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An injury to One, an injury to all

May 2020

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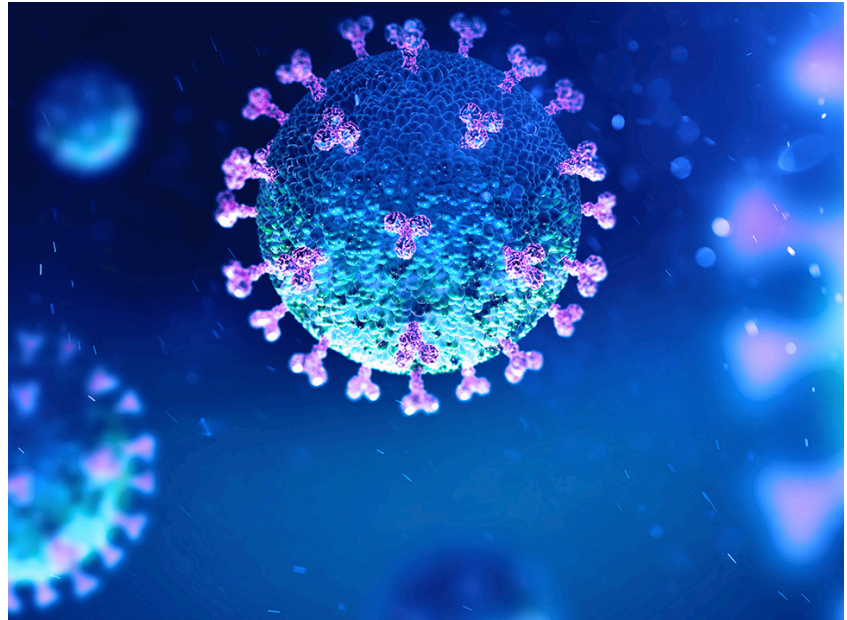
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There's a lot of talk about a return to normal. Of course, in many ways what we're living through is normal, it's normal for capitalism and the state which serves it. It's normal that a crisis is allowed to deepen inequality and that the working class takes the brunt of the pain. If you pay attention to the use of wartime rhetoric, it's all about trying to convince us that we're all in this together, that the workers most exposed to risk, are on the "front line" and that they're national heroes. I expect they'd rather have good equipment, decent pay, and be going home safe to their families at the end of the working day.

During the regular economic down turns which mark capitalism it's the workers who must tighten their belts, and Covid-19 is just another crisis of capitalism. We were warned, not just about



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One FW's Response to UCU Article from Issue 1

Thankyou for your article about UCU. I think that there are criticisms to be made of this union but I would like to correct some of those in the article. Your article claims that "The UCU has seen little material consequences for its efforts" in striking over pensions in 2018 and again and again over pensions, pay, precarity, workload and gender and racial inequality. In fact, because we went on strike, proposed revisions to pensions were stopped. It is true that the employers are being recalcitrant but this is because they understand that when we win it will strengthen the hand of the entire working class. One of the problems with UCU is that it does not take an industrial approach to organising but that it instead refuses to organise workers below a certain grade. Industrial organisation would bring together those on strike in UCU with students, cleaners, technicians and every university worker. The university unions: UCU, Unite, UNISON, EIS & GMB, are all participating in a Joint Union Claim but they are too bureaucratic to be merged together into an industrial union. Organisation with the IWW is the way forward for all workers.

pandemics, but about how public services wouldn't cope, and not coping means working class people at risk and, as always, in fear of losing their homes and of not being able to make ends meet.

We need to be ready for when they make the argument for more austerity, for when they mysteriously lose the magic money tree again. Hard uncertain times are ahead, and our best approach to these challenges is to organise, to work together, to develop mutual aid, direct action, and unbreakable solidarity. The IWW is already showing the way; the articles in this issue of Wildcat should make us all proud to be part of the One Big Union!

Please remember that this newsletter relies upon contributions from members. We always need proposals for articles with a tight focus on IWW organising and action, and we'd really like photos too. Get in touch by email to newsletter:

newsletter@iww.org.uk

IWW Covid-19 Emergency Fund

"I cannot express how grateful I am to you and the union for this, I can't begin to explain how much that has lifted a weight off my shoulders. And such a quick reply! I must admit I'm a bit emotional reading your email and seeing how incredibly supportive and generous you all are ...I will be sure to get more involved with

the union post-Covid, you have helped me more and faster than the government ever has! "

The IWW Covid-19 Emergency Fund was launched on Monday 13th April 2020. It is open to applications from members in good standing across WISERA (Wales Ireland Scotland England Regional Administration)



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"Just wanted to say thank you for this...

This is a really great thing that y'all have done, I look forward to being able to pay it back in kind when we reach better days. Solidarity."

As of 28th April 2020, there have been 55 applications to the fund and £15,140 has been paid out.

We have received 4 applications from fellow workers in Greece which have been approved as a mark of solidarity.*

"Thank you so much for getting back to me so quickly, I really appreciate the help and hope I can contribute something in the future should others be in the same position."

The Covid-19 Emergency Fund Committee has 5 members from different branches. We meet on Jitsi twice a week, typically on Sunday and Wednesday. It has been important to

"This is a huge weight off of my mind, thank you so very much.... Yourself and the union have been nothing but helpful."

establish our process for dealing with applications and facilitating payments from the fund.

Each member of the committee deals with incoming applications and enquiries over a two day period, trying to make contact with new applicants over email, phone and/or text, checking with them and see if they need any further information or assistance. If necessary, we can put applicants in touch with their branch.

The feedback from members has been overwhelmingly positive, with many commenting that they would like to 'give back' to the union through further involvement when possible. We have

actively encouraged fellow workers to get involved with their local branch and are hopeful that a silver lining to this current situation could be an increase in active participation across the union.

We have sent an email to all members inviting donations. We are hopeful that this will help sustain the fund over the coming months.

"I spoke with [panel member] last week who was so incredibly communicative, supportive, helpful and informative ... This has helped me significantly and I cannot thank you enough. "

**Greece is part of the WISERA administration, dues paid by IWW members in Greece do not go into the WISERA pot from which the fund originates but we are aware that due to the low number of IWW members in Greece (around 25), their capacity to establish an emergency fund is low and so their applications are included.*



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The Implementation of the minimum vital income in Spain

The Minimum Vital Income that the Spanish government intends to implement has not yet been approved and has already become a cause of friction among the members of the executive. There are a number of elements to consider when analysing it:

-It will be a mechanism of minimum income and not a Basic Income, since it will not be universal and unconditional, but will only be collected in a situation of extreme economic need.

-It will absorb the rest of the existing minimum incomes at the local or regional level. Two of these payments cannot be received at the same time.

-It's going to be really minimal. There is talk of

about 450 euros per recipient and a total expenditure of 6 billion euros. This means that the Vital Income will be clearly insufficient and that the conditions to be able to collect it will be very restrictive. By comparison the amount to be allocated to the guarantees of the Official Credit Institute to companies is going to be 100 billion euros. And this does not include many other examples of public aid to business, such as aid to tourism or airlines, moratoriums on taxes and social contributions. The idea of a Universal Basic Income is a matter of debate. It implies a guaranteed, unconditional and universal vital minimum for all people, which can help the survival of the vulnerable population in a crisis situation like the current one,

and even serve as a wage cushion, when negotiating the conditions at work with employers. It can also build a social model of "bread and circuses", in which the workers lose their ability to influence production, their possibilities of exercising social power. All this depends on when it is implemented, how it is done and what is done when it comes to legislating it, as well as the position, at that moment, of ongoing struggles and wider society.

But there is no doubt that what the Spanish government is going to implement is not a basic income, but an insufficient minimum income mechanism aimed at a minimum fraction of unemployed workers.

José Luis Carretero Miramar.

Low Paid Workers Hold the Key

During the Covid-19 Crisis and lock-down many people have come to

appreciate the contribution of the low paid workers to providing the

essentials of life as well as in fighting the virus.



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From farm workers, pickers and food packers, drivers and deliverers, warehouse workers, shelf stackers, till checkers to care workers, porters, caterers and nurses in the Health and Social Care Services to all areas of industry, and an army of cleaners, all are recognised as key workers. They are applauded every Thursday evening, but are being treated as Covid fodder,

often forced to work at high risk to them and their families, often without adequate PPE (Personal Protective Equipment).

The IWW supports members facing threats to their jobs if they self isolate to protect family members, and those with bosses who refuse to apply to the Job Protection Scheme, who keep unnecessary workplaces

open, or who don't pay statutory sick pay if you self-isolate. The union backs workers on Zero Hour Contracts who are told they are not entitled to any help, or are incorrectly paid, as well as workers and their patients exposed to the virus by gross negligence of managers. Workers have already fought back and bosses have backed off.

Prisoner Solidarity

Active solidarity with those at the sharpest end of state abandonment and violence is more important than ever.

The Prisoner Solidarity Network, part of the IWW, is a group working to dismantle the criminal justice system and build a society based on collective care. We have members inside and outside of prisons and we focus on supporting inside members to survive and resist the prison system in a number of ways.

In response to COVID-19, we set up an emergency fundraiser to get money directly to people in prison so they can pay for extra phone calls, food and hygiene items. So far we've raised over £10,000 and supported nearly 300 people – we hope to continue

sending money for as long as possible! Outside members continue to write to and hear from our inside members, who explain that the COVID-19 lock-down is exacerbating the challenges they already faced in prison: family separation, social isolation, lack of access to mental and physical healthcare and many more. We call for the immediate release of prisoners to safe accommodation where they can self-isolate in the community, in order to halt the spread of the virus both inside of prisons and in the communities that prison staff live in.

The COVID-19 crisis lays bare the chaos and suffering caused by an economic system that values the profits of the super-rich more than the lives of the rest of us. Institutions of punishment and criminalisation provide a



smokescreen for the social problems designed into the system, insisting we focus our attention on individual 'criminals' rather than the systemic injustice these individuals often bear the brunt of.

Actions of solidarity with people in prison show the state that we can see through the smokescreen – public health means valuing life for all and dismantling the systems that treat human beings as disposable.

You can donate to the Prisoner Solidarity Network fundraiser [here](#) and find out how to get involved here: [prisonersolidarity](#)



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Beyond Your Branch, the One Big Union!

You may be wondering about how the IWW operates outside your own branch in the Wales, Ireland, Scotland, England Regional Administration (WISERA) – which we refer to as the regional level.

First we have our annual conference which is our highest decision-making body. This was due to be in Cardiff this month but has been cancelled due to Covid-19. Our next annual conference will now be in Cardiff in May 2021.

Any motions that were submitted to conference will now be taken by our Delegate Executive Council (DEC). If there are rule

change motions then they will either be deferred to next year or decided by all members in a referendum as the DEC does not deal with these.

The DEC runs the union year-round, making decisions on a mailing list – which is a permanently open meeting – and in quarterly meetings. Branches should elect a delegate who will express your views at DEC and should relay news from the DEC back to the branch. Only branch delegates can vote at DEC meetings, normally having received a mandate from their branch.

The next DEC meeting is May 23rd and is going to be held

online due to Covid-19. Branches will be receiving paperwork, including motions and departmental reports before May 1st so that they can be discussed by branches.

In the past month there have been online meetings of the Organising Dept, the Communications Dept and the Admin Dept. The Training Committee, International Committee and the IT Committee have also had recent meetings. All these bodies progress the work of the union. They report to – and are answerable to the DEC, and thus in effect to the branches and membership.

iww.org.uk

Introducing the new IWW Equality Committee



We are a new committee dedicated to social equality in the union, composed of

officers for access, LGBTQ workers, BAME workers, and women. Currently, the

committee consists of Mike (he/him), our access officer, and Aislinn (they/them), our LGBTQ officer.

Mike is part of the Manchester branch. In his role as Access Officer, he wishes to introduce practical and sustainable solutions to obstacles found whilst creating a fully accessible union. As well as expanding training on disability



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discrimination in the workplace, it's impact on well-being, and how to fight it successfully.

Aislinn is part of the London branch. In their role as LGBTQ officer they hope to focus on the workplace disputes of Trans workers and how the IWW can organise LGBTQ workers to fight against discrimination.

Our overarching goals are:

To make the IWW a fully accessible union to disabled workers.

To connect the workers' struggle with wider social issues and unite a diverse working class.

Our immediate goals are:

Ensuring accessible meetings for all branches.
Providing literature advising LGBT workers on their rights in the workplace, building to campaigns on LGBT workplace disputes.

Ensuring there is a trained first aider in every branch.

If you have knowledge or skills to contribute to the committee, or if you want to

learn more, please contact us. We are also collecting accounts of workplace discrimination from FWs to inform our work.

We are hosting a casual session on Jitsi on May 20th, 6-8pm, to introduce ourselves and hear from people on how this committee can best represent our members. This is open to anyone, please RSVP Aislinn or Mike to attend.

You can reach us at:

LGBTQ@iww.org.uk
access@iww.org.uk

Delegate Executive Council Business for May

The Delegate Executive Council is the regional decision making body responsible for the day to day running of the union.

At the council meeting on Saturday May 23rd they will be receiving reports from officers, committees and departments and discussing:

- Whether a rule change motion intended for

conference 2020 about candidates for officer posts should go to referendum or not.

- The process to replace our paid admins and a review of their pay rates.
- How we can encourage members to step forward to do the larger officer roles such as Regional Secretary, Membership Officer and Organising Department chair.

They will also be compiling the votes from branches on motions covering:

- The use of Industrial Union numbers to help Industrial Organising
- Reassignment of the role of the Anti Fascist

- Committee
- Moving the Tech Committee to the Administration Department
- Creating a new dues rate for self employed workers
- The unions affiliation to the ICL (International Confederation of Labour)

To add your voice contact your local branch and find out when the May branch meeting takes place. The meeting will be online.



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