

# Scottish nurses to strike for fair pay and the future of the NHS

Nursing workers across the whole of Scotland, *writes Connor Beaton at [Heckle](#)*, are set to join postal workers, teachers, railway workers, university and college workers and others next year [2023] in striking for increased pay – a historic move which reveals the extent of popular discontent over wage cuts and austerity imposed from above. With thousands of unfilled vacancies for nursing roles, the looming strike also forms a front in the struggle to defend the free, universal provision of quality healthcare in Scotland in the long-term.

Against the backdrop of consumer price inflation in the UK reaching 11% in November and being set to remain at historically high levels for at least months to come, the Scottish government has offered NHS workers a one-year deal providing for pay increases ranging from 11.32% for the lowest-paid workers to 2% for the highest-paid workers. The average pay increase on offer is 7.5%, translating to a real-terms pay cut of 3.5% for the average NHS worker in Scotland.

“When you take a decade of real-terms pay cuts and then you add such a significant one at a time when there’s a cost of living crisis in the country – people are really worried about their energy bills, especially with Scottish weather and the recent cold snap that we’ve had, it’s really prominent in people’s minds – and I think there’s been a perfect storm really, between that and the pandemic,” Siobhan Aston, a rehabilitation nurse and grassroots activist with [NHS Workers Say NO](#), tells *Heckle*. “I think that’s why Scottish workers have decided no, enough is enough.”

Aston, who qualified as a nurse in 2014, is a rank-and-file

member of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), the largest nursing union which represents over 40,000 nurses, midwives and support workers in Scotland and has taken centre stage in this dispute. Members of unions Unite and Unison, who between them represent most NHS workers in Scotland including a minority of nursing workers, have already accepted the Scottish government's latest pay offer. GMB and the Royal College of Midwives (RCM), which represent smaller numbers of NHS workers, have joined the RCN in rejecting it.

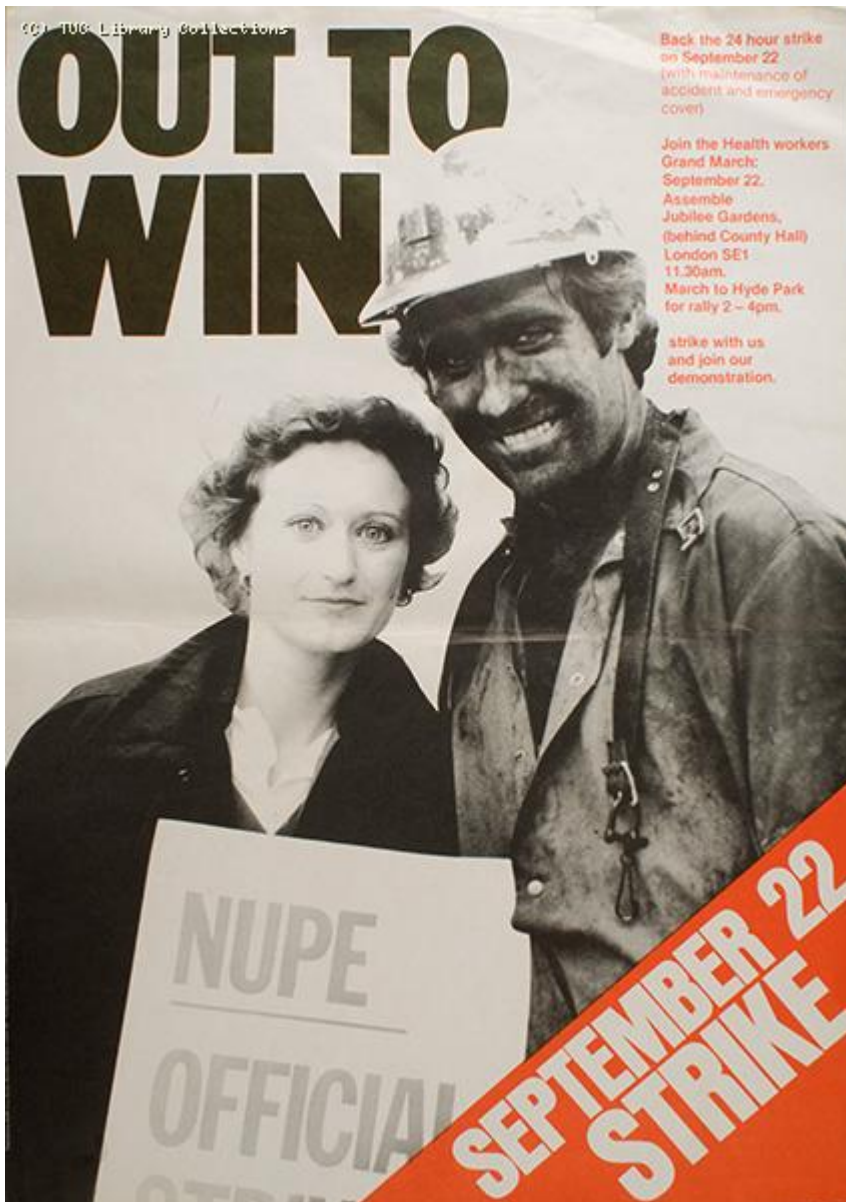
This month's decision by RCN Scotland members to strike for a better pay deal, with [a massive 82% in support](#), is historic for a number of reasons. An important one is that the planned strikes will mark the first time nursing workers have taken industrial action across all of Scotland's 14 regional health boards, rather than taking part in localised action. It is also, however, a dramatic move for the RCN, which for decades rejected the prospect of strike action.



Nursing workers on the march in London. (Photo: [Guy Smallman via NHS Workers Say NO](#))

For most of its 106-year history, the RCN was not a trade union but a professional association aimed primarily at improving standards in nursing. In the 1970s – a tumultuous decade in which the NHS was [rocked by a wave of strikes](#) – the RCN registered as a trade union, but maintained in its constitution an outright ban on its members taking part in strike action and refused to affiliate to the Trades Union Congress (TUC) alongside the other unions representing NHS workers.

When the biggest strike in NHS history took place in 1982, with workers across the UK walking out for a 12% pay increase, RCN members joined mass demonstrations but stopped short of striking; a [critical account from Dale Evans](#) recalls how the “split between TUC-affiliated bodies and non-affiliated unions such as the RCN was to prove crucial in the conduct of the dispute, and its final resolution”. Though unions NUPE and COHSE (both now part of Unison) wanted to continue the dispute, it came to an end when the RCN accepted a government offer including pay rises and the establishment of a pay review board for nurses. Thatcher’s policy was that pay review boards were on offer only to workers who did not strike; the RCN’s stance was rewarded.



A poster issued by NUPE during the 1982 pay dispute.

Since the professionalisation of nursing in the 19th century, generally credited to aristocratic social reformer Florence Nightingale, nursing work has been identified as “women’s work”, best suited to women because of their supposed natural inclination towards care and empathy. This diminishing label has been leveraged by patriarchal capitalism to undervalue and undercompensate nursing workers, who continue to be overwhelmingly women. Tory minister Nadine Dorries, herself a former nurse, last year invoked that vision of nursing as an extension of women’s natural instincts [when she insisted](#) that nurses did not require a significant post-pandemic pay increase because they “do their job because they love their job”.

This perception of nursing has also found expression in the trade union and socialist movements. Evans' article argues that the 1982 dispute, the largest pay dispute during Thatcher's premiership, has been written out of trade union history because most of the workers involved were women, who fit less comfortably into narrow, masculine visions of working class struggle. Socialist newspapers of the day derisively attributed the RCN's no-strike policy to the "Florence Nightingale mentality" of its members. This was challenged by the likes of the feminist-influenced [Radical Nurses Group](#) (RNG) of the 1980s, whose members criticised their union branches as dominated by men and/or managers and reproducing the oppressive hierarchies of their workplaces.

Forty years later, the picture has changed dramatically. For starters, it is now the RCN – having abolished its no-strike rule in 1995 – whose members have refused to buckle under pressure and have diverged from the TUC-affiliated Unison and Unite unions in voting to strike. This has cut short a period of triumphalism from Scottish ministers after nurses walked out in England, Wales and the north of Ireland. Humza Yousaf, the Scottish health secretary, [said in November](#) that his "constructive engagement with [trade unions] is one of reasons why Scotland is only part of the UK where we are not seeing nurses go on strike today". Only weeks later, he [faced condemnation](#) from the RCN for planning to impose a pay deal rejected by its members.

Siobhan Aston, despite having voted to strike, is still sympathetic to the position in which the Scottish government finds itself. "I do believe that they are more left-leaning [than the UK government] and are trying to accommodate us," she tells us. "Their response to this has been that the money's not there through the Barnett consequentials, and I do understand that argument. But realistically, we're at an impasse. We can't afford not to settle this and not to find a compromise." The UK government "does need to allocate more

funding to the devolved nations”, she concedes, while at the same time rejecting some of the more passionate defences of Scottish ministers from SNP supporters. Aston points out: “I’m pro-indy, but it’s very possible to be pro-independence but not agree with the government on absolutely everything. I think that’s widely misunderstood.”

“We’re at an impasse. We can’t afford not to settle this and not to find a compromise.”

That Unite and Unison members voted to accept the pay offer is particularly disappointing to Aston. “There’s division, frankly,” she admits. Though acknowledging that the other unions represent a higher proportion of workers on lower bands, for many of whom the pay offer was “close to inflation”, she notes the narrowness of the margin in some of the ballots. Just 57% of voters in Unison’s last ballot accepted the pay deal, with many of the union’s own members incensed at the outcome. “The word that I’m hearing is that a lot of people are leaving, registered staff are leaving, and moving to a trade union that they feel represents them better,” Aston says. “That’s not my personal opinion, that’s out there for people to see – it’s all over Facebook groups.”

*Heckle* spoke with Stevie, an NHS mental health worker in Clydebank who resigned from Unison after 18 years’ membership and joined the RCN. “I’ve been speaking to a lot of nursing colleagues over the last few weeks as pay negotiations continue with the Scottish government and I have to say that I’ve never known such unity of opinion and determination among them with regard to rejecting real-terms pay cuts and standing up for the NHS,” he says. “I know several long-term members of Unison who resigned in disgust at the union’s cheerleading for a real-terms pay cut. People support the RCN position of demanding fair pay and support for our NHS.”

Aston is confident that public opinion is firmly behind the nurses, paying tribute to the work of other unions, including

the RMT and the CWU, in forcefully making the case for inflation-busting pay rises in recent months, including among NHS workers. The other driving factor, she believes, is the strength of public feeling around the NHS. “Staff feel – and I’ve been a patient too in the last year – that standards are declining,” she explains. “There’s not enough of us to do the job. That’s the reality.” There were over 6,300 nursing and midwifery vacancies in Scotland at the end of September, according to [NHS Scotland figures](#), and the number is growing. “We need more people in order to do the work well, but the problem is people are leaving,” Aston says. “Realistically, if we don’t look at the wages, we’re never going to solve those staffing issues, those retention issues and those recruitment issues.”

Her work with NHS Workers Say NO, a grassroots organisation established at the height of the pandemic in summer 2020, has helped Aston to build a formidable online following which she has used to further the campaign for better pay and conditions for NHS workers. She has nearly 47,000 followers [on Twitter](#) and her [TikTok videos](#) about the pay dispute have collectively racked up tens of thousands of views.

Although new to the RCN, Aston is looking forward to getting more involved and joining her colleagues on the picket line. She has already visited striking nurses in Belfast as well as picket lines with other striking workers, and is effusive about the work of [StrikeMap](#), a worker-led project helping people find out where and when pickets are taking place locally so they can show their support. “It’s really, really important because it’s tough going,” she says. “It’s tough going, campaigning, and it’s hard work. I’ve seen it from my colleagues across the UK setting up strike committees. When people go to their picket line, it really provides an important psychological boost to the people that are standing there.”

RCN Scotland has said it will announce its strike dates early

in the new year. The RCM and GMB unions have indicated that they could follow suit if the Scottish government refuses to return to negotiations. In the spirit of working class solidarity and in defence of the NHS, the full strength of the trade union and socialist movements should be prepared to come out in their support.

*Originally published on 30 December 2022 by Heckle, online publication of the [Republican Socialist Platform](https://heckle.scot/2022/12/scottish-nurses-strike-for-fair-pay-and-the-future-of-the-nhs/) – <https://heckle.scot/2022/12/scottish-nurses-strike-for-fair-pay-and-the-future-of-the-nhs/>. You can join RSP here: <https://join.republicansocialists.scot/>*

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## **“The Other Davos” – Swiss counter summit to the World Economic Forum, watch on YouTube 13/14 January**

The “World Economic Forum” of big business interests kicks off in Davos, Switzerland on 16 January 2023. For a number of years, ecosocialist.scot’s friends and allies in the Swiss [“Movement for Socialism”](#) have organised a counter-summit called “The Other Davos” that focusses on the economic and ecological crises as they affect working class people around the world and presenting ecosocialist alternatives to the global establishment.

The motto of The Other Davos 2023 is ***“In solidarity against inflation, climate catastrophe & war”***.

Guests include Ukrainian-born sociologist Yuliya Yurchenko,



Ukrainian activist Tasha Lomonosova (Sotsialnyi Rukh) and Lausanne-based Ukrainian socialist Hanna Perekhoda (solidarités); Russian journalist Ilya Matveev (Posle Magazine); economic geographer Christian Zeller (author of Revolution for the Climate); Simon Pirani (author of Burning Up: A Global History of Fossil Fuel Consumption"); the Iranian journalist Mina Khani; activists from RWE & Co. Simon Hannah (Anticapitalist Resistance), Charlotte Powell (rs21) and Taisie Tsikas (rs21) from Great Britain; the Italian trade unionist Eliana Como (Sinistra Anticapitalista); Christoph Wälz (Trade Union for Education and Science, Berlin); the anti-racist activists Simin Jawabreh and Mark Akkerman; as well as the journalists Anna Jikhareva (WOZ), Nelli Tügel and Jan Ole Arps (ak – analyse&kritik).

The event takes place in Zurich and starts on **Friday 13 January at 6pm British time, and runs until 7pm on Saturday 14 January.**

**Some of the sessions will be livestreamed on YouTube** and many presenters will be speaking in English, one of three official languages of The Other Davos (the others being German and French).

The full programme is available here:

[The Other Davos 2023 > sozialismus.ch](https://www.sozialismus.ch/en/other-davos-2023)

But you can join the YouTube livestreams as follows:

**Friday 13 January at 6pm-8.30pm (British time)**

Plenary session: **"Perspectives of Solidarity in a burning World"**

We are currently experiencing a dramatic escalation of the contradictions of capitalist society. War, ecological crisis, inflation and poverty are raising the stakes of the challenges

the left is facing. Our answers must inevitably question capitalist power and property relations.

[\(1452\) Plenum: Solidarische Perspektiven in einer brennenden Welt \(Das Andere Davos 2023\) – YouTube](#)

## **Saturday 14 January at 9.30am -12 noon (British time)**

**Workshop: The Iranian Revolution and International Solidarity**

With: Mina Khani, Iranian journalist (e.g. at ak – analyse&kritik) and queer feminist in Berlin, and Elisa Moros, feminist activist of the European Network in Solidarity with Ukraine and the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (NPA) in Paris.

[\(1452\) Der Aufstand im Iran und die internationale feministische Solidarität \(Das Andere Davos 2023\) – YouTube](#)

## **Saturday 14 January at 1.30pm -4pm (British time)**

**Workshop: Resistance Against War and Neoliberalism in Ukraine**

With: Yuliya Yurchenko, lecturer in political economy at the University of Greenwich (UK), author of the book “Ukraine and the Empire of Capital: From Marketisation to Armed Conflict”, Tasha Lomonosova, activist of the Ukrainian socialist organization Sotsialnyi Rukh (SR); fled from Kyiv to Berlin in March 2022, and Hanna Perekhoda, from Donetsk, political scientist at the University of Lausanne, activist of solidarités and the Ukraine-Switzerland Committee.

[\(1452\) Der ukrainische Widerstand gegen Krieg und Neoliberalismus \(Das Andere Davos 2023\) – YouTube](#)

**Saturday 14 January at 5pm -8pm (British time)**

**Workshop: For an Internationalist Antifascism!**

With Mark Akkerman, active with abolishfrontex/stopthewaronmigrants, Mina Khani, Iranian publicist (at ak – analyse&kritik, among others) and queer feminist, Tatjana Söding, activist of the Zetkin collective (research group on right-wing extremism and climate justice), and activists of the Movement for Socialism (BFS).

[\(1452\) Plenum: Für einen internationalistischen Antifaschismus! \(Das Andere Davos 2023\) – YouTube](#)

Please note that times on the programme on the official website are in Central European Time (CET) which is one hour ahead of British Time.

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## **Yet another UN COP Summit last minute deal, but was it worth it ... XR Gairloch**

*Extinction Rebellion (XR) Gairloch latest Climate Crisis Newsletter had a review of the COP 15 Biodiversity summit held in Montreal in December 2022, which we are republishing below. It is available on the [XR Scotland](#) website. We hope to publish more material on the COP15 Biodiversity event on the [ecosocialist.scot](#) website in the near future, and welcome comments and debate.*

# XR Gairloch Climate Crisis Newsletter No 126 – Editorial

**Yet another UN COP Summit last minute deal, but was it worth it.....**

As is usual with UN COP summits it goes down to the wire and the COP15 Biodiversity summit was no different. A deal was eventually done at 3.30 am on Monday morning, but was it? The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), who are one of the biodiverse countries in the world, said it didn't agree with the document but the COP president just overruled them and declared the deal was done anyway. The DRC were later persuaded by Brazil and Indonesia ( another two major biodiverse countries) to back down and sign the agreement.

So did that mean the deal done at COP15 was a major success? No unfortunately not.

Since the Biodiversity COP summit was first established some 30 years ago, they have failed to accomplish any meaningful gains in its mission. In fact a recent U.N. report showed that not a single target from the summit's previous 2010 agreement has been met.

This year nearly 5,000 delegates from 196 countries around the world gathered during the December 7-19 summit aiming to secure a new deal: a 10-year framework aimed at saving Earth's forests, oceans and species before it's too late.

A last minute deal was agreed which featured 23 action-oriented targets to be delivered by 2030 of which the most important was probably the target of protecting 30% of land and sea, but unfortunately the agreement was thought by many environmentalists to be weak and flawed, some of these being:

- The targets and actions are not legally binding
- Weak on how it is implemented and monitored. The

agreement is doomed without clear mechanisms for implementing targets, Similar factors were widely blamed for the failure of the last 10-year biodiversity deal, adopted in 2010 in Aichi, Japan, which was unable to achieve nearly any of its objectives.

- It is said to be the biodiversity equivalent to the Paris 2015 agreement for Climate Change and that has been a failure.
- The use of weak wording like -“eliminate, **phase out or reform incentives**, including subsidies harmful for biodiversity” and “progressively reducing” these subsidies
- Weakened language regarding corporate and non-state disclosure. During COP15, almost 500 companies voiced support for mandatory disclosure of nature-related impacts through the Business for Nature group’s “Make it Mandatory” campaign. However, the final text does not require mandatory disclosure, meaning many corporates will need to involve themselves with voluntary disclosure initiatives.
- Vague, unambitious language on halting species extinctions at some point before 2050, instead of 2030.

*‘Flawed but a turning point for humanity’: Green groups react to COP15’s global biodiversity agreement. [Read article.](#)*

The fact is human civilisation depends on a healthy and diverse natural environment to survive and flourish. It’s a tragedy that we’re living in one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world—and a travesty that the impetus to turn this around just isn’t there. Those with the power to make change are moving too slowly and are pushing the disaster down a road that’s rapidly running out.

*UK accused of hypocrisy over environment protection targets. [Read Article.](#)*

*Scotland’s rarest animals face being wiped out warns expert.*

[Read article.](#)

*Is “Nature Positive” the new “Carbon Neutral” of biodiversity greenwash, and why were fossil fuel delegates at COP15?.....  
What does ‘nature positive’ mean – and can it rally support to stop biodiversity loss? [Read article.](#)*

## **Humanity has become a weapon of mass extinction.....**

The UN biodiversity talks, held every two years, have never garnered the same attention as the world’s main environmental focus – the annual UN talks on climate change.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has slammed multinational corporations for turning the world’s ecosystems into “playthings of profit” and warned failure to correct course would lead to catastrophic results. “We are treating nature like a toilet,” Guterres said. “And ultimately, we are committing suicide by proxy,” with the effects felt on jobs, hunger, disease and death.

As the human population tops 8 billion, the rest of life is being decimated. We’ve destroyed two-thirds of the rainforests, half the coral reefs, and a million species are now facing oblivion, one-third of all land is severely degraded and fertile soil is being lost, while pollution and climate change are accelerating the degradation of the oceans.

Species are vanishing at a rate not seen in 10 million years. As much as 40 percent of Earth’s land surfaces are considered degraded, according to a 2022 UN Global Land Outlook assessment.

196 governments signed the agreement to protect 30% of the planet by 2030 – but scientists say it isn’t enough. For nature to regenerate, and to save our planet’s life-support systems, we have to protect half the Earth, inspired by E0

Wilson's Half-Earth project – and we need a global treaty to enforce action. Currently, 17% of terrestrial and 10% of marine areas are protected so 30% will be a significant increase if it is achieved.

*Half Earth Project. [See site.](#)*

Ultimately, this is about our survival. Even as the planet withers, the chainsaws, diggers, and polluters are charging ahead, pulverising the planet into a barren, lifeless tundra. All in the name of economic growth .

Scientists have warned that with forests and grasslands being lost at unprecedented rates and oceans under pressure from pollution and over-fishing, humans are pushing the Earth beyond safe limits. This includes increasing the risk of diseases, like SARs CoV-2, Ebola and HIV, spilling over from wild animals into human populations.

What happens to the natural world, happens to us all. We are not separate from nature; we are part of it, connected to the very trees, rivers, and oceans that are being decimated.

The COP15 summit in Montreal was regarded as a “last chance” to put nature on a path to recovery. Let us hope that the human race stands by what it agreed at the summit and improves on it to ensure we are not putting a death sentence on nature and ourselves.

Reprinted from XR Gairloch Climate Crisis Newsletter No 126  
[Climate-Crisis-News-Letter-No-126-xr-gairloch.pdf](#)  
[\(xrscotland.org\)](#)

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# **Refuse to be slaves: defend the right to strike!**

*With Scotland's teachers holding a one day strike on 10/11 January followed by a rolling series of one day strikes thereafter, and Scotland's NHS workers discussing launching strike action following rejection of the inadequate Scottish government-backed pay offer, the strike wave in Scotland and across the UK state shows no signs of abating.*

*Ongoing disputes and further strikes across the UK are still affecting the rail industry, Royal Mail, civil servants, the university sector and many other industries. The Tory UK government response to the cost-of-living crisis afflicting workers is to publish a Bill at Westminster this week to restrict trade union rights even further.*

*[ecosocialist.scot](http://ecosocialist.scot) is republishing below an important analysis and call for action across Scotland from the [Scottish Socialist Party](#)'s Workplace Organiser, Richie Venton, as a contribution to the sort of fightback we urgently need in Scotland.*

## **Refuse to be slaves: defend the right to strike!**

***By Richie Venton, Scottish Socialist Party Workplace Organiser***

The Tories are hellbent on turning workers into slaves. They are rushing through legislation on so-called Minimum Service Levels that would effectively ban the right to strike for countless workers, and drastically undermine the effectiveness of any attempts by any workers to stand up for themselves against pay cuts, job losses, slashed working conditions, dangerous safety levels, and decimation of public services.

Under their long-trumpeted new laws, the Tories would empower



employers with the weapon of naming workers who must go to work during any strike action, even after their union has gone through the entire rigmarole of postal ballots, outrageous voting thresholds and 14 days' notice of strike action to make the strike legal. Any named worker would face potential dismissal from their job if they declined to come into work on strike days, after being handpicked by the employer – with no legal protection from unfair dismissal, which workers currently enjoy for the first 12 weeks of a strike. And unions could be sued unless they obeyed the employer-imposed minimum staffing levels on strike days.

## **A Human Right**

The right to strike is a fundamental human right, one that separates the wage-slaves of capitalism from the literal slaves of the ancient slave empires of Rome, Greece and others. It's a right enshrined in the European Human Rights Commission, ILO and other international bodies. The human right to withdraw your labour, rather than being chained to the demands of profiteering employers.

It's the difference between being able to take collective, agreed industrial action to stop the relentless assaults on jobs, pay, workplace health and safety, and indeed the quality of services provided to the public – or abject capitulation to the profit-crazed attacks by big business and austerity-driven governments.

The British government has been quick to condemn SOME regimes abroad as dictatorships when they outlaw the right to strike – unless they happen to be their allies in world exploitation! They are now poised to imitate the actions of the worst dictatorships.



## **Tories Threaten Minimum Safety – not Strikers!**

When the smiling snake Grant Shapps – Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy – appears on TV reassuring viewers this is all about protecting ‘Minimum Safety Levels’, he is indulging in his customary, deceitful, barefaced lies. The same creature cried crocodile tears and muttered faux outrage at the on-the-spot sacking and replacement of 800 ferry workers by the gangster capitalists of P&O Ferries last March – and then helped his Tory government rush through emergency legislation that now allows any employer to do fundamentally the same thing: replace strikers with agency workers.

Back in his days as Tory Mayor of London, Boris Johnson pioneered the call for a ban on strikes in transport – because workers on London Underground dared defend themselves and the vital service to the city’s economy they provide.

Last year, when railway workers were (and are) to the fore in

fighting back against over a decade of pay cuts and vicious assaults on safety standards for the travelling public, the chorus of demands for de facto strike bans on transport grew louder in the Tory ranks and their hired assassins in the right-wing media. We repeatedly warned at the time that if they got away with this against railway workers – under the guise of Minimum Service Levels legislation – they would inevitably extend their assault on the right to strike to other sectors. It didn't take long for that warning to be totally vindicated. As ambulance workers, NHS staff, border security civil service staff and teachers strike in defence of themselves and their services – and firefighters ballot to follow suit – the Tories' legislation proposes to include all of the above, plus workers in nuclear decommissioning.



## Unions Already Provide 'Life-and-Limb' Cover

The Tories' claim that these laws are to protect Minimum Safety Levels is rampant hypocrisy and downright lies. Unions

in key sectors have for years agreed and organised 'life-and-limb cover' when they plan strike action. Over recent decades, I've discussed with umpteen groups of workers in the likes of council services and the NHS who are taking or preparing strike action, who not only explain they are busy organising, through their unions, for 'emergency cover' or 'life-and-limb cover', but add that in many instances the slaughter of staffing levels actually means they are putting more staff on duty during this exercise than would be there on a normal working day!

And that's before the eruption of the current, life-threatening levels of understaffing in the NHS, social care, fire and rescue and other vital services. That's before the Tories succeed in driving train companies into imposing Driver Only Operated trains across the board, or slash rail maintenance by at least 43%, as they want to do right now in return for below-inflation pay offers. It's the Tories and their pals in the boardrooms who threaten 'minimum safety levels', not strikers. In fact, many of the strikes, such as on the railways and NHS, are precisely in defence of safety levels.



# Tories' NHS Cuts Threaten Lives

When Schapps et al trot out the lie that their new anti-strike laws are to prevent people having to wait for an ambulance, which planet does he think we all live on? Before any strikes by ambulance workers – or other NHS staff – people have been suffering life-threatening delays, due to decades of conscious refusal to invest in the NHS, with bed cuts, staffing level crises, exacerbated by drastic pay cuts and crucifying overwork and burnout. In fact, one of the main drivers behind strike action by ambulance workers is the daily crisis of understaffing and chaos caused by the impact of austerity on our hospitals – well before Covid added a further twist to the spiralling NHS crisis, of which the government themselves are the chief architects.

No doubt Grant Schapps has – like his boss, Rishi Sunak – a gold-plated private health scheme, so he won't be worried about the delays in treatment of the sick, made daily worse by his regime.

Their new, even more vicious anti-strike laws will do nothing to avert that crisis, and by undermining workers' ability to resist their austerity cuts will actually make things worse in the frontline services the Tories want to spearhead their de facto strike ban within.



## Class War on Democracy

Britain already has the most repressive anti-union, anti-working-class legislation in the entire western world. Laws that were especially ushered in by the hated Maggie Thatcher Tories in the 1980s but retained absolutely by 13 years of New Labour governments; made even worse since by Tory and Tory-LibDem regimes; now being drastically added to by the current, unelected Tory government, presided over by the 222<sup>nd</sup> richest person in Britain, Rishi Sunak.

In their mission to crush workers' pay and conditions to turbocharge profits, the Tories want to destroy the collective power of organised workers by breaking the unions. They must not succeed.

The Tories have embarked on their escalated war on the working class because they've had a fright, with currently a million workers either taking strike action or having already balloted to do so.

For decades, the employers and their political puppets got away with murder, with the help of defeatist union leaders who told us there was nothing we could do to resist. Now workers have begun to rise off their knees and fight back, the British ruling class are unleashing their customary class brutality. They must not succeed in their war on democracy, workers' rights, pay, jobs and services.

## **Defeat Divide-and-Conquer Tactics**

The employers and government are desperate to divide and conquer workers. They hope – in vain – to whip up 'the public' against strikers, to paint themselves as the saviours of public safety through these laws. But who are the public? It's the railway workers, posties, teachers, university staff, civil service staff, coffin makers and a host of others who have had enough and are striking back.

That widespread solidarity across multiple sectors of the working class is the chief weapon of defence against the attempt to convert workers into slaves. The TUC has threatened legal action against the government's plans. Fine, explore any avenues of self-defence. But it's a dangerous myth to think legal action is the main, let alone only form of resistance. Legal challenges have sometimes been useful, but the most fundamental means of defence of the right to strike is... to strike back, together!



## **Bring Out a Million Strikers – Together!**

One million workers are already either striking on (mostly) separate dates or have live ballots to do so. Alongside the appropriate tactics in each union or industry – with full input to decisions by shop stewards and conveners – the unions embracing these million members should urgently name the day for at least a partial general strike of one million workers, around their common demands on pay, jobs, conditions, services – and in opposition to this attempt to ban strikes. Better still, and simultaneously, the union leaderships – starting with those already engaged in action, putting relentless pressure on the timid TUC – should name the date for a full-scale 24-hour general strike of the entire seven million trade unionists in the UK, including over 600,000 in Scotland.

With proper preparation in workplaces and communities – mass meetings, public meetings, rallies, street activity, media, etc – this could win massive support, including amongst people currently not in a union, not in a job.



Defending basic democratic rights, opposing measures that amount to modern slavery, would find powerful resonance amongst millions of working-class and young people.

## **Call Mass Scottish Demo and 24-hour General Strike**

That is perhaps even more so in Scotland. We never voted in this Tory government – and never have given the Tories a majority since 1955.

The STUC and individual union Scottish leaderships should urgently draw up plans, including a mass Demo at the Scottish parliament, welcoming the SNP government's stated opposition to these new Tory laws, but calling on the Holyrood government to declare its outright refusal – in advance – of ever implementing these anti-strike laws in Scotland, in either the sectors they directly or indirectly employ workers, and outlawing them in contracts they hold with private employers.

Such a Demo – with such an aim – would also add pressure on the Scottish government to end its public sector pay cap and cough up the funds for decent pay for teachers, NHS staff and others currently in dispute. It could pound the Holyrood politicians with demands to defy Tory cuts and instead demand back some of the £5 billion stolen off Scotland by Westminster since 2010, to avert the looming carnage in areas like local government.

Combining union demands on pay and conditions with defence of the basic democratic right to strike – through determined action – is the best and only guarantee of success.

Time is short. Prolonged legal wrangling in mostly hostile Courts is not the means to defend the working class. A mass Scottish Demo, and proper preparations for combined strike action – on the same day by all those currently striking and

on an urgently named date for a complete 24-hour general strike – are the routes we need to travel.

**Refuse to be slaves! Strike together, march together, win together!**



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*Corrected 9 January 2023 to indicate ONE million workers across the UK with strike mandates, not two; and that EIS strikes are 10/11 January (10 primary, 11 secondary)*

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**Towards a global week of action for solidarity with**

# Ukraine

[ecosocialist.scot](http://ecosocialist.scot) members have endorsed the following statement calling for the week of 24 February to be made a global week of action against the Russian invasion and for solidarity with Ukraine and added our name to the appeal. The statement was prepared by the [European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine](#) which represents a wide range of socialist, labour movement and international solidarity organisations across Europe.

We urge the widest possible support for the statement in Scotland, across the rest of the UK state and internationally.

## ***Stop the Russian war of aggression! Peace for Ukraine!***

*Friday February 24 will mark one year since the Russian army invaded Ukraine on the orders of Putin and his regime. A year of indescribable suffering and bloodshed for the Ukrainian people.*

*The completely unjustified invasion has already cost the lives of many tens of thousands of Ukrainian civilians and military personnel. Every day the Ukrainian people face brutality and violence. Millions of civilians have been forced to flee abroad, millions are internally displaced.*

*Entire towns and villages have been reduced to rubble by Russian bombing and airstrikes. Civilian infrastructure (electricity and heating networks, schools, hospitals, railroads, ports, etc.) is being systematically destroyed, making the country unlivable.*

*Putin wants to make an independent and livable Ukraine impossible:*

- *The Russian army has committed mass murders of civilians and Ukrainian soldiers in many places. The*

*fate of many thousands is still unknown. Mass rape campaigns and killings by rape, are established attack strategies. With every liberation of a Ukrainian village or town, new crimes come to light.*

- *A great many Ukrainian citizens (including many hundreds of thousands of children/ over 700 thousand children) have been deported, without permission and often by force, to the territory of Russia.*

*The Ukrainian people rightly refuse to be passive victims of this war of aggression and actively and massively resists the invasion, with or without arms in hand. Very widespread mutual solidarity and self-organization of the population plays a crucial role in enabling this resistance to continue, as does international support in many different forms.*

*The killing of the Ukrainian people before the eyes of the world and the destruction of independent Ukraine must stop! The loudest possible international protest against the Russian invasion and the widest possible solidarity with the Ukrainian people is more necessary than ever*

*We, organizations and individuals from all over the world, launch a **call to make the week of February 24 a global week of action against the Russian invasion and for solidarity with Ukraine.***

- ***Peace for Ukraine, no to the Russian war! Immediate cessation of bombing by the Russian military and withdrawal of all Russian troops from Ukraine.***
- ***The widest possible support for and solidarity with the Ukrainian people in their justified resistance to the Russian invasion.***

*To add your organisation's name to this appeal, please write to us at **[info@ukraine-solidarity.eu](mailto:info@ukraine-solidarity.eu)***

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# Edinburgh Ukraine Solidarity Book Launch – Sat 21 January 7pm-8pm

[Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland](#) are holding an important launch of a book in solidarity with the resistance of Ukraine to the Russian invasion. The meeting will be hosted by [Lighthouse Books, Edinburgh's radical bookshop](#), on **Saturday 21 January from 7pm-8pm**.

Register to attend and buy the book here:  
<https://lighthousebookshop.com/events/ukraine-voices-of-resistance-and-solidarity>

The book is “Ukraine: Voices of Resistance and Solidarity” and is a collection of recent writings by Ukrainians and socialists around the world.

## **ABOUT THE BOOK**

*This is an extremely important book published at this tragic moment when our country has been invaded. It builds a bridge of solidarity between the people of Ukraine and the working class around the world. The contributions make it easier to imagine a better future without imperialism and injustice.*

*Vitalii Dudin, President of Sotsialnyi Rukh/Social Movement.*

*Ukraine: Voices of Resistance and Solidarity is a contribution to understanding what Ukrainians think, feel and need. Their voices are a call for solidarity, peace and progress. Above all, it is about the Ukrainian people deciding their future and an end to Russian imperialism.*  
*Mick Antoniŵ, Member of Senedd Cymru.*

There is an independent review of the book republished on the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign website – [here](#).

The book is published by [Resistance Books](#), with whom [ecosocialist.scot](#) is proud to be associated.

The Facebook event is [here](#) and the details and text of the leaflet for the meeting are below.

We urge all our readers to support this important meeting and to buy the book, which in Scotland can be bought or [ordered from Lighthouse Books](#) (Opening hours: Mon – Sat 10am – 8pm Sun 11.30am – 5pm) directions below or ordered by mail order from Resistance Books [here](#)

**UKRAINE: VOICES OF RESISTANCE AND SOLIDARITY**

**[Lighthouse Books](#), 43-5 West Nicolson Street, Edinburgh, EH8 9DB – [directions](#)**

**Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> January, 7.00 – 8.00 pm.**

**Speakers:**

**Chris Ford, [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign](#) and co-editor of the book**

**Taras Fedirko, [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign](#), Edinburgh**

*The world is becoming an ever more violent and oppressive place. Competing imperialisms, some growing in influence, others declining, are jockeying for place in an increasingly unstable global order. Whole nations and peoples have been repressed or invaded, either directly by imperial powers or by their local allies. We have seen this in Iraq, Syria, Kurdistan, Palestine, Yemen and Xinjiang. Most recently, we have witnessed the bloody invasion of Ukraine, launched by Putin's Russian empire on February 24th, 2022.*

*Putin thought that this invasion would be walkover, and the USA and leading European powers initially thought so too. However, Putin's invasion was met by the resistance of ordinary Ukrainians. Initially they were often unarmed, or only lightly armed. This in the face of Russian heavy artillery, air strikes and then tank-led troops. Women have been to the forefront of these communities of resistance and have been some of the main victims of the continuing occupation. The Donbass miners, with their history of opposition to exploitation and oppression by Ukrainian oligarchs, are also now in the front line of resistance against Putin and his kleptocrat backers. They have already won widespread international solidarity.*

*This meeting, organised by the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign (Scotland), invites people to hear the arguments presented in the book, *Ukraine: Voices of Resistance and Solidarity*. USC(S)'s New Year resolution is to help organise the solidarity necessary to support the people of Ukraine and end the Russian occupation. Self-determination whether, national, social or individual, needs to be defended wherever it is threatened. Please come to this meeting and bring others along too.*

[\*Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland\*](#)

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# Cumbria coal mine sparks widespread outrage

The decision to green light plans to open a new coal mine in Cumbria *[on the border of England and Scotland – eds]* has met with widespread opposition from climate campaigners, *reports the [Red-Green Labour website](#)*.

Friends of the Earth *['FoE England, Wales & Northern Ireland' – Eds]* have issued a [press release here](#), condemning the decision and they may pursue legal action against the decision. Caroline Lucas *[Green Party of England & Wales MP – Eds]* has a [very good article in The Guardian](#).

This [Crowdfunder appeal](#) to raise funds for a legal appeal has been issued by South Lakes Action on Climate Change and is already close to its minimum target of £10,000. It should be supported urgently.

## Red-Green Labour spoke to Cumbrian climate activist Allan Todd about the decision and the ongoing campaign.

He told us that the decision didn't really come as much of a surprise. It was clear which way it was going to go when the decision was pushed back until after COP27, to avoid embarrassing the British government during the climate summit.

Judging from interactions on local social media, it is certainly the case that the mine enjoys some local support. Beyond the usual suspects of climate deniers, many people have



fallen for the argument that it will create much needed employment in the area, and also that the coal is only for the production of British steel and will replace imported coal from China and elsewhere.

Allan says it is a bit of an uphill battle to counter some of these arguments online but he has been very active in trying. So much so that he has been blocked on Facebook by Copeland's directly elected Mayor, a so-called Independent who immediately joined the Tories after being elected a second time, and who has been a proponent of the mine. Other local politicians from both the Tories and Labour support the mine, but Allan knows of at least some who privately oppose it but have not come out against it publicly for pragmatic electoral reasons.

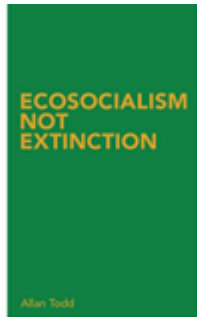
So, there is a huge job to be done to try to shift public opinion away from support for this project. The basic facts are that up to 85% of the coal is ear-marked for export anyway, and of the remaining 15%, the two main steel producers neither need it, nor want it – particularly as its sulphur content is too high, making it unsuitable for steel production.

The mine is expected to create 500 new jobs. However, feasibility studies have shown that between [6,000 and 9,000 jobs could be created](#) in the green sector – wind and tidal power generation, and retrofitting homes with insulation. Insulation is a pressing need in West Cumbria, where fuel poverty has long been a problem.

In terms of the campaign, there will be demonstrations in the coming days – [in Penrith and also at the site of the mine](#). However, this is a fairly remote coastal area, isolated and without much chance of public interaction. Allan contrasts this to the Green Mondays which he organised at the fracking site at Preston New Road which took place in full public view. With the moratorium on fracking still in place, the anti-

fracking campaigners from the Fylde coast will be able to lend their solidarity to the struggle in Cumbria.

Allan's new book "Ecosocialism Not Extinction" is available from [Resistance Books](#).



Reproduced from Red-Green Labour website, original here: <https://redgreenlabour.org/2022/12/09/cumbria-coal-mine-sparks-widespread-outrage/>

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**COP27 was a spectacular failure – boycotting future COP conferences, however, would only compound the problem**

[Alan Thornett](#) offers his thoughts on a troubling end to COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh.

COP27, the 27th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, held last month in Sharm El-Sheikh to confront the planetary emergency caused by climate

change, failed spectacularly in the face of the most challenging set of circumstances a COP conference had faced since the Framework Convention was launched at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

It faced a critical situation from the outset, both in terms of the global geopolitical situation today arising from Putin's invasion of Ukraine and the stage that has been reached in the implementation of the UN COP process itself.

Only a last-minute agreement to establish a "loss and damage" (or "reparations") fund into which the rich countries, which are the most responsible for climate change, would subscribe to help the poor countries, which are the least responsible for global warming, minimise and mitigate the impact of climate change and transition to renewable energy saved COP27 from total ignominy.

Prior to the COP, UN Secretary General António Guterres had argued strongly for such an agreement, warning that unless there is what he called an "historic pact" between the rich and poor countries on this issue, the planet could already be doomed.

The creation of such a fund had been scandalously kept off the agenda by the rich countries for 30 years and was only forced onto it this year after heavy pressure from the developing countries. There was no agreement, however, as to how much money should be paid into it, who should pay it, or on what basis. It was still a step forward, but it was the only one that could be claimed at this conference.

Arguments will continue about the size of the fund and which countries will benefit, and there is a proposal to ask the International Panel on Climate Change (the IPCC) to prepare a recommendation for the COP28 next year in Dubai in the UAE.

When it came to carbon emissions reduction, however, COP27 was an unmitigated disaster.

The UN carbon emissions reduction plan—the so-called “ratcheting up” process adopted at COP21 in Paris in 2015—which required *each member state to determine its own carbon reduction target—or* “Nationally Determined Contributions”—and then enhance them annually at implementation conferences that would be held for that purpose—had fallen apart before the conference was open.

Exactly what happened is not clear. What is clear is that the pledges made in Sharm El-Sheikh, far from building on those made in Glasgow, were well behind those made there, and that the process had suffered a disastrous retreat.

## **The energy debate**

The general debate on energy was also a disaster. Not only had the Egyptian Presidency produced a draft text that blatantly favoured the oil and gas petro-states and the fossil fuel industries in the region, but it had also opened the door to the biggest contingent of fossil fuel lobbyists that a COP conference had ever seen. All the world’s biggest oil and gas producers were there in force, and they used it to the full. Saudi Arabia (no less) ran an event to promote the “circular carbon economy,” under which carbon capture, hydrogen, and other bogus technologies were scandalously presented as clean.

A major target for them was the 1.5°C maximum temperature increase that had also been agreed in Paris. The session dealing with this became so heated that the EU threatened to walk out at one point if the 1.5°C maximum was not protected. Although a reference to 1.5 °C has remained in the final text, the language is ambiguous and widely regarded as unreliable.

The agreement in Glasgow, which for the first time named (and shamed) coal, gas, and oil as major threats to the future of the planet and additionally, in the case of coal, fixed a date for ending its use altogether, was also under attack. In the end, Saudi Arabia and other petro-states, along with China,

Russia, and Brazil, who had been campaigning for their removal, were able to get rid of it. Fossil fuels that had been declared obsolete or obsolete in Glasgow had been rehabilitated in Sharm el-Sheikh. To add insult to injury, the conference agreed to define natural gas as a renewable energy source.

Alok Sharma, no less, the UK's (Boris Johnson appointed) president of COP26, recently sacked from the cabinet by Sunak—but who appears to have become more strongly committed to the cause having been appointed as a stop-gap—was visibly outraged by what had happened to the energy text and lambasted the conference in the closing session:

*“Those of us who came to Egypt to keep 1.5C alive, and to respect what every single one of us agreed to in Glasgow, have had to fight relentlessly here to hold the line. We have had to battle to build on one of the key achievements of Glasgow, including the call on parties to revisit and strengthen their “Nationally Determined Contributions.”*

Repeatedly banging the table, he said:

*“We joined with many parties to propose a number of measures that would have contributed to this. Emissions peaking before 2025, as the science tells us is necessary – NOT IN THIS TEXT. A clear follow-through on the phase down of coal – NOT IN THIS TEXT. A commitment to phase out all fossil fuels – NOT IN THIS TEXT. The energy text, he said had been weakened in the final minutes of the conference to endorse “low-emissions energy”, which can be interpreted as a reference to natural gas.*

The result is a disaster and will directly lead to more death, destruction, poverty, and people having to leave their homes. Climate events become ever more severe as constraints on carbon emissions are lifted. It will speed up the arrival of

tipping points that can take climate chaos out of control—possibly disastrously so. It will also give succour to the climate deniers and offset the defeats they suffered in Paris and Glasgow.

*It's true that this COP27 faced very difficult conditions.* Putin's war triggered an obscene scramble back to fossil energy when it is abundantly clear the only answer to either the economic or the environmental crisis is a rapid transition to renewable energy, which is getting cheaper all the time. The UK government immediately issued 90 new gas and oil extraction licences for the North Sea and is seeking an agreement to import large quantities of fracked natural gas from the USA.

Putin's war, however, was there long before COP27, and the Egyptian organisers did nothing to counter it. In fact, they cynically exploited it for their own ends in order to get emissions restrictions lifted or watered down.

## **So where do we (and the movement) go from here?**

One thing that must be avoided as a result of all of this is a boycott of future COP conferences or the entire COP process by either the radical left or the wider movement. It would simply compound the problem. It was being discussed widely before Sharm El-Sheikh, and it has continued since, both within the radical left and in the broader movement. Greta Thunberg called for it before Sharm El-Sheikh, and George Monbiot advocates it in his November 24 Guardian article.

A boycott by the radical left would primarily be an act of self-harm (or self-isolation), whereas a boycott by the wider movement would demobilise the climate struggle at a critical juncture. Most climate campaigns and NGOs would refuse to follow such a call anyway. The front-line countries certainly

would do so because they see the COP process, with all its problems, as their only chance of survival. That is why they mount such ferocious battles at every COP conference.

There has also been a major change in the climate struggle since the 2015 Paris Accords. This is because the job of the UN COP process has changed from agreeing on a plan to cut carbon emissions (the Paris Accords) to convincing 190 countries with different political systems and vested interests to accept their responsibilities and carry them out. This is a huge task, not least given adverse global geopolitical conditions.

It is clear that the UN has failed to do this, and it is a big unresolved problem. It is important that the left and the climate movement recognise this reality. It is pointless to pretend that this problem does not exist. That they are simply refusing to act when all they would have to do if they wanted to resolve climate change is snap their fingers—which is exactly what George Monbiot argues in his Guardian article. He puts it this way:

*“So what do we do now? After 27 summits and no effective action, it seems that the real purpose was to keep us talking. If governments were serious about preventing climate breakdown, there would have been no Cops 2-27. The major issues would have been resolved at Cop1, as the ozone depletion crisis was at a single summit in Montreal”.*

(He is referring to the 1987 UN Montreal Protocol which banned the use of ozone depleting substances in order to protect the ozone layer that was threatening the future of the planet.)

This is glib in the extreme since there is absolutely no comparison between banning a substance that was easy to replace with no major consequence to anyone involved and abolishing fossil fuels, to which the planet has been addicted for 100 years and has massive vested interests behind it. If

you misunderstand (or misrepresent) the scale of the problem, it is hard to contribute to its solution.

## The key strategic dilemma

What we actually face is some hard strategic choices. The problem, as I [argued in my first article](#), is that only governments—and ultimately governments prepared to go on a war footing to do so—can implement the structural changes necessary to abolish carbon emissions and transition to renewable energy in the few years that science is giving us. The radical left can't do it, the wider movement can't do it, and a mass movement can't do it—other than by forcing governments to act.

We are facing a planetary emergency. And under these conditions, it is only the UN Framework Convention—or something with a similar global reach and authority —organised on a transnational basis that is capable of addressing the 190 individual countries that will need to be involved and convinced if it is to be effective.

In terms of the climate justice movement, it is also the only forum through which the climate movement can place pressure and demands on the global elites and around which we can build the kind of mass movement that can force them to take effective action.

A socialist revolution (unfortunately) is not just around the corner, but the task we face is time-limited. We have less than ten years to stop global warming; remember, an ecosocialist society can't build on a dead planet.

The task we face, therefore, whether it fits our plans or not or whether we like it or not, is to force the global elites (however reluctantly) to introduce the structural changes necessary to halt climate change within the timescale science is giving us, and we can't do that by turning our backs on the



COP process; we can only do that by engaging with it more effectively and building a mass movement to force it to act against the logic of the capitalist system that they embrace.

## **What kind of mass movement?**

Everyone in this debate argues that a powerful mass movement will be needed to force the change that is necessary in this struggle—including George Monbiot. It is an aspiration, however, that begs many questions. What kind of mass movement do we need? It would have to be the largest coalition of progressive forces ever assembled (because we have to save the planet), so it would not be socialist at first, a movement capable of confronting the kinds of societal breakdowns that are likely as climate impacts worsen. But how would it come to be, and how would its future path be decided?

Such a movement must include those defending the ecology and climate of the planet in any number of ways. It must include the indigenous peoples who have been the backbone of so many of these struggles, along with the young school strikers who have been so inspirational over the past two years. And it should include the activists of XR who have brought new energy into the movement in the form of non-violent direct action.

Movements that emerge spontaneously are more likely to move to the right than to the left, depending on the experiences gained by the forces during their formation and the balance of political forces within them; the strength of the socialist (or indeed ecosocialist) forces within such a movement will be determined, at least in part, by the role such forces have played in the movement's development and the political legacy they have been able to establish. It must also have a progressive political and environmental driving force within it that fights for an environmentally progressive direction of travel.

Forcing major structural change against the will of the ruling

elites will not only need a powerful mass movement behind it but also an environmental action programme behind it such as abolishing fossil fuels, making a rapid transition to renewables, ensuring a socially just transition, making the polluters pay, and retrofitting homes that can command mass support, not just amongst socialists and environmental activists but amongst the wider populations as they are impacted by the ecological crisis itself.

The key to this is to make fossil fuels far more expensive than renewables by means that are socially just, that redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor, that can bring about a big reduction in emissions in the time available, and (crucially) are capable of commanding popular support. This means heavily taxing the polluters to both cut emissions and ensure that they fund the transition to renewables.

As long as fossil fuel remains the cheapest way to generate energy, it is going to be used. An important mechanism, therefore, for bringing about big reductions in carbon emissions in a short period of time must be carbon pricing—making the polluters pay. This means levying heavy taxes or fees on carbon emissions as a part of a strongly progressive and redistributive taxation system that can win mass popular support.

One proposal on the table in this regard is James Hansen's fee and dividend proposition. It provides the framework for very big emissions reductions, here and now while capitalism exists, and on the basis of a major transfer of wealth from the rich to the poor (as argued above) in order to drive it forward.

As he recognises, it would need to go along with a crash programme of renewable energy production to meet the demand that his incentives would create. It would also need a major programme of energy conservation, a big reduction in the use of the internal combustion engine, the abolition of factory

farming, and a big reduction in meat consumption.

## Conclusion

The UN has made a unique contribution to the struggle against climate change, a capitalist institution as it inevitably is, having identified the problem soon after it entered public consciousness 32 years ago. It has confronted opposition from many of its member states, and it has been successful, along with its specialist divisions such as the IPCC, in winning the war both against the climate deniers—who were massively backed by the fossil fuel producers for many years—and in winning the scientific community very strongly over to the climate struggle, without which we would not be where we are today.

It has also been key—along with relentless pressure from the ecological crisis itself—in transforming global awareness of climate change to a level without which the options we are discussing today would not exist.

Today, however, the UN faces a pivotal moment. Its carbon reduction strategy has fallen apart, thanks to the Paris Accords and the Glasgow Agreements. Unless this is addressed urgently, it could paralyse the UN's environmental work for many years. It could weaken the global justice movement and open the door to increasingly disastrous climate events, leading directly to tipping points that could take climate chaos out of control.

Unless drastic changes are made, not only the Paris Accords and the Glasgow Agreements will be rendered obsolete, but also the entire approach to climate change adopted in 1992 under the UN Framework Agreement on Climate Change; the 1997 Kyoto Agreement.

The UN must stop handing COP conferences over to countries that cannot:

- Support the project the UN is collectively seeking to promote
- Ensure the basic right to campaign and protest
- Support the project the UN is collectively seeking to promote
- Drastically limit fossil fuel lobbies the kind of access to its conferences
- Seek to ensure that the UN's carbon reduction project is a success.

A very good start would be to accept Lula's offer to hold the 2025 COP in the Amazon rain forest, which would be a huge boost to the movement.

Guterres told us in his opening speech in Sharm El-Sheikh that "the clock is ticking." We are in the fight of our lives, and we are losing. Greenhouse gas emissions keep growing. Global temperatures keep rising, and our planet is fast approaching tipping points that will make climate chaos irreversible. We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator.

In his closing speech, he told us that:

*"Our planet is still in the emergency room. We need to drastically reduce emissions now – and this is an issue this COP did not address. The world still needs a giant leap on climate ambition."*

He was absolutely right on both counts. His commitment and his passion for the cause have never been in doubt. His task now must be to make the necessary changes in order for his warnings to be translated into actions by making the UN COP carbon reduction process fit for purpose in terms of the challenges we face in the twenty-first century.

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This article was originally published on Alan Thornett's [ecosocialist discussion blog](#). This version is reprinted from the website of Anti\*Capitalist Resistance (a revolutionary ecosocialist organisation in England and Wales): <https://anticapitalistresistance.org/cop27-was-a-spectacular-failure-boycotting-future-cop-conferences-however-would-only-compound-the-problem/>

Alan Thornett was a prominent trade union leader in the 1970s in Britain and is the author of "[Facing the Apocalypse: Arguments for Ecosocialism](#)" (£15), published by [Resistance Books](#), and several volumes of [memoirs of trade union struggles](#).

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## **COP27 (Climate) – Fossil victory in Sharm el-Sheikh: only the fight remains**

Daniel Tanuro writes on the COP27.

A few days before the opening of COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, I wrote that this conference would be a "new height of greenwashing, green capitalism and repression". It was a mistake. Greenwashing and repression were more than ever on the shores of the Red Sea, but green capitalism suffered a setback, and fossils won a clear victory.

In matters of climate, we can define green capitalism as the fraction of employers and their political representatives who claim that the disaster can be stopped by a market policy that encourages companies to adopt green or "low carbon" energy

technologies, so that it would be possible to reconcile economic growth, growth in profits and rapid reduction in emissions, and even to achieve “net zero emissions” in 2050. This component, known as “mitigation” of climate change, is then supplemented by a so-called “adaptation” component to the now inevitable effects of global warming, and a “funding” component (mainly aimed at southern countries). On these two levels too, the proponents of green capitalism believe that the market can do the job – they even see an opportunity for capital.

## **From Copenhagen to Paris, from “top down” to “bottom-up”**

The agreement reached in Paris at COP21 (2015) was typically a manifestation of this policy. It stipulated that the parties would commit to taking action to ensure that global warming “remains well below 2°C, while continuing efforts not to exceed 1.5°C”. It should be remembered that COP19 (Copenhagen, 2009) had buried the idea of a global distribution of the “2°C carbon budget” (the quantity of carbon that can still be sent into the atmosphere to have a reasonable probability of not exceeding 2°C during this century) according to the responsibilities and the differentiated capacities of the countries. Such a global distribution was (and remains) the most rational approach to combining climate efficacy and social justice, but this “top-down” approach involved settling the accounts of imperialism, which the United States and the European Union European did not want at any price. COP20 (Cancun, 2010) therefore adopted a “bottom-up” approach, more compatible with the neoliberal air of the time: each country would determine its “national contribution” to the climate effort, and we would see, in the course of the annual COP, 1°) if the sum of the efforts is sufficient; 2) if the distribution of efforts complies with the principle of “common but differentiated responsibility” which is enshrined in the Framework Convention on Climate (UN, Rio, 1992).

As a reminder, this Framework Convention affirmed the will of the parties to avoid “a dangerous anthropogenic disturbance of the climate system”. Six years after Copenhagen, twenty-three years after Rio, Paris finally came to clarify a little what should be understood by this. This is the formula that we recalled above: “stay well below 2°C while continuing efforts not to exceed 1.5°C...”. But one ambiguity hits you in the face: at the end of the day, where is the threshold of dangerousness? At 2°C or 1.5°C? Asked to shed light on the answer to be given to this question, the IPCC submitted a specific report from which it is very clear that half a degree more or less leads to enormous differences in terms of impact. In the process, COP26 (Glasgow, 2021) gave satisfaction to the representatives of the small island states who are sounding the alarm bell: we must stay below 1.5°C of warming.

But how to do it? The gap between the “national contributions” of the countries and the path to follow to stay below 1.5°C (or to exceed this threshold only very slightly, with the possibility of going back below quite quickly) is an abyss: on the basis of the national contributions, warming will easily exceed the objective. The drafters of the Paris agreement were aware of this “emission gap”. They therefore decided that the parties’ climate commitments would be subject to an “ambition-raising” exercise every five years, in the hope of gradually bridging the gap between the commitments and the objective to be achieved. Problem: six years later, the objective to be reached (1.5°C maximum) has become much more restrictive, and the time available to reach it has become ever shorter.

## **From Paris to Glasgow: “raising ambitions”?**

In Glasgow, the message from scientists was crystal clear: a) global emissions reductions must start now, b) the global peak must be reached no later than 2025, c) CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (and methane!) must decrease by 45 per cent globally by 2030, and

d) climate justice implies that the richest one per cent divides its emissions by thirty while the poorest 50 per cent will multiply them by three. All this, without mentioning the gigantic efforts to be made in terms of adaptation and financing, particularly in poor countries...

In this context, Glasgow could only note the accelerated obsolescence of the five-year strategy of “enhancing ambitions” adopted in Paris: no one could seriously claim that a round table every five years would make it possible to fill the emissions gap. In a very tense context, the British Presidency then proposed that the “mitigation” component be subject to review every year during the “decisive decade” 2020-2030, and this procedure was adopted. The presidency also proposed to decide on the rapid elimination of coal but, on this point, it came up against a veto from India, so that the participants had to content themselves with deciding on a reduction (“phasing down”) rather than an elimination (“phasing out”) of the use of this fuel.

## **In Sharm el-Sheikh: place your bets, there's no more time left**

At the end of COP27, the results are quite clear: there is almost nothing left of these commitments made in Glasgow.

The annual raising of ambitions has not taken place. All the countries should have updated their “national contributions”: only thirty complied with the exercise, and even then, very insufficiently (see my article preceding the COP). It is very likely that this attempt will be the last and that we will henceforth be content with the process of five-year reviews provided for by COP21... while hypocritically pretending to ignore the impossibility by this means of respecting the 1.5°C limit!

COP26 had adopted a “mitigation work programme” which COP27 was supposed to implement. It was content to decide that the



process would be “non-prescriptive, non-punitive” and “would not lead to new objectives”. Moreover, the objective of the 1.5°C maximum, adopted in Glasgow, came very near to being explicitly called into question (it was explicitly called into question, outside the plenary session, by the representatives of Russia and Saudi Arabia, not to mention the trial balloons launched by China and India at certain G20 meetings).

Nothing was decided to materialize the “phasing down” of coal. The Indian delegation, cleverly, proposed a text on the eventual phasing out of all fossil fuels (not only coal, but also oil and gas). Surprise: eighty countries, “developed” and “developing”, supported it, but the Egyptian presidency did not even mention it. The final statement says nothing about it. The term “fossil fuels” appears only once in the text, which calls for “accelerating efforts to reduce (the use of) coal without abatement and the elimination of inefficient subsidies to fossil fuels”. The formula is strictly identical to that which was adopted in Glasgow... (the expression “coal without abatement” refers to combustion installations without CO2 capture for geological sequestration or industrial use...). According to some leaks from the debates between heads of delegations, the Saudis and the Russians opposed any further mention of fossil fuels in the text. The Russian representative is said to have even declared on this occasion: “It is unacceptable. We cannot make the energy situation worse” (*Carbon brief*, Key Outcomes of COP27). It’s the pot calling the kettle black!

We thought we had seen everything in terms of greenwashing, but no: some decisions taken in Sharm -el-Sheikh open up the risk that pollution rights could be counted twice. Paris had decided on the principle of a “new market mechanism” to take over from the CDM (Clean Development Mechanism, set up by the Kyoto Protocol). From now on, the rights market will have two speeds: on the one hand a market for emission credits, on the other hand a free market for “mitigation contributions”, on

which nothing stands in the way of the so-called emission reductions being counted twice (once by the seller and once by the buyer!). In addition, countries that conclude bilateral emission reduction agreements will be free to decide that the means implemented are “confidential”... and therefore unverifiable!

The very fashionable theme of “carbon removal” from the atmosphere considerably increases the risks of greenwashing on the emission credits market. Several methods and technologies could theoretically be used, but there is a great danger that they will serve as a substitute for reducing emissions. So, things have to be very strictly defined and framed. Especially when they involve the use of land areas for energy purposes, because this use obviously risks coming into conflict with human food production and the protection of biodiversity. A previously designated technical body was to look into the problem. It is faced with such a mass of proposals which are contested, or which have never been tested, that the worst is to be feared, pushed forward by an alliance between fossil fuels and agribusiness.

## **“Loss and damage”: the tree that hides the forest**

The media made much of the decision to create a fund for “loss and damage”. This is a demand that poor countries and small island states have been putting forward for thirty years: the climatic disasters that they are experiencing are costing them dearly, whereas they are the product of the warming caused mainly by the developed capitalist countries; those responsible must therefore pay, through an ad hoc fund. The United States and the European Union have always opposed this demand, but in Sharm el-Sheikh, the pressure from “developing” countries was too strong, it was no longer possible to quibble: either a fund was created, or it was the end of the COP process and a deep split between North and South. You

should know that this “South” includes countries as different as the oil monarchies, China, and the so-called “least developed” countries... To prevent all this little world from forming a bloc supported by the “anti-Western” discourse of the Kremlin, Western imperialism could not afford to do nothing. The EU unblocked the situation by setting the following conditions: 1°) that the fund be supplemented by various sources of financing (including existing sources, and others, “innovative”); 2) that its interventions benefit only the most vulnerable countries; 3°) that the COP “enhances the ambitions” of mitigation. The first two points have been met, not the third.

The creation of the fund is undoubtedly a victory for the poorest countries, increasingly impacted by disasters such as the floods that recently hit Pakistan and Niger, or the typhoons that are increasingly ravaging the Philippines. But it is a symbolic victory, because COP27 only took a vague decision of principle. Who will pay? When? How much? And above all: to whom will the funds go? To the victims on the ground, or to the corrupt intermediaries? On all these issues, we can expect tough battles. Saudi Arabia, the Emirates and Qatar will refuse to pay, citing the fact that the UN defines them as “developing countries”. China will most likely do the same, arguing that it is contributing through bilateral agreements, as part of its “New Silk Roads”. It is not tomorrow or the day after that capitalism will take its responsibilities in the face of the catastrophe for which it is responsible and which is destroying the existence of millions of men and women, in the South, but also in the North (even though the consequences there are, for the moment, less dramatic)...

The cries of victory over the “loss and damage” fund are all the less justified since the other promises in terms of financing are still not honoured by the rich countries: the hundred billion dollars a year are not paid into the Green Fund for the Climate, and the commitment to double the

resources of the adaptation fund has not materialized.

## **A victory for fossils, acquired in the name of... the poorest!?**

This is not the place to go into more detail, other publications have done it very well (*Carbon Brief*, *Home Climate News*, CLARA, among others). The conclusion that emerges is that the climate policy of green capitalism, with its three components (mitigation, adaptation, financing) suffered a failure in Sharm el-Sheikh. Champion of green capitalism, the European Union almost walked out and slammed the door behind it. On the other hand, COP27 ended in a victory for fossil capital.

This victory is first and foremost the result of the geopolitical context created by the exit (?) from the pandemic and accentuated by the Russian war of aggression against the Ukrainian people. We have entered a conjuncture of growing inter-imperialist rivalries and all-out rearmament. The wars, so to speak, are still only local, and not all have yet been declared, but the possibility of a conflagration haunts all capitalist leaders. Even if they do not want it, they are preparing for it, and this preparation, paradoxically, implies both the acceleration of the development of renewable energies and the increased use of fossil fuels, and therefore a considerable expansion of the possibilities of profit for the big capitalist groups of coal, oil, gas... and the finance capital behind it. It is no coincidence that, a year after Glasgow, the balloon of Mark Carney 's GFANZ (Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero) is deflating: banks and pension funds are less willing than ever to comply with UN rules ("Race for Zero net") on the banning of fossil fuel investments...

Secondly, it is the result of the very nature of the COP process. From Paris onwards, the capitalist sponsorship of

these summits has experienced explosive growth. In Sharm el-Sheikh, it seems that quantity has turned into quality. Of the twenty corporate sponsors of the event, only two were not directly or indirectly linked to the fossil fuel industry. The industrial coal, oil and gas lobbies had sent more than 600 delegates to the conference. To this must be added the “fossil moles” in the delegations of many countries (including representatives of the Russian oligarchs under sanctions!), not to mention the official delegations composed solely of these “moles”, in particular those of the fossil monarchies of the Middle East. All this fossil scum seems to have changed tactics: rather than denying climate change, or its “anthropogenic” origin, or the role of CO<sub>2</sub>, the emphasis is now on “clean fossils” and technologies of “carbon removal”. The delegation of the Emirates (one thousand delegates!) thus organized a “side-event” (on the sidelines of the official programme) to attract partners to collaborate on a vast project of “green oil” consisting (stupidly, because the technology is known) of injecting CO<sub>2</sub> into the oil deposits, to bring out more oil... the combustion of which will produce more CO<sub>2</sub>. The *Financial Times*, which is, it will be agreed, above all suspicion of anti-capitalism, was not afraid to go to the heart of the problem: the grip of fossils on the negotiations has grown so much that COP27 was in fact a trade fair for investments, in particular in gas (“green energy”, according to the European Union!), but also in oil, and even in coal (*Financial Times*, 26/11/2022).

A third factor came into play: the role of the Egyptian presidency. During the final plenary, the representative of Saudi Arabia thanked it, on behalf of his country and the Arab League. The dictatorship of General Sissi has indeed achieved a double performance: establishing itself as a country to be visited despite the fierce repression of all opposition, on the one hand; and on the other portraying himself as the spokesperson for peoples thirsty for climate justice, especially on the world’s poorest continent...even when he was

in fact acting in collusion with the most relentless of fossil exploiters, so wealthy that they no longer know what to do with their fortunes. In his final speech, the Saudi representative added: "We would like to emphasize that the Convention (the UN Framework Convention on Climate) must address the question of emissions, and not that of the origin of the emissions." In other words: let us exploit and burn fossil fuels, no need to remove this energy source, let's focus on how to remove CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere, by "offsetting" the emissions (capture and geological sequestration, tree plantations, purchases of "rights to pollute, etc.).

## **Only the mass struggle remains**

The Europeans, Frank Timmermans in the lead, are weeping and wailing: "the possibility of staying below 1.5°C is becoming extremely low and is disappearing", they say in substance. In effect. But whose fault is it? It would be too easy to unload the responsibility on others. In reality, these heralds of green capitalism are caught up in their own neoliberal logic: do they swear by the market? Well, fossils, which dominate the market, have dominated the COP... Time will tell if this is just a hiccup of history. COP28 will be chaired by the United Arab Emirates, so there is nothing to expect from that side. The answer, in fact, will depend on the evolution of the global geopolitical conjuncture, that is to say, ultimately, on social and ecological struggles. Either mass revolts will make the powerful tremble and force them to let go; in this case, whatever the source of the struggle (inflation? one assassination too many, as in Iran? a police confinement, as in China?), a space will open up to unite the social and the ecological, therefore also to impose measures in line with another climate policy. Or else the race to the abyss will continue.

Nobody, this time, dared to say, as usual, that this COP,

“although disappointing”, nevertheless constituted “a step forward”. In fact, two things are now crystal clear: 1°) there will be no real “steps forward” without radical anti-capitalist and anti-productivist measures; 2°) they will not emerge from the COP, but from the struggles and their convergence.

*27 November 2022*

*•This article was written for the [Gauche Anticapitaliste website](#) (Belgium supporters of the Fourth International). This version is republished from [International Viewpoint](#) online news magazine of the [Fourth International](#) : <https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7898>*

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## **Rising Clyde 8: latest issue of Scottish Climate Show on “COP27”**

The latest issue of Rising Clyde, the Scottish Climate Show hosted by Iain Bruce, is now available on YouTube via the Independence Live video service.

In this episode Iain is with Sabrina Fernandes in Rio and

Nathan Thanki in Ibagué, Colombia, talking about the few signs of hope among the failures of COP27 – the agreement on Loss and Damage, the return of Lula, and the blistering critique from President Gustavo Petro. .

**Watch the programme here:**

## **Previous Issues**

Previous Rising Clyde shows on Independence Live can be found here:

[\(1035\) SHOW: Rising Clyde – YouTube](#)

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**Radical Independence Campaign  
statement on UK Supreme Court  
ruling against a Scottish  
Independence referendum**

**This is a dark day for democracy  
and signals clearly the rotten,**



# **undemocratic nature of our broken, union state.**

The unelected judges of the UK Supreme Court are saying that the Scottish Parliament is permanently vassalled to Westminster and its undemocratic parliament, government and state – that the democratic rights of the Scottish people do not matter and can be ignored.

The court is saying that a parish or district council in England has the right to call a referendum on any issue, but what was claimed to be the “most powerful devolved parliament in the world” cannot.

The collaboration of both the UK government and the official opposition in thwarting democracy needs to be answered with a rising tide of protest by the Scottish people, starting at [the 15 rallies called in Scotland today](#).

If the UK government refuses to now give the referendum a legal basis and continues to try to thwart the Parliament, we call for massive and escalating protests across Scotland against this denial of democracy.

## **Let the People Decide – not the judges!**

The UK now has a prime minister and a head of state who are not prepared to subject themselves to a democratic vote, yet deny the people of Scotland their democratic rights.

The UK government’s refusal to countenance democracy also has a profound impact on rights not just in Scotland but across all parts of the UK state – especially for the people of Cymru/Wales and of Ireland in determining their own future.

# **When governments reject democracy, it is time for the people to rise up and say: enough is enough!**

The UK government is not only denying democracy by the Scottish people, but for all the citizens of the UK state in refusing to put its austerity plans and wage restraint to a vote in an election.

We therefore also call for full support for the battles of the people to win decent pay awards through strike action over the coming months and call for defence of public services against all cuts.

Make the rich companies and individuals who have benefited from profiteering from the crisis pay for it, not force ordinary people to choose between eating and heating over this winter!

RIC will support a campaign of mass direct action – strikes, protests, rallies, civil disobedience – against this rotten undemocratic Tory government.

We call on the Scottish Government and the Westminster opposition to support such protests.

We welcome the SNP's backing for protest rallies in Scotland this evening over the Supreme Court, but also call on them to support the massive strikes voted for by workers that are due in Scotland over the coming weeks and months and to secure the resources to pay workers the inflation-related pay award they deserve.



Furthermore, following the dreadful rolling back at COP27 of international commitments on climate change and 1.5 degrees from the Glasgow COP last year, we call for an end to all new exploration licenses for fossil fuels in the North Sea, and for massive public investment in renewables, funding for a just transition for workers and for a massive publicly-funded programme of home insulation and other reduction measures on energy instead. We support direct action to achieve these goals.

Calls for the Scottish Government to press on with a non-sanctioned referendum in light of today's ruling are inarguably complicated by the necessary role of local authorities in organising the voting process, which could not be guaranteed in those circumstances.

Similarly, the SNP's suggestion that the next UK general election could be used as a proxy referendum may falter in a cost of living crisis and would certainly undermine the broad, non-partisan coalition of the grassroots independence movement – as well as putting us up against the [troubling introduction](#)

[of voter ID](#) for Westminster elections.

It is now time for a mass independence movement to mount the most effective challenge possible to the present Conservative UK government, not just on its undemocratic blocking of an independence referendum but also on its right-wing economic policies and their devastating impact on Scotland's people, which need to be opposed in the here and now not just in the future.

Reprinted from the Radical Independence Campaign:  
<https://ric.scot/2022/11/ric-statement-on-supreme-court-ruling/>

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## **23 November: Rallies called across Scotland and Europe over UK Supreme Court decision**

Rallies in support of Scottish Independence and self-determination have been called across Scotland and Europe for **Wednesday 23 November**, the day of the decision by the UK Supreme Court on whether to allow the Scottish Parliament the right to hold a second independence referendum.

The Scottish rallies have been called by an ad hoc group [Time for Scotland](#) in conjunction with local independence groups and will feature speakers from the independence movement reacting to the decision of the UK Supreme Court. A pro-EU campaign, Europe for Scotland will also hold meetings/rallies in five cities across the EU.

ecosocialist.scot will have a representative inside the UK Supreme Court in the morning (the judgement starts at 9.45am UK time) and you can follow our coverage on [Twitter](#) and [Mastodon](#). A full analysis of the implications of the verdict will follow on this website.

## **Rally locations**

The rallies are in the following locations (as at Monday 21 November 14:00) and full details can be found at the [Time for Scotland website](#).

**Edinburgh (main rally) – Holyrood Parliament 5:30pm – 7:30pm**

**Aberdeen – St Nicholas Square 5:30pm**

**Borders – Selkirk Square and on to Kirk o Forest 6.30pm**

**Dumfries – Midsteeples area in the town centre. Beside the Planestanes 5:30pm**

**Dundee – City Square, in front of the Caird Hall 5:30pm**

**Glasgow – Concert Hall steps  
Buchanan Street 5:30pm**

**Greenock – Lyle fountain in  
Cathcart Square 5:15pm for 5:30pm**

**Inverness – Inverness Townhouse  
Starts 6:30pm**

**Inverurie – Inverurie Town Hall  
5:30pm**

**Lochgilphead – Front Green  
Lochgilphead 12noon**

**Orkney – St Magnus Cathedral, Kirk  
Green 5:15pm**

**Perth – Concert Hall Plaza  
(outside Horsecross) 5:30pm**

**Skye – Portree Sheriff Court,  
Portree Square (plus street stall  
in square depending on weather  
conditions) 5:30pm**

The rallies/protests in Europe will be in the following

cities, full details from <https://twitter.com/ScotlandEurope>  
and on the [Europe for Scotland Facebook page](#)

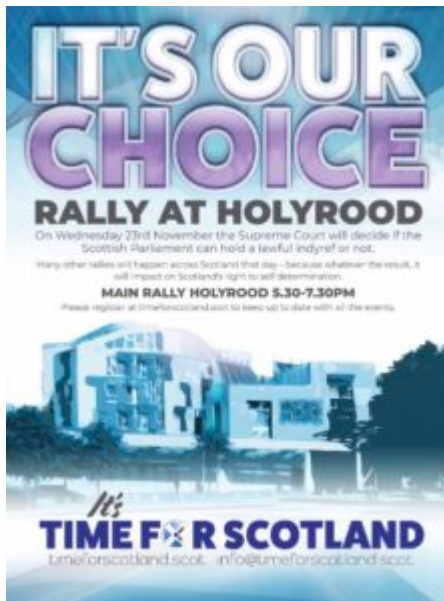
**Berlin – Sinti-und-Roma-Denkmal,  
Simsonweg, 10117 Berlin, Germany  
17:30 UTC+01**

**Brussels/Bruxelles – Coté Schuman,  
Parc Du Cinquantenaire 19:45  
UTC+01**

**Munich/München – Café am  
Glockenspiel Marienplatz 28  
5.5tock 18:30 UTC+01**

**Paris – The Auld Alliance 80 Rue  
francois Miron 19:00 UTC+01**

**Rome/Roma – Metro Colosseo Via dei  
Fori Imperiali 19:30 UTC+01**



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**Statement: The rich make us pay for their profits! Let's mobilize against the rise in the cost of living**

The following statement on the cost-of-living crisis across Europe has been prepared by sections of the [Fourth International](#) and is signed by [ecosocialist.scot](http://ecosocialist.scot).

**The rich make us pay for their profits!  
Let's mobilize against the rise in the cost of living**

*For several months now, strike movements and popular mobilizations have been developing in Europe – both inside and outside the European Union – to resist the explosion in the cost of living.*



The price of energy, food, rents, transport has increased over the past two years in all countries, aggravating the living conditions of the working classes already under heavy attack in recent years by precariousness, job cuts with Covid and a fall in real wages and benefits.

After inflation in the EU-27 and the UK of respectively 2.6% and 2.5% in 2021, in August 2022, the CPI year-on-year inflation rates reached at 10.5% and 9.9%, with 12.0% and 13.1% for food, 37.5% and 32.0% for fuels (44.6% and 48.8% in 15 months), (sources STATISTA and ONS). Electricity prices began to rise last autumn across Europe, with gas prices exploding during the same period (well before the Russian military invaded Ukraine), tripling over a year in Germany and the Netherlands, while energy prices doubled for households in Britain. In the all-Ireland energy market, prices have risen across the board, north and south, including in the important cost of heating oil, with government interventions stalled in the north by the collapse of political institutions and the ongoing impact of Brexit.

The driving force of this inflation is found in the stock market speculation on raw materials since the recovery in demand since the height of the Covid pandemic, in the context of an oligopolistic market. The catastrophic climate situation in recent months, drought and heat, explicit consequences of climate change, have worsened this situation, as of course the invasion of Ukraine by Putin's army. Global oil supply is set to tighten, intensifying concerns over soaring inflation after the OPEC+ group of nations (including Russia), faced with falling prices, announced at the beginning of September its largest supply cut since 2020. The move comes ahead of European Union embargoes on Russian energy over the Ukraine war. Speculation on energy prices and an explosion of profits distributed to the shareholders of large companies have resulted. Underlying all this, there is an epochal reduction in the availability of fossil fuels.

Marginal rates of profit have risen, not only in large transport, energy and pharmaceutical companies. Profits in 2021 have been historic. In an unprecedented move, [the five largest French banks](#) generated more than €31 billion in profits in 2021. [Spain's Santander](#) recorded €8.1 billion in net income, Italy's Intesa San Paolo €4.2 billion and [Germany's Deutsche Bank](#) €3.4 billion. Volkswagen's operating margin almost doubled to €20 billion. In the first half of 2022, Shell (Netherlands) leads the way with profits of \$20.6 billion, followed by BP (UK) with \$21.5 billion and TotalEnergies (France) with \$14.7 billion.

These few examples of dazzling enrichment, which is also accompanied by the personal enrichment of the propertied class, especially by distribution of dividends and increase of shares value, contrast with the low wage and benefit rises, the drastic loss of purchase power and labour rights, which have increased the impoverishment of the popular classes. The unequal distribution of wealth worsened during the beginning of the Covid years. This inequality has sharpened even more, particularly for women, young people, the racialized working classes, disabled people, and those populations living in the most deprived areas. [A study](#) predicts that by the end of the year 80% of households in the UK will be in energy poverty and a further explosion of energy prices is anticipated in 2023.

In this period, neoliberal governments have stepped up tax measures in favour of corporations, cut social spending and significantly increased military budgets – with the concomitant impact on inflation – further worsening the living conditions of the most precarious. The Ukraine war is instrumentalized by reactionary forces, multinational firms and imperialist powers to push their own agenda, arguing that all military budgets are aimed at helping Ukrainian resistance, which is obviously false. Solidarity against the Putin invasion does not prevent fighting against neoliberal and imperialist agendas and austerity policies directed

against the working classes.

Governments at different levels (national, regional, local) have introduced support aid systems, energy price ceilings or transport packages, so the weight of inflation on popular classes is uneven depending on the state, but these systems are temporary and do not make up for the increase in the cost of living.

Material conditions, including the interminable wait for the next pay or benefit cheque, have become the essential concern for the vast majority of the working class. Energy, food, housing costs are essential for everyone and these costs are all increasing to unbearable levels

Such a situation is intolerable.

Many struggles have taken place in recent months:

Across the UK state there has been a significant increase in national strikes since the spring despite the most repressive anti-strike laws in Europe – particularly in transport, on the post, in telecoms and in several major ports. A significant vote has just been won for strikes by university lecturers, while schoolteachers and health workers are also balloting. On the other hand, there have been signs of fragmentation of action on the rail and mail by the leaderships of those unions. There is a significant level of public support for the strikes that are taking place. This is combined with political action especially around the right to food and the right to housing. A six months' rent freeze has been imposed across Scotland by the devolved government there.

At the same time, we have seen the development of a movement to boycott the payment of energy bills with "[Don't Pay UK](#)" across Britain and in Italy, especially in Naples. In Germany, the demonstrations on the left have so far been limited to the oppositional left and some trade unions. This weakness is due mostly to the fact that the leadership of the big

industrial unions, the chemical workers union and the metal workers union, are embedded in a tripartite structure which is proposing relief measures for the population. The far right tries to profit from the huge price increases with demonstrations that outnumber those of the left. Huge demonstration occurred in the Czech Republic on 3 October. Several days of strikes called by the trade unions, demonstrations against the high cost of living have taken place or are scheduled (in France 29 Sept, 16 and 18 October, 21 September and 9 November in Belgium). In France, strikes developed around the oil refineries, with workers on strike for four weeks.

Attacks on living conditions will worsen further in the coming months, particularly with the planned increase in contracts and energy prices, and the end of measures which partially cushioned their impact.

In Italy, Germany, the Czech Republic, France, we see different political currents with different motivations attempting to divert popular classes' anger away from the capitalists responsible for this crisis and moreover refusing concrete measures to be taken immediately to protect and improve the level and conditions of life for the poorest and most precarious part of the population. At the time when the far right is seeking to exploit this situation, it is our responsibility to seek to organize the broadest class, social and political fronts to impose social demands, the requisition of the wealth produced and the organization of public services for the benefit of the popular classes by aiming at capitalist profits. We particularly want to see the whole movement devoting resources to organizing and supporting the most precarious.

In these mobilizations, we stand for:

- Increase in wages and benefits at least in line with inflation, with particular protection for those on low

incomes, and “uberized workers”, who are de facto employees of capitalist groups

- For automatic increases to keep pace with inflation – a sliding scale of wages and benefits with real measures of inflation determined by organized workers and benefit recipients themselves.
- Abolition of gender inequality at work; give effect to the principle of equal pay for men and women for work of equal value
- Access to free childcare for any child that needs it
- Abolition of VAT on food and energy and reduction and freeze of rents and prices of basic necessities
- Increase of effective tax rate on wealth and profit
- Free local and regional transport, growth of public transport systems
- Free power and heating corresponding to people’s basic needs
- Energy, banking and transport companies, to be socialized under democratic control by workers and users
- Audit of the public debt with citizen participation leading to the cancellation of the illegitimate debt as a way of finding more room for an increase in social spending and in the struggle against the ecological crisis.
- Massive investment into renewable energy, no new fossil fuels – for the decommissioning of nuclear.

At a time when ultraliberal governments are developing, attacking democratic rights, including in alliance with neo-fascist forces as in Sweden or Italy, it is vital that the anti-capitalist forces, the workers’ movement as a whole, develop an emergency plan against the high cost of living and

inflation to support all the already existing popular mobilizations and develop them while fighting attempts by the far right to exploit popular anger.

*16 November 2022*

## **Signatures**

**Belgium:** -SAP-Antikapitalisten / Gauche anticapitaliste

**England and Wales:** - Anticapitalist Resistance

**France:** - Ensemble ! (Mouvement pour une Alternative de Gauche et Ecologiste)

- NPA (Nouveau parti anticapitaliste)

**Germany:** - ISO (Internationale Sozialistische Organisation)

**Greece:** - TPT (Fourth International Programmatic Tendency) & Magazine "4" - Greek section of FI

**Italy :** - Sinistra Anticapitalista

**Norway:** - FIN (Fourth International in Norway, Forbundet Internasjonalt)

**Portugal :** - SPQI : collective of FI activists

-Toupeira Vermelha: collective of FI activists

**Scotland:** - ecosocialist.scot

**Spanish State:** - Anticapitalistas

**Sweden :** - Socialistik Politik

**Switzerland :** - BFS/MPS (Bewegung für den Sozialismus/mouvement pour le socialisme/movimento per il

socialismo)

– solidarités

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<https://fourth.international/en/485>

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## **COP27- still fiddling while the world burns**

The [ecosocialist alliance](#) issued a statement on 5 November 2022 for COP27, which was supported by [anti\\*capitalist resistance](#) and others.

## **COP27- Still Fiddling While the World Burns**

**COP 27, which will meet from the 6-18 November 2022, unfolds against a backdrop of growing climate chaos and ecological degradation. As this latest COP approaches, economic recession, increased poverty and war run alongside the multiple interlinked and inseparable crises of climate, environment, extinction and zoonotic diseases. We now face a global economic recession likely to be deeper even than that of 2008.**

**The economic spiral into recession will make addressing environmental crisis even more difficult, as states and corporations rush to increase fossil fuel production to offset the deepening energy crisis. They will try to make working people pay with their living standards and their lives, for the crisis of their rotten system. Resources which should be**

directed at adaptation and amelioration of the climate crisis will be diverted to war and fossil fuel production including dangerous Fracking and Underground Coal Gasification (UCG).

**We face increasingly destructive wars**, most notably in Ukraine which is destabilising world food supplies, and which has the potential for the use of nuclear weapons. War causes huge physical and social damage to people and societies and the military industrial processes produce 6% of all greenhouse gasses. The impact of wars in Ukraine, Yemen, Palestine and other places in terms of human and environmental cost, and on food production and energy costs, will continue to exacerbate the crises facing the environment and the global economy. Russia's invasion of Ukraine must not be the pretext for a rush to fossil fuels, new coal and gas and the resumption of fracking. Quite the opposite- it should be a spur to shift more rapidly towards renewables.

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

**The COP 27 conference will take place in an isolated, heavily policed tourist resort**, with only one major road in and out, and hotels charging rates that will likely push the entire COP beyond the means of many grassroots organisations, especially those from poorer countries in the Global South. The Egyptian government say there will be room for opposition, but what they mean, is that activists will be offered fake protests opportunities where state-affiliated NGOs demonstrate around the convention giving the impression of an independent local civil society. No real Egyptian or other opposition will be



allowed near Sharm El-Sheikh. We send solidarity to Egypt's climate campaigners, women's organisations, Trade Unionists and workers fighting for democracy.

**2022 has seen floods in Pakistan**, directly affecting thirty-three million people, Australia and elsewhere. We have seen wildfires, extreme heat, ice melt, drought, and extreme weather events on many continents, yet governments pursue still more fossil fuel production. 2022's summer of disasters broke records worldwide. In 2021, global sea level set a new record high and is projected to continue to rise. The United Nations reports that research shows that women and children are up to fourteen times more likely than men to die during climate disasters.

**The big issues of climate change will be debated in Egypt** but whatever is agreed, capitalism left to itself can at best mitigate, not end them. Environmental destruction is woven into the very fabric of the system itself. However, much big business resists, we will have to force it to act on a global scale. Ultimately, only the ending of capitalism itself and its replacement by democratic Ecosocialist planned production for need and not private profit can guarantee the necessary action.

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.

### **Sustainability and global justice**

The long-term global crisis and the immediate effects of catastrophic events impact more severely on women, children, elders, LGBTQIA+, disabled people and the people of First

Nations. An eco-socialist 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.

### **Action now to halt climate change!**

#### **We demand:**

- All new fossil fuels must stay in the ground – no new gas, coal, or oil! No to Fracking and UCG!
- 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.
- The retrofitting of homes and public buildings with insulation and other energy saving measures to reduce fuel use and to address fuel poverty.
- 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.
- No to ‘offsetting’ of carbon emissions- we need a real zero not net-zero.

## **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 massive reduction in meat and dairy production and consumption, with a view to its phasing out, 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.
- End 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 eco-socialist 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, using a free and fast broadband infrastructure.

- An end to ecologically and socially destructive extractivism, especially in the territories of Indigenous peoples and First Nations .

- Respect for the economic, cultural, political and land rights of Indigenous peoples and First Nations.

As eco-socialists 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 worker's and community organisations internationally, raising demands on governments and challenging corporations.

**If you would like to support the statement or contact Ecosocialist Alliance please email [eco-socialist-action@protonmail.com](mailto:eco-socialist-action@protonmail.com)**

Ecosocialist Alliance, October 2022

## **Groups**

[Left Unity](#), UK

[Anti-Capitalist Resistance](#), UK

[Green Left](#), UK

[Global Ecosocialist Network](#), International

[RISE](#), Ireland

[Parti de Gauche Marseille Nord](#), France

[Socialist Project](#), Canada

[Breakthrough Party](#), UK

[People Before Profit](#), Ireland

[Climate and Capitalism](#), International

[XR Camden](#), UK

[Anti-Fracking Nanas](#), UK

West Cumbria Friends of the Earth, UK

Save Euston Trees, UK

[Ecosocialist Alliance UK Facebook Group](#), UK

## **Individuals**

Beatrix Campbell, OBE, Writer, UK

George Monbiot, Environmental Writer & Activist, UK

Julia Steinberger, Professor of Ecological Economics, Lausanne University, Switzerland

Victor Wallis, author of Red Green Revolution, USA

Professor Krista Cowman ,Historian, UK

Marina Prentoulis, Associate Professor in Politics & Media, UEA; author of Left Populism in Europe, UK

Romayne Phoenix, Ecosocialist Campaigner, UK

Dr Jay Ginn, (retired academic researcher, UK

Alistair Sinclair Green Eco-Socialist Councillor, Lancaster City Council, UK

Clara Paillard, Unite the Union & Tipping Point UK, UK

Felicity Dowling, Left Unity Principal Speaker, UK

Derek Wall, Former GPEW Principal Speaker; Political Economy Lecturer, Goldsmiths; Author of Climate Strike,UK

Rob Marsden, Red Green Labour editorial board- personal capacity, UK

Jo Alberti, veteran left activist, UK

Doug Thorpe, Left Unity National Secretary, UK

Kevin Frea, Deputy Leader, Lancaster City Council, UK

Dee Searle, One Vote for the Planet activist, UK

Jim Hollinshead, Left Unity, UCU, UK

Ed Bober, UK

Patrick Fitzgerald, Artist, Vizcaya, Spain

Allan Todd, Climate & Anti-Fascist Activist; member of Left Unity's NC, UK

Gordon Peters, Ecosocialist activist, UK

Tim Dawes, Former Chair Green Party of England and Wales; Rtrd. Senior Local Govt. Officer/Consultant, UK

Joe Human, climate activist, UK

Fiona Prior, Climate activist, grandmother, UK

Peter Murry, Ecosocialist activist, UK

Lucy Moy-Thomas, Climate Emergency Camden, UK

Tina Rothery, Climate Campaigner, UK

Dr. Richard Nicholson, Haywards Heath Town Councillor, UK

Sally Lansbury, Labour Party Cllr., Allerdale Borough Council, UK

Deanna Austin-Crowe, Health Worker, UK

Chris Bluemel, Musician & Activist, UK

Lucy Early, Ecosocialist Alliance member, UK

Joseph Healy, International Officer of Left Unity & UNITE  
Regional Officer, UK

Al Barnes, Paramedic & XR Activist, UK

Steve Masters, Climate activist and Green party councillor, UK

Alice Brown, One Vote for the Planet, UK

Jane Walby, Global Justice Now, Camden Fairtrade Network, Debt  
Justice, UK

Dorothea Hackman, Save Euston Trees, UK

Penelope Read, Eco-Warrior, Actor & Musician, UK

Samantha Barnes, Solicitor, UK

Charlotte Christensen, Mum & Anarchist, UK

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