Why now and not before?

Anarchist Communist Group

28th March, 2020

The government gave local councils 48 hours to house all rough sleepers in England in emergency accommodation on Friday March 27th. However, this was a request rather than a straight order, and there was no clarification on who would fund this. It comes as one of the Johnson regime’s coronavirus measures.

First initiated by Johnson’s homelessness tsar, Louise Casey, it was then followed up by Luke Hall, the junior housing minister. In addition to housing all rough sleepers, councils should find alternative housing for people in night shelters and hostels, seen as danger points for the spread of the disease. He instructed councils to set up coronavirus coordination cells. In addition he underlined that it was imperative that the homeless should not gather in day centres, also seen as danger points.

There is plenty of empty housing. Just look around you on any high street, and see the empty flats above shops and the empty office blocks and stores. All empty housing should be requisitioned and handed over to the homeless and many hotels lying empty at the moment should be used to house health workers.

Why didn’t this happen before? Why did it take to a major health crisis to think of housing the many rough sleepers on the streets? And when the crisis is over, then the homeless should be allowed to stay in the accommodation found for them.

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