

# Brighton Solidarity

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## BANKRUPT EXCUSES FROM A BANKRUPTED BUSINESS!

A company that owned two restaurants, both in busy areas of Brighton, decided to claim insolvency. However, the company decided not to pay some of the workers! One worker owed £1964 tried claiming it back from the government's insolvency service only to be told the company was not declared insolvent. The company provided excuses such as they needed more time to declare it. In the mean time one of the closed restaurants reopened with some of the same staff and same owners. After four months of trying to get their money back, the worker contacted Brighton Solfed for support.

Whilst formulating the demand letter, we saw a complex company setup, with differing names, directors and secretaries. However, it was the same named individuals that kept appearing. Upon delivering the demand letter we saw a nervous manager trying to distance himself from the owner's dodgy practises.

We gave the owners one month to try to resolve the dispute amicably. Even though we emailed them directly twice and visited the restaurant twice within in this time, communication was nonexistent. Once we knew when the owner would be there post deadline, we planned to picket the restaurant. Fifteen Solfed members were on the picket line; the manager and owners were worried. Police were called to no avail and the owners caved in to a meeting.

At the meeting the first owner tried to distance himself from the previous company as well as pleading his difficulty in starting

out himself. He also tried to negate our actions and propaganda as not right. We countered all these excuses with the knowledge of their company structures, his responsibility to pay workers, and our commitment to direct action and solidarity over legalistic manoeuvring. The owner tried to buy out the worker with a cash sum of £964 on behalf of the other owner. We reminded him the original sum stands and he agreed to contact the other owner to let them know.

It was then arranged for us to have a meeting with both owners to settle the dispute. We reminded them that whilst negotiations are in progress we would suspend action.

The following meeting we were met with the same old excuses. We remained firm, and were offered £1500 cash. Again we kept focused and argued our stance. They allowed us some time to consult each other, and then as they returned, we were offered the full amount. The caveat to this was that the worker would receive £1500 cash and the rest by direct debit in instalments to ensure we would not be back to claim more. We were outraged to be compared to such practise as theirs. We informed them that we were demanding what was rightfully the workers. After this brief discussion we accepted the offer with the condition that if any payment were delayed we would be back to picket.

We left and joined the Brighton Solfed crowd ready to picket in case of no result, to an applause for the workers success!



## THE RADICAL BANK EVICTED A BRIEF HISTORY OF SELF-MANAGEMENT TO BE CONTINUED

Last June the 6th an anti-austerity demonstration took place in Brighton. The "Free Education Movement", which came from Brighton universities, took the initiative in staging the protest, part of a series that are happening along the country after last election.

There was a decent turn out. A few hundred people marched by Brighton streets against the current and coming attacks on our living conditions. After the last election people are angry and scared, for good reason.

However, nothing really inspiring was heard in the speeches. Vote for Labour or smaller lefty parties, join one of those services providers that are still called unions, lobby our representatives about housing, benefits, work or migration... Always ask never act. The slogan "unity against Conservatives" is the excuse of lefty politicians to make people forget what they would do once in power.

However, some people's patience was running out and the left-wing representatives's pacification tactics started being ineffective. Thus after the march itinerary finished the people went on walking and... there we were! in Preston Circus in front of an abandoned branch of Barclays Bank.

Then something really unusual happened. A big group of people decided not to wait and not to ask. As the necessity of space for living and gathering has become merchandise thanks to criminals like Barclays, we could not afford to vote, sign petitions or complain to our MP. We broke the door and went in.

For fourteen days a diverse and relatively big group of people faced managing the space, without leaders or public or private funds. Issues such as cleaning and maintenance, legality, security, activities, communication and conviviality were discussed in open meetings and tackled collectively. Meetings were well attended and, last June the 14th, around seven hundred people visited the building during the opening day.

Obviously something like this terrifies the authorities. In the friendly and welcoming Brighton (for property speculators, exploiters and people with money to spend) this experience is dangerously exemplary. Thus on June the 16th the eviction was ordered by the Court and was carried through on the 19th.

In the Radical Bank meetings were usually long, hard and not always very productive. There was a lack of a common vision and strategy about squatting. Several mistakes in the organisation happened and arguments among the people have occurred. However, you can see in many people's faces that this experience will not be forgotten.

Now is the time to evaluate positive and negative aspects of the experience, but something has been broken in Brighton (apart from a door or a window or whatever). The feelings of fear and resignation and the idea that nothing can be done cannot be held anymore. All Brighton has seen it.

From Brighton-SolFed we cannot do less than congratulate all the participants (among who we include some of ourselves). Despite the limitations, this experience is pointing in the right direction. We will see you in the streets.

# NOTICE PAY: THE FACTS

'Notice pay' is the amount the worker is paid during their notice period. This is the amount a worker earned per week if on fixed-hours, or, if on casual or irregular hours, the average pay a worker earned since starting the job. It is common practice, especially in precarious industries such as the hospitality sector, for bosses to sack workers on the spot and without giving a notice period or notice pay. This is entirely unlawful and SolFed have successfully supported workers to demand notice pay of 1 week after they've been fired.

Zero-hours contracts: a worker on a zero-hours contract doesn't have the same employment rights as a worker in fixed-term or permanent work, including no right to be given a notice period or notice pay. However, if a worker on a zero-hours contract has continuous employment for a year or more, it can be argued that they have 'employee' status and therefore have the same rights, including the right to a notice period and notice pay. 'Continuous employment' is a vague term but usually means that a worker on a zero-hours contract has worked for at least a year without a

break of a week or more (not including paid holiday). SolFed have successfully supported workers on zero-hours contracts to win notice pay after being told by their boss that they're no longer required.

Remember, all workers have the right to a written statement of terms & conditions after 2 months in their job, and it's worth requesting a copy of this from your employer (sometimes known as a 'contract', though a written statement of terms & conditions, which is less detailed than a contract, is all that is lawfully required). Whether a worker is given a written statement of terms & conditions or not, the terms and conditions that applied during the first 2 months of employment become the norm.

Share this information with your colleagues and contact Brighton SolFed if you or your colleagues need support to demand notice pay or any other employment right, including unpaid wages or holiday entitlement, harassment...

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## REPRESSION THROUGH JAIL IS STILL ON IN SPAIN

A couple of months ago some people took part in an action in Brighton against the ongoing repression in Spain, and since then things are not looking better. The latest news from "Operación Pandora", the sequel of "Operación Piñata", was that all of our anarchist comrades were released from preventive imprisonment, with a trial accusing them of terrorism still on hold. That was good news, because they were for a few months deprived of their freedom in the worst grade of the Spanish prison system (FIES). However, the government decided to block all the bank accounts connected with them.

There have been some other rather desperate acts from the government to try and criminalise the individuals that oppose them, as in the case of Alfon, arrested in Madrid in 2012 during a demonstration against the changes in working conditions in Spain. He spent two months in solitary confinement (FIES) and, after several legal proceedings and other drills, a couple of weeks ago the Spanish Supreme Court finally sentenced him to four years in prison for possession of explosives. His mother and lawyer are already complaining that the prison cut Alfon's communications with the outside world. The outrage of this process is that the prosecution lacks any evidence, being only and exclusively supported by the statements of the police.

Another case regards Sergi and Rubén, detained in a protest against a fascist action in 2011, and sentenced to three years of jail (as it was their first offence, two years in prison was not enough) under an accusation of ideological hate. With these examples we can clearly see that in Spain the police and fascism are the ultimate rulers.

In case we have not had enough, on the first of July the Public Safety Law, or the Gag Law as renamed by the population, came into effect. This Law brings Spain back to the dictatorship, with fines from 600 to 30.000 Euros for being involved in demonstrations, stopping an eviction, resisting authority or taking part in informative pickets. Within the first days of the Gag Law, lots of people are refusing to accept it, and are still resisting and gathering together to protest against it, but the first effects can also be seen in police brutality and the consequent fines. There's only one thing left - to keep resisting against the domination of governments and police states, and always supporting our comrades, deprived of their liberty just to serve as an example of the power the state holds.



# AN EXPERIENCE: HOSPITALITY HORRENDOUSLY HURTS...

I was looking for a new job within three weeks of working for the company. I found out I was pregnant, obviously in a state of shock I called in sick - the first time since starting the job, which included 10 hour shifts with a half hour break -which started from the moment you started making your food, so in the grand scheme of things 15-20 minutes to sit down 9 hrs and 40 minutes standing up- I was fired the same day before they saw my doctors note or I got chance to explain my traumatic situation - which I was finding quite hard to explain to the manager (3 months pregnant) and owners wife (pregnant) that I might have to take time off to have an abortion, which is private and personal information that really, I shouldn't have to disclose to people I have only known for 3 weeks.

Looking at the situation I understand it is hard for employers in hospitality to get cover however, we are only human. We may work in hospitality but us too have a life, and unforeseen events do occur. I find it repulsive that without a thought to a human being, you can disregard them and their lives. Hospitality is becoming a resemblance to slave trade...long hours, no respect, no appreciation, and most of all no life- all we need now is shackles and for them to crack the whips out.

We as hospitality staff are expected to have abuse hurled at us by customers when things go wrong- this we can cope with, this we have trained to cope with. But when the horizon now broadens to your employers lack of empathy, and ridiculously absurd expectations... Who would want to follow a career in this?

My point is... we do get sick, we should be allowed time off, not made to feel guilty for every holiday we have, or sick day we have off, or more hilariously... we are bloody entitled to sit down after 5 hours of constant work on your feet, to have a cigarette, rest our aching feet, and have a break!

I am extremely hurt by the situation, and it has caused my anxiety disorder to flare it's ugly self again... I do not feel it is fair anymore and finally now, as much as I love working as a waitress... I now officially after all the awful employers... horrible hours with lack of appreciation... I give up.

Hospitality just horrendously hurts. Hurts your life, health, confidence, mentality, relationships, and your bank balance.

## This is solidarity, not charity - An injury to one is an injury to all!



Health & Social Care Network

**Health & Social Care drop-in surgeries:** The Brighton SolFed Health & Social Care network holds drop-in surgeries on the last Monday of each month. The next one will be on Monday 27th July, 7 - 9 pm at the Saint Georges Tavern, near Sussex County Hospital (33 Upper Sudeley Street, Kemp Town, BN2 1HE). We'll be launching our new pamphlet on the implications of the Immigration Act for NHS workers, including ways to collectively sabotage the attempt to make frontline health workers gatekeepers to the state's anti-migrant agenda. We welcome all workers in the sector, whether NHS, private, or voluntary / charity. If you've any workplace issues you'd like to discuss with SolFed members working in health or social care, then come along on Monday.



Brighton SolFed is a local anarcho-syndicalist union based on the idea that through solidarity and direct action, ordinary people have the power to improve our lives.

Our aim is to promote solidarity in our workplaces and outside of them, encouraging workers to organise independently of bosses, bureaucrats and political parties to fight for our own interests. Our ultimate goal is a stateless, classless society based on the principle "from each according to their ability, to each according to their need". We see such a society emerging out of working class struggles to assert our needs in the here and now.

Our activity therefore aims to build struggles which both benefit us all now and bring us closer to the society we want to create. We are not a state-registered trade union or political party. Nor are we a service provider - we can't solve your problems for you. What we are is fellow workers who are sick of being screwed around ourselves and want to do something about it by helping each other. If that's how you feel too - join us! We are stronger when we stand together and organise.

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