

TOTALLY INDYPENDENT

Newsletter of Haringey Solidarity Group

www.haringey.org.uk

FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR LONDON



In February around 40 people from community and environmental groups, trade unions and political parties came together in East London to discuss demanding free public transport throughout London. People from Haringey and **Haringey Solidarity Group** were also involved.

By the end of the day the group had a name (**Fare-Free London**). It also agreed to demand that all public transport is free for everyone throughout the capital. This echoes the 'Fares Fair' mass campaign from the 1970s.

In times of austerity some will say this can't be done. But it is already happening in some towns/cities in France, USA,

Luxembourg and Estonia. If they can find the money - so can we.

Trains, tubes and buses are hugely expensive for many of us - especially those on benefits and low or no wages. Free travel will help the poorest of us and anyone else travelling in London.

Fare-Free London doesn't just want free public transport. They also want better public transport. And this benefits us all. Not just by having more buses and tubes. With a better system, car owners don't need to drive as much, making the air cleaner to breathe and better for the climate.

And the campaign don't want this just for London. Groups

throughout the country should be demanding the same, so we have free public transport throughout the country.

The campaign has only just begun, but groups throughout London need to be involved. To make it work, it needs groups in every area in London to publicise and campaign for this.

Free transport for all is such a great idea. Those in power will obviously say no at first. So we all need to come together and make it happen.

To find out more about the campaign or to discuss what we could start doing in Haringey email us at info@haringey.org.uk

HORROR CONTINUES IN PALESTINE

Since the last issue of this newsletter, the horrors in Gaza have only become more horrific. At least 30,000 Palestinian civilians have been massacred by the Israeli Defence Forces, 12,000 are children. Though the death toll from the disgusting Hamas' attacks on Israeli civilians on October 7th has been revised to under 800, Israel's fanatical right-wing government continues to use this trauma to justify its ongoing genocide of Palestinians. The International Court of Justice itself considered the real possibility of an unfolding genocide, even though its ruling and demands have been dismissed and totally ignored by the Israeli Government.

It is no exaggeration to describe the political situation in Israel as one descending into fascism. Many Israeli politicians make no secret of their intentions to inflict collective punishment on the civilians of Gaza, talking of 'human-animals' and 'no innocent civilians'. The far-right hold conferences planning new illegal settlements in Gaza. The same land still smoking from 4 months of a relentless bombing campaign.

The Israeli Government is now causing famine. Supported by the military, frenzied right-wing mobs block desperately-needed aid from entering Gaza, sometimes staging parties and raves to block the trucks. Jubilant soldiers post videos of their crimes on social media, dancing as hospitals and universities are demolished, bragging of their personal murder-counts. On the West Bank (where there is no Hamas), Israeli settlers violently and illegally dispossess even more Palestinians of their land, again aided by the military.



The supposed 'moderates' within Israel who protest Prime Minister Netanyahu's leadership, make no mention of genocide, war crimes or mass murder. Instead they only highlight his failure to return Israeli hostages and defeat Hamas. A progressive opposition to these social forces remains worryingly insignificant.

The United States government, despite its empty gestures of concern, is content to continue its unconditional economic and military support of Israel, without which the killing would be difficult. Their lapdog, the United Kingdom, follows suit. Rather than support the people of Palestine and cease arms shipments to Israel, our politicians and media choose instead to use Palestinian deaths to position themselves more favourably for the upcoming general election, and promote cynical Islamophobic moral panics.

After months of fortnightly London (and many other cities) protests of hundreds of thousands demanding an immediate ceasefire, our politicians ignore any call for

humanity. The flaws in our Parliamentary democracy are exposed for all to see. Our supposed representatives have no interest in representing us. Their true constituents seem to be the state security services, the US and Israeli governments, British arms manufacturers and right-wing Zionist interest groups. We, the people, have no seat at the table.

Israel is best understood as a settler colonial state, whose creation in the Middle East was made possible because it benefitted the interests of western powers. That this global order is falling apart is undeniable. Trump, Brexit, inflation, Ukraine, the rise of far-right forces the world over, and of course climate change are all symptoms of this terminal crisis. The Palestinian genocide is its most aggressive symptom.

What comes after this crisis in global capitalism is uncertain. But be it in Palestine, Haringey, or around the world, things are likely to get worse before they can get better. The mass pro-Palestinian protests around the world show that people demand better now.

Haringey *Women In Black* are a group of local residents (men welcome too) who come together every Sunday at 11am outside *Wood Green Library* to call for a ceasefire in Palestine. Their placards include: "There is no military solution" "Ceasefire now in the name of humanity" "Peace for Palestine, Peace for Israel", "Brutality only breeds Brutality", "Stop In the name of Peace".

Women in Black is a worldwide network of women committed to peace with justice and actively opposed to injustice, war, militarism and other forms of violence. They started in Jerusalem in 1988 calling for an end to hostilities by all sides to the conflict in Palestine. One of their campaigning slogans is "stop the arms trade, stop the killing now". They have issued

WOMEN IN BLACK

the following statement: "We mourn the loss of life and the destruction of homes, schools and hospitals that are caused by the use of these weapons. We refuse to accept an economy that profits from war - we urge governments to resolve conflicts by diplomatic and cooperative means rather than promoting an industry that fuels wars through this continued trade in death"

London *Women in Black* are calling for:

- Immediate ceasefire in Gaza to allow the required humanitarian assistance to reach the people of Palestine

- An end to the bombing in Yemen and international support for peace efforts there
- Immediate safe return of all Israeli hostages held in Gaza
- Immediate safe return of all shipping crews abducted and held in Yemen
- An end to the arm sales to Israel and other regimes carrying out violations of humanitarian law and human rights.
- An end to Israeli apartheid and occupation in Palestine with women's full and effective involvement in serious peace negotiations based on justice and equality for all
- A return to our common humanity

For more information:
london.womeninblack.org

DEMOCRATISING DEMOCRACY

The UK general elections will be all over the news very soon. There will not be time and space for anything else. But what about the positions in our society that are not democratically elected? In which elections are we not asked to participate?

Mexico's PM opened a Pandora's Box, talking in congress about the right for citizens to choose members of the Supreme Court of Justice. He thought that this should be chosen democratically, and citizens should have a direct decision. In contrast, in the UK, members of the House of Lords are still not democratically elected, and many other relevant positions have never been democratically elected. For instance, the chief of London Metropolitan Police or the Governor of the Bank of England. Why can we not have a say about this, or whether such

posts or institutions should even exist?

Since 2001, the *World Social Forum* has tried to promote more democratic alternatives, or in other words, making democracy more democratic. The current system offers to citizens very limited options for decision making. Some of the solutions offered by the *World Social Forum* are not new, nor utopian, as they are in use in some countries. For instance, Switzerland has a great culture of referendums. Citizens of that country are asked to decide which commerce relations should be established by the government, whether experiments on humans or animals should be legal or illegal, and even if total face coverings should be allowed or not. For sceptical voices, Switzerland is a present example of how a more democratic system can

work. The direct involvement in politics of citizens there has not brought the country to a total social collapse.

But the above examples don't change anything fundamentally. Another, better, example is **Cheran**, a town of 20,000 inhabitants in Mexico. Here the central government has been replaced by an assembly elected by direct democracy. All people in the town get involved. There is no police, nor politicians. Political parties are not allowed. A militia chosen by the local assembly guarantees order and peace in **Cheran**. Since this new system was implemented more than 10 years ago, criminality and murder has been drastically reduced in one of the most dangerous parts of the planet.

These are only examples, and we can now dream about adding London and the UK to the list.

NEW ELECTIONS SAME OLD STORY

The election for *Mayor of London* is coming up on 2nd May. Many people will be looking at the list of candidates, only one of whom can possibly win, and wondering whether or where to put their vote. A general election will follow later in the year. Again, people will look at the competing parties and ask, which of these is going to make decisions that make my life better? Which of these

parties, if given power, will use that power to make things better for people like me?

Unfortunately, the answer is that whoever you vote for in May or in the general election, it won't make any difference to our oppressive and unfair society. The election for Mayor is already decided, **Sadiq Khan** will get another term, and the Mayor has very little power to make decisions that actually affect our lives anyway. In the general election, the

race is between Labour and Tories, neither of which care the tiniest bit about ordinary people. Neither want to make things better for people, they only care about getting

will do and say whatever they think will get them there. Usually that means saying whatever the big newspaper bosses want to hear, and definitely not making plans to change anything important.

Elections are pantomimes, intended to distract us. They give the illusion of choice, but they don't change anything. It is better to ignore them and put time and energy into something that can

make a difference. Maybe engaging in your local community, pushing to make positive changes in your own neighbourhood.

This kind of effort has an actual impact on real people and has the added benefit of being good for the people who take part, making them feel more connected to where they live and the people around them. These are real benefits, much better than a pointless tick in a box.



power. Some will say that keeping the Tories out is the most important thing, but are Labour leaders really better?

They may be less obviously racist and hostile to LGBT+ people, but only on the surface - despite the best hopes of most of their membership, who have little or no say. Labour and Tories' priorities are the same: they want to get power and run the country based on 'business-as-usual', and they

PEOPLE POWER

Everyone seems keen to improve things for themselves, their families and others. Many hope that buying lottery tickets, voting for politicians, buying endless stuff, praying to God, or following the lives of celebrities will make their lives better. But does it? What really counts is building up our communities and empowering ourselves where we live and work. That way we can all learn from and support each other, have a real say and make a difference to what's going on, and help make a better future for ourselves and everyone in the long term.

Over the last year, in Haringey alone, tens of thousands of local residents and workers have been involved in a wide range of

positive collective activities and volunteering. There are in fact over 1,000 local community groups throughout Haringey! This includes local residents' associations, 'Friends of Parks' groups, and street-based mutual aid groups; varied community campaigns and protests; single-issue and specific interest groups; community-run centres and projects; cultural, artistic and self-help groups; and local trades union branches including the wave of strikes in public services and other workplaces. Everyone can and should take part in one or more of such inspiring collective activities.

Such groups are generally responding to their own and other people's real needs, and aim to build up people's awareness and

self-confidence, share knowledge, and to spread useful information and ideas. They want to help to strengthen our communities in some way and are based on positive human values and democratic ways of working, as opposed to the way our society is currently based on profits and power.

Such groups and activities would be so much stronger and more effective in the long term if they linked up and supported each other, and explicitly promoted people power and collective decision-making as an alternative to capitalism and Government - the root causes of almost all of society's problems. We therefore call on everyone to help build grassroots solidarity and power, and to work towards empowering people to together take control of their own lives, communities and workplaces. It's logical, right, necessary and urgent.

STRIKERS DEMAND BETTER PUBLIC SERVICES

Last year, after more than a decade of savage cuts, the Government made it clear that it was refusing to allocate any extra money for schools, hospital and public services. Our public services are in deep crisis and this Government is offering nothing to avert it.

For example, nothing extra to fix the shocking state of our schools, where hundreds of buildings are out of action due to crumbling concrete, water pours in through leaky ceilings, and mould and peeling paintwork are regular features of classroom walls. And no sign of any additional investment needed to restore the real terms pay cuts for school staff since 2010 or tackle sky-high workloads.

Collective strikes by hundreds of thousands of teachers forced the Government to put more money on the table, including a 6% pay rise. But there are concerns over how this will be funded. Dismay and disgust at the lack of a long-term agreement on pay has stirred continuing discontent

and opposition to the Government among school staff.

In fact a wave of strikes, has for months, spread throughout the public sector - for example on the railways and in the NHS. Recently junior doctors were striking for the

10th time in their long-running pay dispute with the Government, in a sector where they work extremely long hours. Like teachers they have seen their pay cut almost a third in the last ten years. There has been massive public support, and local picket lines outside schools,

hospitals and train stations have been supported by other trades unionists and the general public.

These inspiring strikes underline that doing nothing or trusting the Government is not an option. A general strike of all the public sector, backed by other workers and the wider public, would show people are prepared to do all we can to empower ourselves, to protect our jobs, professions and services and fight for what is fair.

The workers who keep these essential services going are entitled to fully funded above-inflation pay rises, and everyone must demand massive investment to ensure the best possible services. We all need to keep up the pressure.



FOOD IS A DEMOCRATIC RIGHT

What if we reorganised our food system so that food is a right instead of just another commodity, and we collectively decide what we want on our plates? Some campaigners argue that this is not just something we should wish for, but is actually achievable in the near future.

This project stems from the many flaws in the way food is currently produced, processed and sold. Intensive farming locks farmers into depending on machines and fertiliser producers, and weakens smaller farms using alternative models. It also hinges upon a poorly paid, exploited and un-unionised workforce, where many are foreign workers on work visas, making them vulnerable from abuse by their employer. This allows big farms to reap £billions in profit each year.

The next links of the food supply-chain take huge yearly profits as well: tens of £billions for the food processing industry, and £billions for big supermarkets.

With this system, increasingly many people cannot afford good quality food, or even food at all. 17% of UK households are in food insecurity, and the number of people using food bank is 10 times what it was 10 years ago.

Activists in France and Belgium, who face similar problems, have proposed that everyone contributes (according to income) to a communal fund, which would then be equally distributed - amounting to about £130 each month.

This money could only be spent for specific food products, which would be collectively chosen. Decisions could be made at both the national and local level, democratically and in a way that respects cultural diversity and health constraints.

Crucially, people would vote not only on what they want to eat, but also how they want it produced. This could make important changes to the current food system. We could base it on people's needs rather than profit, restructure it on a more sustainable and local basis, and insist that food is a basic right not a commodity. Local experiments are under way in France and Belgium, with promising preliminary results. In the UK, several groups have been campaigning for food equality, in particular the *Right to Food* and *National Food Service* campaigns. But the wider project described above still has to be taken up in the UK. We need this to build theory and practice on how to bring about a crucial turning-point in the production and consumption of our food.

Right to Food London: <https://www.righttofoodlondon.com>

National Food Service: <https://nationalfoodservice.uk>

Or for longer article see https://issuu.com/apreslarevolution/docs/numero1-apreslarevolution_light (see page 103)



STREET PARTIES FOR ALL

Street parties are a brilliant way to bring neighbours together and to get to know each other. Or just an excuse to have some fun. They can be as simple as a few people meeting outside someone's house to closing the road off and having a mini festival.

Many streets in Haringey have street parties and some have been going for years. The one I've been involved in happens annually, for each of the last 3 years. We close our street and just have fun. Face painting, bouncy castle, tee shirt printing, games and free food and drink for the kids. For the adults there is food and music and people bring out their chairs and drinks and we all get to know each other a little better.

We receive a small grant and neighbours contribute what they can afford, so everything is free.



Neighbours help out with setting up, running the activities and clearing away. Different communities in our street bring out traditional foods to share. This year we also closed the street in winter and had an outdoor film night - with hot drinks and food.

Neighbours loved it.

But it doesn't need to be big. A street nearby have a smaller event but four times a year. Like ours, people reclaim their street, kids play in the street and neighbours get to meet each other. Getting to know your neighbours is truly liberating and makes the street feel like it belongs to the community.

Groups around the borough have festival items to lend/hire out and church halls and community centres can help. **Tottenham Grammar School Foundation** can provide small grants. But many streets just get neighbours bringing out tables and chairs, food to share and put up some decorations.

If you want help putting on a street party contact us at info@haringey.org.uk

HARINGEY CLIMATE GATHERING

“Decide Together” was a Community Assembly hosted by **Extinction Rebellion (XR) Haringey** in November 2023.

Neighbourhood rewilding, outdoor meet-ups, cycling support, home-grown food-sharing ... the ideas for local community actions came thick and fast at the event which packed out the **Kurdish Community Centre** just off Green Lanes.

A representative from Haringey Right to Food opened the event. ‘This assembly is the latest in a growing number of local community led actions, including the Haringey Community Action Network (HCAN) day of workshops with action on housing, migrant justice, health and care, poverty, the fight against austerity, climate and the

biodiversity crisis.’

She also praised the **Haringey Right To Food** demonstration and mini-festival last autumn.

Key issues discussed included ‘the climate crisis, pollution, how the collapse of nature will affect us all and how we respond better to build a thriving and sustainable future in Haringey.’ Presentations came from a climate specialist; a local GP; Haringey Council's Head of Carbon Management; and an activist from **Haringey Living Streets**. A wealth of experience and expertise informed discussions in smaller groups, and a full report of ideas for actions has been since circulated widely.

The HCAN convenor noted ‘Everyone who attended was genuinely asked

to articulate what they felt were the priorities. It was so refreshing as everybody's voice was welcomed and heard. Normally people attending such events are told what to think and what needs to be done. The trick now is to put some great ideas into action. If we can do this, we and the future of the planet are onto a winner.’

An XR coordinator said: ‘We couldn't have had such a successful assembly without the welcoming support of the Kurdish community. We have a successful model for planning actions around community issues, and are ready to discuss this with community groups.’

More information:
www.facebook.com/XRHaringey

ANARCHIST TALKS

Anarchism - a way of people collectively running society harmoniously without Governments - is often misunderstood and usually used to project a negative image. Nothing could be further from the truth! Anarchists are looking to speak openly about this most misrepresented of political theories to dispel the many myths around it.

Rebel City is a collective of Anarchists in London. Over the past few years they have been giving talks on Anarchism in schools, mainly to A-level politics students.

Students, teachers and others taking part have found the sessions engaging and informative and there has been a real buzz, with participants

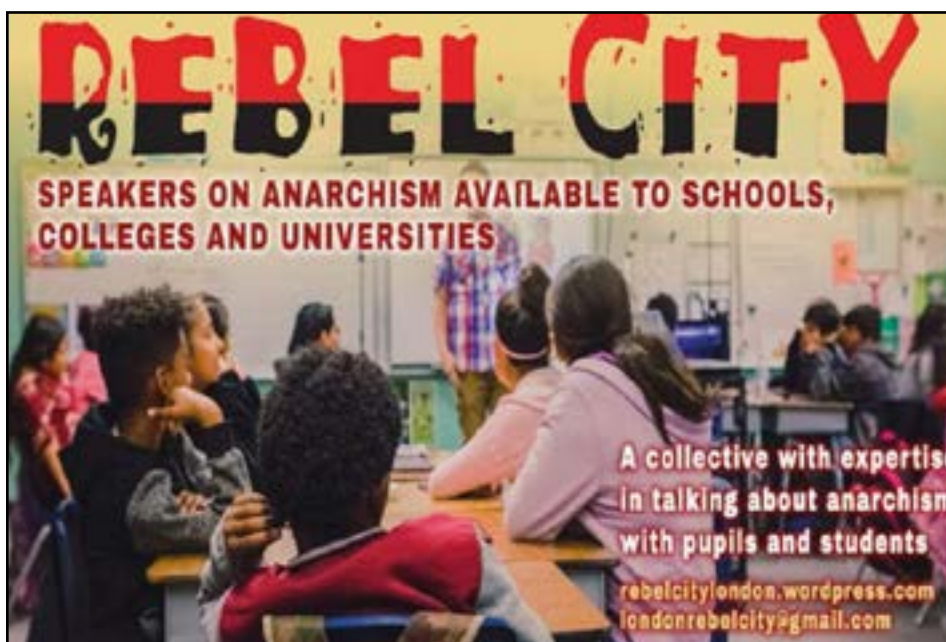
eager to interact, ask questions and contribute.

If you, your school, or your group are interested in hosting

a talk, please get in touch.

We can cover anywhere in the Greater London area and even further with an online meeting.

Email: a_levelpoliticsanarchism@yahoo.com



WHO WE ARE

In 1991, Haringey Solidarity Group (HSG) emerged from the Anti-Poll Tax campaign. We wanted to create a long-term, vibrant, non-hierarchical group, unlike political parties where ambitions and posturing displace real politics.

We believe in ridding ourselves of the current system which places profit and power before people's needs. This involves getting organised, fighting back and collectively taking those decisions which affect our daily lives. We think people should take control of their community and workplace struggles,

support each other, encourage practical solidarity, build the necessary skills and knowledge for these struggles and generate strong, permanent, grassroots networks.

Many of us are involved with local residents', community and campaign groups within the borough. We support workers in dispute, campaigns against public service cuts and threatened community amenities. We are active on environmental, housing and claimants' issues and resist state controls.

Come and share your views at our monthly meeting. We welcome your involvement and with practical activities including distributing this newsletter and producing other materials including posters and leaflets.

**FIND OUT
MORE
AND GET
INVOLVED**

Visit: www.haringey.org.uk

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Write to:

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Email: info@haringey.org.uk