

# BUILD THE CLIMATE STRIKES

The climate strikes and Extinction Rebellion have forced the climate emergency up the political agenda. People have educated themselves and each other. Unions, politicians and businesses have been forced to begin to respond, however inadequately. Even unions which lobby for fossil fuels and airport expansion voted for a Green New Deal at Labour conference.



*Climate strikers in Manchester, 20 September*

The climate strikes have pushed collective action rather than individualism to the centre of political debate, just as Extinction Rebellion have re-popularised the idea of direct action and defying the law when necessary. School students have inspired workers to strike, despite repressive anti-union legislation.

Strikes are potentially an extremely powerful form of direct action. Almost nothing happens without workers working – no goods are made nor services are produced. Strikes can create a crisis for businesses, industries and governments.

The scale of climate strikes isn't yet enough, but September 20 forced workers' action onto the agenda of unions and employers.

Before September 20, many in the unions were sceptical about the possibility of workers joining the strike – even when they gave it rhetorical support.

The fact that workers struck should be shouted from the rooftops, and the mechanics of how they did so despite the anti-union laws need to be discussed throughout the movement.

The rs21 website carried video interviews with school and university students taking part on the day - and with workers.

See [rs21.org.uk/climate](https://rs21.org.uk/climate) for reports, analysis and resources.

Rick Lighten, a UNISON member working in Higher Education, explained how a group of Manchester staff and students who wanted to support the strike launched a petition calling on management to commit to taking no sanctions against anyone who joined the strike. The process of collecting signatures meant talking to other workers and students and grew the group. Management were forced to respond to the petition and their response gave some workers the confidence to strike.

In other workplaces unions negotiated extended lunch-breaks for workers to join protests, or for delegations to be given time off to do so.

## Key tasks facing us now include:

- Using the experience of September 20 to build for wider action
- Building participation in climate campaigning
- Building a radical current within the climate movement
- Building stronger unions in every workplace
- Strengthening links between the climate and working-class movements
- Pushing in workplaces and unions for climate action
- Pushing for Labour to include radical measures in its manifesto – and for the election of a left Labour government

# THE POLITICS OF CLIMATE BREAKDOWN

## OPPOSE FOSSIL CAPITAL

Everyone can see that the government is not taking enough action to radically reduce emissions, but why? It is not simply corrupt or inept. States compete by encouraging capital accumulation, so protect the interests of polluting and exploitative corporations. Their pursuit of profit and economic growth at any price is no accident, it is the essence of capitalism.

The repression of anti-fracking protesters who disrupt fossil fuel extraction shows that the state puts capital before people. The banning of XR protests in London illustrates the same lesson. We need mass direct action against both fossil capital and its state backers.

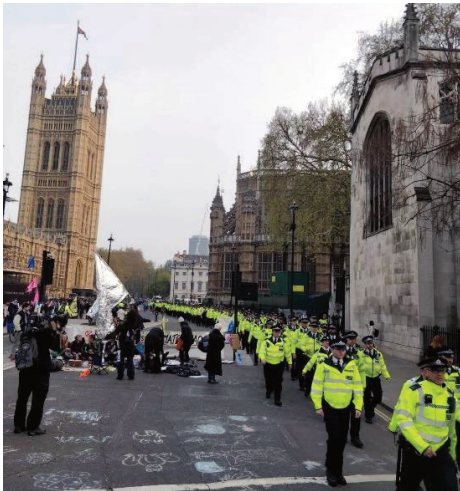


Photo: Caroline Lucas, Twitter

## JUST TRANSITION

A minority of wealthy individuals and corporations are responsible for the vast majority of atmospheric carbon, yet they are the ones with the greatest stake in the status quo. The rich are already planning to insulate themselves from the worst effects of climate chaos while failing to prevent it - and to repress the rest of us. The global majority will have to take them on to protect our environment. Diversifying our movement and mobilising that global majority means a just transition is vital. It must offer secure green housing, jobs and transport for everyone. This will need

programmes of publicly funded investment and the retraining of workers whose livelihoods currently rely on carbon intensive industries. Market 'solutions' through price or tax incentives won't cut emissions fast enough and penalise the poorest. There are already trade unionists making this case through campaigns like One Million Climate Jobs and Scot.E3.

## ANTI-IMPERIALISM

Colonialism and imperialism have always gone hand in hand with extractive industries and environmental destruction. Fossil capital and the arms industry profit from imperialist conflict and competition. Imperialist states fight to control natural resources, build extractive infrastructures that destroy the conditions of life for indigenous peoples, and routinely violate the flimsy and inadequate international agreements on emissions. The climate movement must be anti-imperialist and stand in solidarity with indigenous people against incursions by extractive industries. Campaigns demanding that corporations and public institutions divest from fossil capital and the arms industry are gaining ground, from university campuses to workers' pensions.

## MIGRANT SOLIDARITY & THE FAR RIGHT

As climate chaos and war displaces millions of people in the Global South, imperialist states are militarising their borders against the survivors of their own policies. Many on the far right are climate deniers, promoting carbon-intensive industries. Brazil's far-right President Jair Bolsonaro poses an existential threat to the rainforest and to indigenous peoples. Others are using the climate crisis to justify genocidal racism, blaming people from poor countries who have contributed little to this catastrophe but face the worst consequences.

Climate change is an international crisis that demands an internationalist solution. We need to oppose the far right, build solidarity with migrants and opposition to border controls.