

Winning over workers is crucial to fighting climate change

Green Left

A few years ago, climate change and the concept of just transition were seen as secondary issues by many on the left, except for a few groups like Green Left. We and others tried to raise awareness among the left that climate change was a material condition that needed action to fight for ecosocialism.

The left and workers' movement are playing catch-up.

Many repeated climate events worldwide mean that those on the left are becoming more aware. People around the globe, including the Youth Climate Strikers, Extinction Rebellion and others have raised awareness through direct action initiatives.

Many in the wider workers' movement know that climate change is a reality and that traditional carbon-based jobs in coal, gas, etc. may need a carefully planned move to green jobs.

Socialism or barbarism

The famous socialist Rosa Luxemburg is credited with inventing the term 'socialism or barbarism' to highlight the urgency of workers' struggle to win social justice in the face of war and capitalist exploitation internationally.

Climate change is now a material condition on our planet. The mass of the working class (or the 99%) must fight for ecosocialism if we are to escape the barbarism of poverty, precarious employment and even loss of access to basic necessities such as clean water and food.

With COP26, workers need to engage with the debate.

Green Left and ecosocialists welcome the development of movements in the UK within the trade unions. These include the Campaign Against Climate Change Trade Union Group (cacctu.org.uk), Greener Jobs Alliance (greenerjobsalliance.co.uk), and the TUC report (www.tuc.org.uk/green) that talks about the Green Industrial Revolution and just transition for workers. Globally, workers' movements have had the same conversations.

Everyone on our planet should have rights to jobs that they can build their lives around and be free of exploitation or doing jobs that lead to the destruction that is climate change. A burning planet impacts on our class more than on the 1%. We cannot trust the bosses to look after us. This is why we need to ensure that workers moving from high-carbon industries to green industries are given security in new greener jobs with decent pay and training in these new jobs. Many workers can transfer and build on the skills they already have.

Green technology and advances for humankind and the planet can take place in a sustainable and life-enhancing way – but we are being held back.

A new epoch requires ecosocialist revolutionary thinking.

Never has there been such an urgent need for socialist and environmental activists to plan for real control to be taken by our class from capitalists. A mass movement needs to be built based on an ecosocialist vision. Otherwise, barbarism and planet destruction will take place.

Green Left is pleased to take part in the Ecosocialist Alliance and similar initiatives to assist building a strong ecosocialist movement for change.

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STOP THE CAPITALIST CARBON MACHINE

After COP26...

Jon Duveen | Anti★Capitalist Resistance

Let's maintain the unity and build on the momentum

One of the gains from the mobilisations around COP26 in Glasgow is the COP26 Coalition. It has been the focus point for all those excluded from the actual COP26 process.

All shades of environmental campaigning, from the NGOs to local groups to ecosocialists, have been able to participate in the discussions about the development of the mobilisations around COP26.

Some of the key organisations involved include a number of trade unions (Unison, Unite, PCS, BAFWU, Equity and also the National Union of Students) and several major radical NGOs such as War on Want, Global Justice Now and Friends of the Earth. In Scotland, XR is also involved.

As well as this overarching COP coalition, a number of city-wide or regional groups have come into being, acting as organising centres for climate-related activities, campaigning against such things as new roads, incinerators, fracking or HS2.

This has been a source of great strength to the movement and has allowed the COP26 Coalition to be an authoritative voice for these mobilisations.

The question we need to address is what will happen after the COP26 has left Glasgow. How can the environmental movement develop after COP26?

For the three nations of Scotland, Wales and England the COP26 Coalition has helped unify the movement and this strength needs to be developed after COP26.

The COP26 Coalition, in some form, needs to maintain itself and serve as a forum for unifying the various and disparate struggle we all engage in around environmental issues.

In what form the COP26 Coalition should continue is open to debate, but we do need a central pole to co-ordinate our work and develop a programme to combat climate change and keep the temperature rise below 1.5°C.

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ECOSOCIALISM NOT EXTINCTION

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ECOSOCIALISM

COP 26 unfolds against a backdrop of **growing climate chaos and ecological degradation**, after an unprecedented summer of heatwaves, wildfires, and flooding events. **Climate change is upon us**, and we face multiple interlinked and inseparable crises- of climate, environment, extinction, economy and zoonotic diseases.

As ecosocialists we say another world is possible, but a massive social and political transformation is needed, requiring the mobilisation of the mass of working people across the globe. Only the end of **capitalism's relentless pursuit of private profit**, endless waste, and rapacious drive for growth, can provide the solution not only to climate change, environmental degradation, and mass extinction, but to global poverty, hunger, and hyper-exploitation.

The big issues of climate change will be debated in Glasgow, but whatever is agreed, **capitalism can at best mitigate climate change, not stop it**. Genuine climate solutions cannot be based on the very market system that created the problem. **Only the organised working class, and the rural oppressed of the global south – women and men – have the power to end capitalism**, because their labour produces all wealth and they have no great fortune to lose if the system changes, no vested interests in inequality, exploitation, and private profit.

Action now to halt climate change! We demand:

- **All fossil fuels must stay in the ground** – no new gas, coal, or oil!
- **A rapid move to renewable energy** for transport, infrastructure, industry, agriculture, and homes
- **A massive global programme of public works** investing in green jobs, and replacing employment in unsustainable industries.
- **A globally funded just transition for the global south** to develop the necessary sustainable technologies and infrastructure.
- **A major cut in greenhouse gas emissions** of at least 70% by 2030, from a 1990 baseline. This must be comprehensive - including all military, aviation, and shipping emissions – and include mechanisms for transparent accounting, measurement, and popular oversight.
- **The end of emissions trading schemes.**

Sustainability and global justice

The **long-term global crisis** and the immediate effects of catastrophic events impact more severely on **women, children, elders, LGBTQ+ and disabled people**. An ecosocialist strategy puts **social justice and liberation struggles of the oppressed** at its core.

Migration is, and will increasingly be, driven by climate change and conflicts and resource wars resulting from it. **Accommodating and supporting free movement of people** must be a core policy and necessary part of planning for the future. We call for:

- **Immediate cancellation of the international debt of the global south.**
- A rapid shift from massive 'factory' farms and large-scale monoculture agribusiness towards **eco-friendly farming methods and investment in green agricultural technology** to reduce synthetic fertiliser and pesticide use in agriculture and replace these with organic methods and support for small farmers.
- **A major reduction in meat and dairy production and consumption** through education and provision and promotion of high-quality, affordable plant-based alternatives.
- The promotion of agricultural systems based on **the right to food and food sovereignty**, human rights, and with local control over natural resources, seeds, land, water, forests, knowledge, and technology to end food and nutrition insecurity in the global south.
- **The end of deforestation in the tropical and boreal forests** by reduction of demand for imported food, timber, and biofuels.
- **A massive increase in protected areas for biodiversity conservation.**
- **Ending fuel poverty** through retrofitting energy existing homes and buildings with energy efficient sustainable technologies.

We demand a just transition

- **Re-skilling of workers in environmentally damaging industries** with well paid alternative jobs in the new economy.
- **Full and democratic involvement of workers** to harness the energy and creativity of the working people to design and implement new sustainable technologies and decommission old unsustainable ones.
- Resources for popular education and involvement in implementing and enhancing a just transition, with **environmental education embedded at all levels within the curriculum.**
- Urgent development of **sustainable, affordable, and high-quality public transport** with a comprehensive integrated plan which meets peoples needs and reduces the requirement for private car use.
- **A planned ecosocialist economy** which eliminates waste, duplication and environmentally harmful practices, reduction in the working week and a corresponding increase in leisure time.
- Work practices reorganised with the emphasis on **fair flexibility and working closer to home**, utilising a free and fast broadband infrastructure.

As ecosocialists we put forward a vision of a just and sustainable world and fight with every ounce of our energy for every change, however small, which makes such a world possible. We will organise and assist wherever possible worker's and community organisations internationally, raising demands on governments and challenging corporations.

Ecosocialist Alliance, September 2021

Extinction Rebellion gets political!

Allan Todd | Left Unity

"Better late than never!" – or so the adage has it. This is certainly true of Extinction Rebellion's recent decision to get more 'political' as regards the causes of, and cures for, the ever-worsening climate crisis. This is a very welcome – and significant – shift, especially in view of the dreadful record-breaking climate disasters experienced in Europe, as well as many other areas of the world, this summer.

This positive shift has come out of the internal debates which took place within XR during last year's pandemic and lockdowns. Starting with XR Scotland, which has now moved very close to an explicitly anti-capitalist stance, there was a 'trickle down' of ideas across the border. This eventually led to a decisive shift within XRUK, towards a much more political interpretation of their original but rather unspecified slogan:

⊗ SYSTEM CHANGE, NOT CLIMATE CHANGE ⊗

During last year, many XR groups and individuals began to frame the problem as a clash between the current profit-driven 'commercial economy' – which is pushing the planet to the edge of climate catastrophe – and a desired 'social/human economy' in which the needs of the majority of the people and of the planet would be put first. This is not very far from an ecosocialist position!

As a first step, XR has developed the strategy of a 'money rebellion', specifically directed against the banks and other financial institutions which continue to fund existing and even new fossil fuel projects in the UK and around the world. This money rebellion began in January of this year, and involved various actions and social media campaigns. Most recently, it was the main focus of XR's Impossible Rebellion in London towards the end of August 2021. XR's new immediate demand is that all new fossil fuel investments should be stopped immediately by the UK government: because we are out of time, and because this would be the clearest way for the UK government to show they are at last taking the climate crisis seriously, before COP26 meets.

As a result of these recent shifts, XRUK has also developed an important fourth demand, which has been added to their original Three Demands. This latest demand mirrors earlier developments in XRUS, and specifically calls for social and global climate justice.

As part of that, XRUK now calls for a just transition into clean energy projects for those currently employed in the fossil fuel industries. There have also been calls for climate justice for those in the global south, and for the G7 countries to make financial reparations to fund moves there towards clean energy sources. There are also calls for the industrialised countries to cover the costs of the climate damages already being experienced by people in the global south, given that the latter countries have done relatively little in terms of soaring greenhouse gas emissions.

Such calls have come out of moves to 'de-colonise' XR, by recognising the impacts of racism in developed countries, and the injustices inflicted on people and countries in the global south by western imperialism over many decades. One result of this led to XR reaching out to key groups and movements, such as Black Lives Matter, which have been disproportionately and unequally affected by climate disasters. This should allow XR to move away from being a largely white protest movement to having a wider base of social support.

Similarly, by taking on board the call for a just transition, and thus reaching out to the labour and trade union movements, XR should be able to move beyond being perceived as a largely middle-class movement. It was particularly encouraging to see XR backing the People's Assembly demo in June of this year – with their samba band being a centrepiece of the protest.

These political developments within Extinction Rebellion could not have come at a more opportune time: not only is COP26 getting closer, but we have just had yet more confirmations that the climate and ecological crises are continuing to get worse.

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