

CLIMATE AND CLASS STRUGGLE

It is fantastic that UCU's eight days of strikes at 60 universities over pensions, pay, inequality, workload and casualisation coincide with the climate strike on November 29th. Unity between workers' struggles and the climate movement strengthens both.

It was a UCU motion that led to the TUC backing the amazing 20th September climate strike, dramatically increasing the number of adults who took part. At many universities staff and students took climate action together.

The timing of the UCU strikes helps increase participation in the climate strike and helps UCU members win solidarity from students and the public.



Photo: John Walker

There are strategic reasons why striking together matters too. On one hand the school strikers are popularising the idea of striking, offering hope for a renewal of the workers' movement. On the other, greater working-class involvement is critical for the success of the climate movement.

GREEN CEOs ARE NOT THE ANSWER

Extinction Rebellion (XR) are right to see mass militant action as the key to success and to say (XR Principle 7) that they aim to centre marginalised voices who have to fight hardest to be heard. We all need to work to make this a consistent reality.

Tackling the climate emergency requires a powerful movement and we don't all have the

same power. The need for power leads some to focus on wooing corporate bosses – if only they would join us, they could deploy vast resources to help. This is a flawed strategy.

The super-rich are already building fortified mansions in the hope of protecting themselves from the worst consequences of climate breakdown. This isn't just a matter of ignorance, stupidity and greed (though there's plenty of those). The problem is structural. Capitalism pits companies and states in competition to grow as quickly as possible by maximising profits to avoid going bust or being taken over by competitors.

While there are no profits on a dead planet, capitalism incentivises a short-term profit focus where companies and states fear being undercut if they take more climate action than competitors. Fossil capital is already deploying vast resources to lobby against climate action. It's not only Trump and Bolsonaro dragging their feet – no state is doing what is needed.



Photo: XR Scotland via Twitter

This is why XR Scotland were right to say that climate struggle is class struggle. We need to take the power off corporations and states.

History tell us that mass movements stand the greatest chance of success when the working class is at their heart. Workers have both the interest and the potential collective power to change things. Turning that potential into reality will take a commitment to a just transition along with arguments, organising and campaigning.

REPRESSION

Whenever anyone challenges the status quo the repressive power of the state is revealed. We can see this globally, from Iran and Chile to Hong Kong and Catalonia. We shouldn't kid ourselves that the British state is much different.

The courts may have overturned the Metropolitan Police ban on the XR, but not before hundreds had been dispersed or arrested. Anti-fracking and anti-fascist campaigners have had to withstand legal repression and police violence. The courts overturned an overwhelming democratic vote by CWU postal workers that made it unlawful for them to strike before Christmas. Just as for XR, the damage is done even if a higher court later overturns the injunction.



Photo: Caroline Lucas, Twitter

ELECTION

The election of a Corbyn-led Labour government would be a huge boost for the movement. It's not just that Labour policies are so much better than Johnson's on climate, education and the rest. It would be a lot easier for workers and climate campaigners alike to resist state repression under a Labour government.

Labour pledge to repeal the 2016 Trade Union Act which deterred UCU from calling strikes at universities where members voted 'Yes' but didn't achieve a 50% turnout. But the injunction against the CWU was based on 1992 legislation. All the anti-union laws (which also ban strikes directly over climate) need repealing. In the meantime, we need to support workers who defy them.

A Labour government won't stop state repression (even the 1945 Attlee government used troops to

break strikes) but it will be more susceptible to pressure than Boris 'Water-cannon' Johnson.

Encourage people to register to vote by 26 November: www.gov.uk/register-to-vote. Many migrants who are entitled to vote don't realise it. Many students don't know they can register at university and home addresses.

BUILD THE MOVEMENTS

Campaigning to vote the Tories out and Corbyn in won't be enough. Governments come under huge pressure from the rich and powerful. We will need to keep fighting whatever the election result.

Trump's visit to Britain on 2-4 December is an opportunity to hit the streets against him and his friend in Downing Street.

We need a huge turnout from individuals and unions for the N29 climate strike and to keep building the movement. In 2020 the UN COP26 climate talks will be in Glasgow and action is already being planned.

Send UCU or climate strike reports and photos to rs21editorial@gmail.com. See rs21.org.uk/climate for climate reports, analysis and resources.

MAKING THE MOST OF THE UCU STRIKE

The more people who play an active part the better. This isn't just about having effective pickets. Strikers need to show that the campaign will only get bigger.

The strike is about the future of Higher Education. Strikers' issues mirror those across Britain. Stagnating pay, inadequate pensions, discrimination and casualisation afflict the vast majority of working-class people, creating a huge pool of potential solidarity.

Strikers can reach out to involve students, tour local workplaces to raise support for the UCU and climate strikes, join climate strike rallies, contact campaigners over inequality and discrimination, take part in with election campaigning, and help colleagues in institutions which missed the ballot threshold tighten up their organisation.

Workers at non-striking universities can use solidarity protests and petitions to raise morale, have 1-1 conversations about the importance of sticking together, test the union structure and identify weak areas.

The more universities who can successfully re-ballot the bigger the win will be.