

workers power

Supplement
9 August 2024

workerspower.uk
@workers_power

FOR MASS PROTESTS AND COMMUNITY SELF-DEFENCE AGAINST FASCIST POGROMS

Thousands of anti racists kept fascist protests off the streets on Wednesday night, showing working class mobilisation is the best way to defend our communities. Tens of thousands are expected to march on Saturday's day of action.

But there is no room for complacency. Several riots descended into near pogroms, with Mosques attacked and hotels set on fire with people inside.

The racists have been let off the leash. Muslims and people of colour have been targeted by racists in the streets. Bus drivers have been spat at and called 'terrorist scum'. Women have had their hijabs ripped off and subjected to rape and death threats online.

This racism has been fueled by government policies demonising Muslims as an 'enemy within', the Windrush scandal, the criminalisation of refugees, and racist campaigns by the media and politicians claiming Britain is being 'invaded' (Suella Braverman) by a 'swarm' (David Cameron) of 'cockroaches' (The Sun).

All this was distilled by the Brexit campaign into a toxic combination that promised leaving the EU would mean we could 'take back control' of our borders and 'spend £350 million a week on the NHS'.

It's no coincidence that race riots erupted a week after tens of thousands attended a demonstration in central London organised by Nigel Farage supporter Tommy Robinson. The riots represent the attempt by Reform's fascist fellow travellers to turn its slogans into action. For them the real way to 'deter refugees' isn't Rwanda—it's knives and petrol bombs.

Labour's police crackdown will do nothing to address the reasons the far right is growing. Despite the token denunciations of 'criminality', the press is full of articles asking whether it is 'legitimate' to be concerned about immigration. What they don't ask is why complaints about the NHS crisis are directed against the relatively small sums spent on housing asylum seekers, instead of the vast wealth hoarded by Britain's bosses.

The deindustrialisation and austerity which destroyed public

services, housing and jobs, have created fertile conditions for the far right to exploit.

But the real enemy of working people doesn't arrive by boat—he arrives by private jet. It is not refugees fleeing war in Afghanistan, or migrants paid slave wages to care for our elderly who are to blame for Labour's decision to keep the two-child benefit cap or strip pensioners of winter fuel payments.

The best way to undermine the far right poison is to rebuild a working class movement that fights for a society in which production and distribution is planned in the interests of need, not profit.

The trade unions should demonstrate outside Labour Party conference demanding it tax the rich and the banks to fund a major spending programme to restore public services and invest in skilled jobs and decent pensions.

The immediate task is to organise the self-defence of our communities. Calls for protests to be 'peaceful' are understandable—but misguided. We can't rely on the racist police to protect us. Mass assemblies in working class areas should elect self-defence committees to protect communities and defend the right to protest.

We must oppose Labour's plans to attack migrants and refugees. Immigration controls exist to allow the state to control the labour supply and create a two-tier workforce, which can be more easily exploited. The working class should stand for free movement and equal rights for all.

Labour's first weeks in office have been met by a violent outburst of racist terror instead of a working class mobilisation putting forward a programme to provide the jobs, education, housing and healthcare that our communities need.

Without a mass working class movement that names the real enemy and fights for a socialist alternative to capitalism, we leave the door open to far right demagogues like Nigel Farage and his fascist allies deflecting anger into a racist street movement that will tear apart working class communities and undermine our ability to fight for our real interests.

The anti-racist mobilisations show that the support exists for such a campaign. But it needs to be organised.

ANTI-MUSLIM RIOTS SPREAD TO BELFAST

A riot in south Belfast on Saturday 2 August was followed by racist attacks and clashes with the police on every subsequent night. At the weekend the far right's intended target was Belfast Islamic Centre but the police were able to block a potential assault on the building. However, they had no plan to deal with the subsequent rampage through Botanic Avenue, a multiethnic area, where shops and businesses were firebombed with impunity. The overwhelmingly loyalist character of the hate mob was shown as they tried to attack a nationalist area on the Lower Ormeau Road but at least here they were repelled by the residents.

Earlier on Saturday an antiracist mobilisation of several hundred had gathered outside Belfast City Hall to oppose the far right march to the Islamic Centre. As the anti-migrant mob grew, they launched fireworks and eggs at the Unite Against Racism demonstration before they headed off.

A flier for the racist 'crusade' had already called on people to bring their 'Christian flags and banners' as well as Union and Irish flags! The media homed in on the Irish tricolours alongside the Union flags but it was clear that some Dublin fascists, with their 'Coolock Says No' banner, had tried to link the far right attacks on refugee centres in the Republic with the UK riots.

Unfortunately, 'Northern Ireland' already has a sectarian culture entirely compatible with the recent rise in racist victimisation. The Six County entity was born as a sectarian anti-Catholic and anti-Irish statelet which has institutionalised discrimination as well as spawned systematic attacks and pogroms on Catholic/nationalist areas. Bigotry and hate is now being directed towards ethnic minorities.

The spate of attacks in the Village area of south Belfast have been going on for years, from the erection of Nazi flags outside a Mosque to forcing families to move. Similarly in Larne where petrol bombs, racist graffiti and gun threats have been used in a number of 'racially motivated' attacks. It is also clearly the case that loyalist paramilitaries are coordinating the attacks. Even the PSNI have now acknowledged that there is 'no doubt' about the links of such groups to the recent riots.

The urgent need is for a working class antiracist movement that can challenge the anti-migrant narrative and blames capitalism and imperialism as the real enemy of workers. Such a movement will not be built by the present crop of trade union leaders just content to make weak calls to desist from hatred as with the NIC-ICTU statement which fails to propose any action. Neither can we rely

on the police to protect communities from attack as was shown on Saturday. The time has come to organise self-defence, we need militant antifascist mobilisations that can defend our communities from attack and drive the far right off the streets.

FIGHTING RACISM—AND CAPITALISM

Britain's historic and continuing role as one of the world's great imperial powers has made it both one of the richest countries, and its working class one of the most diverse. But the racism that blames asylum seekers for a lack of investment in public services does not originate in the working class. It comes from the top down. It is part and parcel of the British ruling class's ideology, rooted in colonialism, slavery and Empire, which has always promoted racism as a tool to divide the working class.

From the Irish in the 19th century, to the Eastern European Jews at the turn of the 20th, to the Black, Asian, and Polish immigrants in the 1950s, 1970s and 2000s, the generations of immigrant workers who built our cities and created Britain's modern multiethnic working class have always been subjected to racist campaigns by the press and parties owned by the same employers who exploit them.

In times of economic crisis, the people hit hardest are those who already face institutional discrimination, casual abuse and the constant threat of violence: women, Black, Asian and other ethnic minorities, the LGBT+ community, disabled and youth.

Black people, Asians, migrants and ethnic minorities are subjected daily to verbal abuse, threats and often violence. Fascists like Tommy Robinson whip up racist fears on the streets, given the nod by Tory and right wing politicians, like Nigel Farage.

- We must **drive the fascists off our streets**, deny them any platform and **support organised self-defence** in the communities.

- Many of the most dangerous racists are in the police, where constant racist, sexist and homophobic 'banter' encourages harassment and murder of women, black people and other minorities. Between 200 and 300 people, disproportionately black, have died at the hands of the police every year since 2016. We say: **End stop and search. Sack all racist cops. For inquiries into police killings under community control.**

- Racism remains rampant in the workplace. Black trade union sections should monitor racist incidents by managers and fellow workers and demand their unions take action, including strikes, to educate the racists and sack those that cannot or will not reform. **A workers' veto against racist management rulings should be enforced by united strike action.**

- Refugees and migrants welcome here. **Abolish the Nationality and Borders Act and all immigration controls - open the borders.** Immediate right to work for asylum seekers. Full citizenship rights for all migrants and equal access to employment, housing, health and social security.



SCAN TO JOIN OUR WHATSAPP CHANNEL

Agree with this bulletin? Want to get organised? Get in touch with our activists!

