

ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE

We all know the Kurds and others in Kobane, Syria, defeated the fighters of ISIS. What is less known is that Kobane is undergoing a major revolution in the way they organise themselves. A revolution to rival any of those of the Arab Spring.

The Kurds in an area known as Rojava, which includes Kobane, decided that decisions should be made from the "bottom up" rather than "top down". This means people meet locally to decide what needs to happen.

But let's go back a step. In 2004, an uprising in Qamishli, Syria, began. Many protestors were arrested, tortured, and "disappeared" in the prisons or elsewhere. Many are still missing today. Kurdish resistance continued and in 2012 they finally took over Rojava when Bashar al-Assad's forces withdrew. Rojava means "western" in Kurdish, as in Western Kurdistan. And along the Syrian-Turkish

border in northern Syria, there are three areas not physically connected to each other. These three zones make up Rojava and are autonomous (free) zones from the rest of Syria.

Rojavans formed the Tev-Dam, (the Movement of the Democracy Society) to bring everyone together. Tev-Dam was incredibly inclusive and tried to cover every major issue in society. But rather than just a Kurdish revolution, people knew that everyone should be involved in decision making, including Arab, Muslim, Christian, Assyrian and Yazidi.

The first task was to establish a variety of groups and committees in the streets, neighbourhoods, villages and towns everywhere. These groups' role was to discuss and decide upon all the issues facing society. Groups were set up to look at: women's rights, economic, environmental, education, health and care issues, trade and business, relations with foreign countries and many more. There are even groups set up to reconcile disagreements between different people, groups or factions.

Groups meet to discuss problems people have where they live. They then come together in the villages or towns in a larger group called the "House of the People". Every group or committee has two representatives and one must always be a woman.

Tev-Dam realised these areas needed to come together for making bigger decisions. So in January 2014, they set up the Democratic Self Administration (DSA) to implement and execute decisions from the "House of the People". Almost half the 22 representatives are women. It's organized so people from different backgrounds, nationalities, religions and genders can all participate.

We all saw that women took up arms to fight ISIS. But the revolution is not just about picking up weapons. Other important



changes for women have been introduced including: girls under 18 can't be married off; women's and children's rights must be recognized, protected and implemented; female circumcision is banned; equality between men and women. There are many other radical policies which would shame any "democratic" western government.

Although this revolution faces threats from a number of places it is still progressing and growing. It's also received much needed solidarity from people around the world. We know movements and human struggles which launch a social revolution, rather than just a political revolution, are scarce and social revolutions happened in very few countries. In spite of this these revolutions are still shining examples for us all. They remind us that either a revolution must be social or it does not exist as a revolution. Rojava demonstrates that it's possible, even with a war going on, to fight back and change the present system to a better one. We wish them every success.

For more see: <http://libcom.org/news/experiment-west-kurdistan-syrian-kurdistan-has-proved-people-can-make-changes-zaher-baher-2>

THREE CHEERS FOR THE ANNIE

Many thousands of local pubs across the country have closed over the past two decades - sold for housing, supermarkets and betting shops. One that has bucked this trend is the Antwerp Arms in Tottenham. Situated next to Bruce Castle Park the building was under threat from a property developer until local people developed a plan to buy it.

Through campaigning, fundraising and grants the Antwerp Arms Association were able to buy the building. It re-opened earlier this year as a community pub and has been refurbished by those involved in the Association.

It aims to be a focal point and a vibrant resource for the local community, encourages people to become involved in its running and has planned a series of events over the next few months.

As a plaque on a bench in the nearby Tottenham Cemetery proclaims "Why are you sitting here - The Annie's Open!"

WHO WE ARE

In 1991, Haringey Solidarity Group (HSG) emerged from the Anti-Poll Tax campaign, formed by Haringey residents with a wide range of backgrounds and views. 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, communities and workplaces.

We think people must take control of their community and workplace struggles, support each other, encourage practical solidarity, build the necessary skills and knowledge for those 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 oppressive policing and state controls.

We encourage everyone to share their views at our open, monthly meetings where consensus is the aim. We would welcome your involvement, either as an individual or a campaign group, at our meetings and discussion evenings and with practical activities including distributing this newsletter and producing other materials including posters and leaflets.

If you would like to learn more about HSG, then visit www.haringey.org.uk, friend us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter @hsg_, post to PO Box 2474, London N8, phone 0845 2235 270 or email info@haringev.org.uk

EVICITION - PAH, I DON'T THINK SO

In Spain, like here, banks are repossessing huge numbers of homes and evicting owners. Just because people couldn't keep paying their mortgages, children and old people are forced onto the streets by banks, judges, politicians and cops.

Pissed off with this, Spaniards formed PAH (Platform for those Affected by Mortgages) in 2009. Enough was enough. They weren't prepared to watch friends, family and neighbours evicted through no fault of their own. A home is a basic right we are all entitled to no matter if you rent, own or squat it.

PAH use civil disobedience and direct action. Local people gather

when people are being evicted to stop cops and bailiffs removing them. In 2013, there were on average 184 eviction attempts per day. PAH are so successful they now have over 200 groups throughout Spain and by October 2014 stopped 1135 evictions. That's 1135 families not living on the streets. Even some cops and locksmiths refuse to help with the evictions.

But PAH is more than just about stopping evictions. They have three main objectives: write off all mortgage debt when banks repossess a property, stop evictions, and turn mortgaged homes into affordable rental properties.

To further achieve these aims PAH

occupy the banks of those facing repossession until the bank agrees to re-negotiate the mortgage or write off their debt. They also fight to convert homes owned by the banks into social rental housing. But they also re-occupy (squat) buildings taken by the banks and re-house evicted families.

PAH is really inspiring and something we will need to copy now the Tories are in power and threatening massive austerity measures and cuts. To find out more about PAH and get inspired by how it works, Haringey Independent Cinema (HIC) are screening a film about them on Thursday 16th July.

More on HIC: haringey.org.uk/hic PAH (in Spanish): afectadosporlahipoteca.com

TOTALLY INDYPENDENT

Newsletter of Haringey Solidarity Group
www.haringey.org.uk

"What crime is robbing a bank, compared to owning one?" - Bertolt Brecht

COUNCIL TO DEMOLISH BROADWATER FARM

Have Haringey Council gone totally mad? Thousands are homeless yet Haringey plan to demolish or sell council housing we desperately need. They're demolishing part of Love Lane estate for a "walkway" for Spurs. Tunnel Gardens is next. But the scheme to knock down Broadwater Farm estate is pure madness.

We thought this was a bad joke. But the idea is seriously being discussed. And it's not just the estate they intend to destroy. Plans include turning part of Lordship Recreation Ground (the Rec) into a building site for years and concreting over the football pitches. They're also planning to demolish housing, some privately owned, nearby.

1200 families live on Broadwater Farm. Millions have been spent on improving housing and more improvements are still needed. Millions have also been spent on improving the Rec where hundreds of volunteers put in thousands of hours of their free

time. Broadwater United turned wasteland into sport facilities that hundreds of us have used for years. Eleven football teams presently use this space.

At an angry April meeting 150 people heard the Council's ideas - some for the first time. People assumed they would be moved back into new flats, but were shocked to hear large amounts of the new housing would be sold and they may be moved to who knows where?

Homeowners will be priced out of the area. Three-bedroom flats on the farm sell for £200,000. But one-bedroom flats on the Lawrence Road development are £300,000.

People demanded not one blade of grass on the park or pitches should be touched. A coalition of groups formed to fight these

shameful plans. These included the residents association, Friends of Lordship Rec, Broadwater United, residents and supporters of the threatened homes.

We support any campaign to stop the Farm being demolished and new homes built which will only benefit property developers and yuppies. We need to protect social housing and the

communities we have built up. We need secure housing for all and green spaces.

Stand with the Farm residents and the users of the Rec, and if that means standing in front of bulldozers - we will be there.

For more information to stop these stupid plans contact bwflordship@gmail.com



DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS

Benefits are a right and are paid for through our National Insurance contributions. These rights are being trashed under the lie that austerity is necessary - though not austerity for the filthy rich. But it's not just about money; it's also about control.

The Tory government have more benefit cuts planned. They are intent on killing the poor and the vulnerable.

Consider the results of austerity so far. While the price of food and housing are still rising, the benefit

cap will be further reduced from £26,000 to £23,000. In the last 18 months, over 50,000 households have had their benefits capped - nearly half of them in London. This means more parents going to foodbanks (limited to just 18 days' food per year) and more children not getting fresh fruit and veg.

When you're living on the border of poverty, a small drop in income can tip you over the edge. In 2012, JobCentre bosses warned of the risk of suicides among benefit claimants, yet the rate of

sanctioning was stepped up. During 2014 over 900,000 JSA claimants had benefit sanctions. In March a government committee announced that 40 people had committed suicide because of problems with welfare payments. That number is just the tip of the iceberg.

In future, you'll be forced to obey doctor's orders, whatever the side-effects, or you'll starve! Here's a quote from the 2015 Tory Manifesto: "People who might benefit from treatment should get the medical help they need so they

can return to work. If they refuse a recommended treatment, we will review whether their benefits should be reduced."

The sanctions and the suicides will continue, until enough people say "Enough!" But don't drown in your despair. When you hear anyone talking about "benefit scroungers" tell them to .. stop reading The Mail and find out what's really happening. Our rights that were fought for are being eroded, but we can win them back again if we support and defend each other.