is not taught in our schools because

the ruling class does not want the youth to know that wars are concocted to benefit the capitalist system and to maintain the imperialism nature of Britain's history. The Iraq war caused a protest of a million people in London in its outset. The ruling class are terrified of this happening again. Our generation has been known to be vocally anti-imperialist and so the ruling class does not want to throw gasoline into the fire of anger. The British education system won't tell you the truth. Let the Marxist Student Federation do it ■

THE IRISH PARTITIONING

by Seamas McMillan

The partition of Ireland into North and South remains an open wound in Irish society to this day. British imperialism is directly responsible for this crime, which was committed against the Irish people in the midst of their struggle for independence from Britain. Partition continues to feed religious sectarianism and is used to divide Irish workers. Yet, despite its influence on Irish life to this day, it is noticeably absent from school textbooks, both in Ireland and in Britain. As we approach the 100th anniversary of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, in which an agreement was struck to divide Ireland, attempts are being made to rewrite the

history of the sectarian state in the North of Ireland and to hide the truth about the partition of this nation.

The Irish Marxist, James Connolly, predicted in 1914 that the partition of Ireland “would mean a carnival of reaction both North and South”. The last century has tragically borne out his prediction. The Partition of Ireland in 1921 came towards the end of an incredible struggle against British imperialism across the country.



James Connolly, Irish Marxist revolutionary

In the struggle for Irish independence, you had general strikes, workers’ committees established in factories across Ireland, and even attempts for the workers themselves to take power into their hands. In the town of Limerick, for instance, a workers’ soviet was declared, which even printed its own money. In the countryside, farmers seized the land from the parasitic landlords; and importantly in 1919 an engineering strike of both Catholics and Protestants rocked Unionist rule in Belfast.

All of these events posed serious dangers to the ruling capitalist class and their right to get rich off the backs of the Irish workers. A successful socialist revolution in Ireland would have been a beacon to workers in Britain and the rest of the world to throw capitalist exploitation off their own backs. And so the British government turned to the tactic of divide and rule.

Despite the amazing potential posed by the engineering strike in Belfast, it turned into its opposite, and the following year there was a purge of workplaces across the city by the capitalists with assistance of the more backward workers. 11,000 Catholics were expelled from their jobs, along with 1,850 “rotten Protestants”, a term used to describe Protestant workers who had played an important role in the strike the previous year. Simultaneously in the south, there was a split in the national liberation movement as a large portion moved to support partition with the assistance of Britain. Opponents to this were imprisoned or killed by the new Irish Free State.



The century that followed saw the politics of the Free State dominated by two capitalist parties in partnership with the Catholic Church, which smothered the population with its archaic social views. In the North, sectarianism was continually stoked by the Unionist establishment, and the Catholic minority suffered incredible discrimination in terms of access to employment, housing, and largely denied the vote by the property franchise ■

CHARTIST REVOLUTION

by Laurie O’Connell,
Cambridge Marxists

We are often told that the British working class has never been revolutionary. In fact, we are told, all of our rights were granted peacefully by the benevolent ruling class. However, the real history of Britain shows that this could not be further from the truth.

Chartism was a mass movement of millions of workers, mostly active in the 1830s and 1840s. Fed up with their terrible conditions, workers demanded the right to vote and to put their own representatives in parliament. As much as we are now told this was simply a movement for reform, the workers realised that it was not just reformers vs conservatives, but workers vs capitalists. As Bronterre O’Brien, a leading

REVOLUTION

Chartist, explained, it was not the actions of a few cruel individuals in parliament which needed to be remedied, but the question of which class they represented. Individuals, he explained “are but the chosen tools or instruments of these classes.”

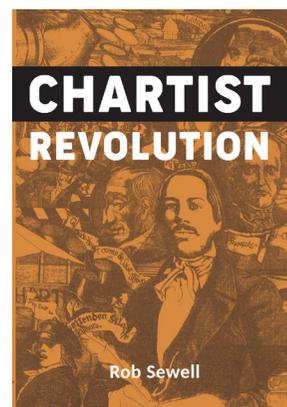
The ruling class feared that the workers would use any political power they gained to seize the property of the rich and put a stop to the exploitation of capitalism altogether. They refused to grant the Chartists the vote, even in the face of this mass movement. The Chartists had to struggle against the capitalists for every basic democratic right. The Chartist movement didn't just politely request the vote. In

November 1839, Welsh Chartists rose up in the first ever generalised insurrection of the new industrial proletariat. Although they didn't succeed, the Chartists made revolutionary history. The movement went on to found the first working class party in history, and to present three mass petitions to parliament. In 1848 a petition holding 5.7 million signatures - more than 1/3 of the population - was presented to parliament.

No wonder, then, that the Chartist movement is barely mentioned in history textbooks. When it is mentioned, the Chartist movement is presented as a mere movement for reform- and a failed one at that. But the Chartists them-

selves understood that the vote was a means to an end. They strove to change society root-and-branch. That is the real revolutionary legacy of the Chartist movement and the British working class ■

Interested in hearing more? Get a copy of WellRed's new title 'Chartist Revolution' today!

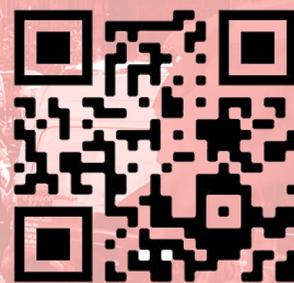


JOIN OUR MEETINGS!

On December 3rd, 10th and 17th, the Marxist Student Federation will be holding meetings for young revolutionaries. We will discuss the truth of economics, history and politics. What is the reality of what has been happening around



us? And why doesn't the education system want to tell the truth about this? Find out more by registering for these 3 meetings. Scan the QR code to register.



MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

CAPITALISM TO BLAME

BY HASAN WRIGHT

University accommodation: halls of residence or prison cells?

This is surely the question on the lips of students across Britain, as they enter yet another month of imposed online learning and quarantine. Since the beginning of the first nationwide lockdown in April, more than 23 Universities in the UK, including Glasgow, Manchester and the University of Sheffield, have confined students to their rooms, in some cases for a matter of weeks, in others, indefinitely. In addition, most students have no or very few in person contact hours, and are learning remotely.

This is despite promises made by Universities across the country in August that the student experi-

ence would be assuredly normal, with only a few adjustments to accommodate the difficulties produced by the COVID-19 pandemic. A mix of online and in person teaching was supposedly guaranteed, but this approach was quickly abandoned.

Since terms began in September, there has been an uptick in reported anxiety and loneliness related mental health problems. The Guardian recently reported that “nightline has reported higher demand than usual for this time of year as self-isolation takes its toll on students’ mental health.

Anecdotal reports from Nightlines across the country have mentioned an increase in the number of suicide related calls. This alert comes after Finn Kitson, 19, was found dead at Man-

chester University’s Fallowfield campus on 8 October.

Sara Khan, vice president for liberation and equality at the NUS has pointed out that “There was a mental health crisis across universities prior to the pandemic... the pandemic has only exacerbated these issues”.



A decade of austerity and capitalist crisis has left public services, especially mental health services, completely gutted, leaving unwell students stranded and without support.

Indeed, the failure of universities,

successive governments, and other health care providers, to provide adequate mental health treatments and facilities is actually a problem that goes back decades. Since the late 1970s there has been sweeping privatisation, all in an effort to maintain the profit margins of the bosses and major shareholders.

Clinical psychology, like other fields of research, has been subject to a major stagnation, as researchers have been forced to produce unreliable data to satisfy profit-seeking publishers and the pharmaceutical industry. Where once capitalism drove major scientific innovation, now the profit motive is the precise obstacle to the advancement of medicine, including mental health treatment.

The contradiction between the profit motive and medical advancement exploded into a public health crisis in the wake of the 2008 recession, which began the wholesale destruction of public services we are now witnessing. The pandemic catalysed the deepening of this crisis, further revealing how incapable the present system is of providing adequate care to ordinary people.

Now we have on the one hand, the failure of bourgeois science to provide adequate treatment for mental health problems, and on the other, the inability of the ruling class to allocate sufficient resources to health services or support on a profitable basis.



“We must make one thing clear: it does not have to be this way. Despite the claims of the bosses, the money is there to provide care not only for the mentally ill, not only to fund rigorous medical research, but to usher in a new era of social progress.”

The youth are bearing the brunt of this crisis, as they have become de facto prisoners on campus. The University bosses knew they could not provide adequate support for students, but to ensure loans were taken out and rents were paid, plowed ahead anyway, luring them back to halls of residence for nothing more than zoom calls and mental anguish.

However, we must make one thing clear: it does not have to be this way. Campus misery is not the result of scarcity. Despite the claims of the bosses, the money is there to provide care not only for the mentally ill, not only to fund rigorous medical research, but to provide a free higher

education to every UK citizen, give university staff a pay rise, and usher in a new era of social progress, starting with higher education. There is more than £800 billion in uninvested capital in the British economy. Indeed, Trinity College Cambridge alone is worth £1.4 billion in assets, making it richer than some countries. The problem is that all these resources are owned privately by a tiny number of individuals, who can only invest to make profits for themselves and their shareholders.

This is why we must expropriate the universities, and begin providing a future to the youth on the basis of need, not profit. ■



FIGHT LANDORDS WITH A RENT STRIKE!

Students up and down the country are furious with their current living conditions. Thousands of students have been trapped in their accommodation halls, with minimal help or guidance from their universities on what will happen next. Meanwhile university management, and the Tories, are continuing to blame young people and students for the rise in COVID cases.

We have been brought to university, by management and the government, under false pretenses. Why should we be paying £9,000 fees and huge rents for poor-quality online teaching and housing?

In fact, why should we be paying anything at all? This situation has only proved beyond doubt that education should be free. Uni-

versities have been run as businesses for years, focusing more on profits than the standard of education or welfare of their students. Now we are seeing the consequence of this system. In a moment of extreme crisis, students are being attacked like never before.

As universities continue to shift the blame and avoid accountability for their reckless actions, we – as students – must be firm in our response. We must fight these landlords with a rent strike.

The NUS has already stated that it will support rent strikes where it can. A successful rent strike took place in 2016 over five months in which 200 students living at UCL halls of residence withheld rents ranging from £156 to £276 a week. Altogether they received

concessions worth £1.5 million. If we replicated this, on a nation-wide scale, it would push the universities, and the Tories on the backfoot.

It is within our power to do so. We must demand the compensation of all rent payments and tuition fees for all students, regardless of isolation status. Education should be free; and students should receive full maintenance grants, not be forced to pay eye-watering rents to university bosses and parasitic private landlords.

Moreover, we demand that universities work with students to institute an effective isolation and self-quarantine plan, including free meal deliveries, free and comprehensive mental health services, and a comprehensive

REVOLUTION

should help to establish democratic student committees in halls of residence.

These should elect accountable and recallable representatives, and join together to form an organised network of students across the university. Where management refuses to offer rebates, then such networks should be used to coordinate rent strikes.

Importantly, with this kind of organisation in place, students would also be in a strong position to unite with UCU members and other unionised workers to fight against the marketisation that has spread throughout higher education. This would strengthen the position of both students and staff, in the joint struggle against fees, rents, cuts, and casualisation. ■

All students should:

- Call meetings, block-by-block; hall-by-hall
- Create whatsapp groups to organise
- Elect accountable representatives for each block/hall
- Network these groups together to coordinate strike action
- Door-knock in every hall, with leaflets giving agitation, analysis and advice

**SICK OF THIS
ROTTEN SYSTEM?
HELP US FIGHT IT.
JOIN THE MSF TODAY!**



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