

The Plebs News



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Climate Change: The Great Challenge and COP 26



Hello! I'm Anne Grange and I'm the Climate Change Officer for Walkley Labour. I'm a keen environmentalist and there are lots of ways that people can get active for the environment, and there are lots of opportunities to do that over this coming month. I'm also an active member of Sheffield Greenpeace. If anyone would like to join us, please follow this link:

<https://greenwire.greenpeace.org.uk/s/group/0F94H000000CHglSAG/sheffield-greenpeace> or like us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/sheffieldgreenpeace/>

COP26 - You may have heard of the COP26 conference being held from the 31st October to the 12th November in Glasgow. It is the United Nations Climate Change Conference of Parties. The event starts with the World Leaders' Summit on the 1st-2nd November, followed by the UN process, from the 3rd to the 12th November. The UK is hosting the event, so this is a crucial opportunity for the UK government to encourage urgent global action for the climate.

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change, adopted by 196 countries at COP 21 in Paris, in December 2015, which entered into force on 4 November 2016. Its goal is to limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. Unfortunately, the governments which signed the deal aren't delivering the necessary emissions cuts to limit global warming, and change needs to happen fast. The world has the chance to get back on track at COP26, but that means that global governments have to make some big commitments, and act urgently.

Many environmental groups are heading to Glasgow for the conference, to show their support for urgent climate action. But you can play your part from Sheffield.

Walkley Litter Pick_ 24th October

Within Labour, I participated in the Labour for a Green New Deal meetings running up to the local elections, and I really want to join forces with other people within Walkley Labour who care for our planet. I wanted to do start with something practical. Walkley Labour is holding a litter pick at 10am on Sunday 24th October, starting at Bamforth Street tram stop. Please also bring drinks and a snack so we can stop for a chat together and have your say on climate change issues and local environmental issues. Litter grabbers and bags will be provided, but please bring your own gloves and hand sanitiser. <https://fb.me/e/1g1oeXvHz>

I'm also involved with Walkley Wombles, who meet for a litter pick on Walkley Green, opposite Asda on South Road at 11am on the first Sunday of every month. The Walkley Wombles Facebook Group . **See over for more**

Sheffield Climate Activities

Saturday 6th November is the Global Day of Action for Climate Justice, and Sheffield is part of it. Meet at 12pm on Devonshire Green. Everyone is welcome to take part and show that you want the world's governments, and especially the UK government, to take urgent action on climate change. I hope to see you there!

https://actionnetwork.org/event_campaigns/6-nov-global-day-of-action?nowrapper=true

Clang for the Climate: 30th October

As the world's leaders arrive in Britain on Saturday, 30th October, you are invited to Clang for Climate. This is a bit like the clapping for carers that happened in 2020, but the aim is to grab a pan to sound the alarm about climate breakdown. You might want to tell your neighbours about it first, or maybe we could organise a group clang on Walkley Green!

Paul Blomfield: Big Conversation on Climate

I have discovered that both Sheffield Heeley MP Louise Haigh and Sheffield Hallam MP Olivia Blake have recently held Big Green Conversation events, where local residents and businesses were invited to share their views and priorities on climate change, as well as making changes to their own lives that will help to address climate change, such as using public transport or walking or cycling more often. Our Labour Central MP, Paul Blomfield, is planning an Environment and climate emergency Big Conversation event with South Yorkshire Climate Coalition, which is great news, but there is no date set for it yet. Please register your interest for this and other Big Conversation events by following this link:

<https://www.paulblomfield.co.uk/the-big-conversation-report-2020/the-big-conversation-2021/>

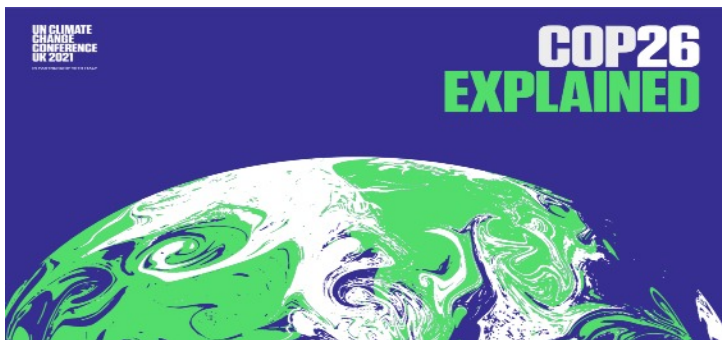


Sheffield Turns Out for Spanish Climate Walkers

Spanish activists are walking from Spain to COP26 in Glasgow and stopped off in Sheffield overnight Wednesday. On Thursday they were given bananas and hearts with messages. A great sendoff with singing and the samba band from trade unions and supporters.



If you need to get in touch with me to discuss anything to do with climate change and what Walkley residents can do about it, my email is anne.grange77@gmail.com



- Our goals for COP26
- The negotiations process
- What the UK is doing to tackle climate change

In November, the UK, together with our partners Italy, will host an event many believe to be the world's best last chance to get runaway climate change under control.

COP26 is the 2021 United Nations climate change conference

For nearly three decades the UN has been bringing together almost every country on earth for global climate summits – called COPs – which stands for 'Conference of the Parties'. In that time climate change has gone from being a fringe issue to a global priority.

This year will be the 26th annual summit – giving it the name COP26. With the UK as President, COP26 takes place in Glasgow.

In the run up to COP26 the UK is working with every nation to reach agreement on how to tackle climate change. World leaders will arrive in Scotland, alongside tens of thousands of negotiators, government representatives, businesses and citizens for twelve days of talks.

Not only is it a huge task but it is also not just yet another international summit. Most experts believe COP26 has a unique urgency.

To understand why, it's necessary to look back to another COP.

The importance of the Paris Agreement -COP21 took place in Paris in 2015.

For the first time ever, something momentous happened: every country agreed to work together to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees and aim for 1.5 degrees, to adapt to the impacts of a changing climate and to make money available to deliver on these aims.

The Paris Agreement was born. The commitment to aim for 1.5 degrees is important because every fraction of a degree of warming will result in the loss of many more lives lost and livelihoods damaged.

Under the Paris Agreement, countries committed to bring forward national plans setting out how much they would reduce their emissions – known as Nationally Determined Contributions, or 'NDCs'.

They agreed that every five years they would come back with an updated plan that would reflect their highest possible ambition at that time.

Glasgow is the moment for countries to update their plans

The run up to this year's summit in Glasgow is the moment (delayed by a year due to the pandemic) when countries update their plans for reducing emissions.

But that's not all. The commitments laid out in Paris did not come close to limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees, and the window for achieving this is closing.

The decade out to 2030 will be crucial.

So as momentous as Paris was, countries must go much further than they did even at that historic summit in order to keep the hope of holding temperature rises to 1.5 alive. COP26 needs to be decisive.

Whilst COP 26 is a meeting of world leaders many feel that they are not moving far enough or far enough to preserve the planet for our children. An alternative conference of groups from civil society will be making their voices heard in Glasgow



About COP26 Coalition

The COP26 Coalition is a UK-based civil society coalition of groups and individuals mobilising around climate justice during COP26. Coalition members include environment and development NGOs, trade unions, grassroots community campaigns, faith groups, youth groups, migrant and racial justice networks – to name a few.

Our aims

World leaders and experts will meet in Glasgow in November at the global climate talks, COP26.

Global problems need global solutions. The decisions made at COP26 will shape how governments respond (or not) to the climate crisis. They will decide who is to be sacrificed, who will escape and who will make a profit.

So far, governments have done too little too late: colluding with corporations and hiding behind green washed ‘solutions’ that actually don’t exist yet, that don’t address the scale of the problem, and in many cases rely on more exploitation of people and the planet. Justice won’t be handed to us by world leaders or delivered by corporations. Only we can imagine and build the future that works for all of us. The transformative solutions that we need to survive and build a more just and fair world can only be brought about through collective action, solidarity and coordination, from our local communities and international levels.

We are bringing together movements from across the world to build power for system change – indigenous movements, frontline communities, trade unions, racial justice groups, youth strikers, landworkers, peasants, NGOs, grassroots community campaigns, feminist movements, faith groups – to name a few. Wherever you are in the world, now is the time to join the fight for climate justice. We need all hands on deck: in workplaces, communities, schools, hospitals and across national borders. We will be putting indigenous, frontline and Global South communities front and centre. We need your help to amplify their voices and demands.

6 November: Join us in actions across the world so that we can be loud and clear to the world leaders discussing our future: we want climate justice now!

7-10 November: Join us for our People’s Summit for Climate Justice where the climate justice movement will be coming together to discuss, learn and strategize for system change. You can join in online from anywhere in the world, or in-person in Glasgow.

There's no choice between climate action and fairness — they're one and the same thing

There can be no more excuses from political leaders when it comes to tackling the climate catastrophe, writes JEREMY CORBYN MP

AS THE Labour conference meets, and with Conservative Party conference the following week, it is more urgent than ever that serious discussion and attention is devoted to the need for radical action to tackle the deepening global climate catastrophe.

With the 2021 United Nations climate change conference (also known as Cop26) to be held in Glasgow between October 31 and November 12, the eyes of the world will be on whether an agreement can be reached by international governments on the scale and speed of co-ordinated action that is needed to tackle climate change.

As UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres said this Tuesday, every day “we see the warning signs in every continent and region — scorching temperatures, shocking biodiversity loss, polluted air, water and natural spaces.”

This means that world leaders must now act together, or humanity is on track for a “hellscape” of temperature rise that will bring “catastrophe.”

The recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was a code red for humanity, but Boris Johnson's government and too many others around the world are still unwilling to face up to the scale of the challenge we face, instead diverting vital resources to nuclear weapons we can never use or refusing to stand up to the fossil fuel global corporations.

A recent report from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change outlines that current nation state commitments for Cop26 will lead to a 16 per cent rise in emissions by 2030, when they actually need to fall by a minimum of 45 per cent.

To be clear, the only targets that count at the Cop discussions are those that are science-based and can save our planet.

We have quite simply run out of time for presidents and prime ministers to be negotiating over what is “possible,” “realistic,” “affordable” and all the other euphemisms for not doing enough.

Too many governments are distracting from the urgency of the issue by talking about targets for 2050 or 2060, when this will be too late.

The time then for excuses is over — so what action do we need?

In the wealthiest countries in the world, such as ours, that have primarily caused the climate emergency, we need immediate investment, legislation, and innovation to start cutting emissions at least 7 per cent next year and every year thereafter.

The government should immediately budget for a green new deal that can deliver this, at the same time as creating good jobs and boosting living standards at this vital time for the economy.

As part of this immediate action, investment in and from the public sector must lead climate action.

As Labour's last two manifestos and plans for a "Green Industrial Revolution" made clear, the market has failed to do what is needed to tackle the climate emergency, and it will keep on failing.

Ever since Margaret Thatcher came to power, neoliberal and Conservative economists have told us that if everyone — meaning the wealthiest — is free to pursue their own material self-interests then everyone will be better off.

Climate change demonstrates just how big a fraud that right-wing ideology is.

We're in a climate emergency not because everyone has behaved irresponsibly, but because a tiny minority have indulged in such huge levels of consumption and waste that it has tipped the whole planet into a new geological age.

Political leaders have hidden for too long behind the fallacy that governments should only intervene to "correct market failure" and that only the private sector can innovate.

By ignoring climate change and following the profit opportunities of fossil fuels, the whole neoliberal economic model has led humanity to the brink of extinction.

In the wealthiest countries of the world, the first test of any government when it comes to what they are doing in terms of climate action is how they are spending Covid stimulus and recovery packages.

In many countries, levels of public investment in the economy are higher than they have ever been outside of world wars, but too much of this spending goes straight into the pockets of big private companies rather than being used to help people and planet.

If — instead of outsourcing and further enriching the billionaires — all stimulus and recovery spending was focused on the rapid expansion of a truly green and caring economy, we would have a serious chance of overcoming climate breakdown and tackling inequality.

But to date barely 10 per cent of stimulus globally is in any way green.

US President Joe Biden is trying to get through a multitrillion-dollar green infrastructure package in the US, but the British government is bailing out companies without any strings attached to ensure their future development is greener.

It is time, then, for a radical green new deal based on massive investment, with tackling inequality and injustice at its heart, both here and around the world. Investing in global healthcare must also be a crucial part of this.

Climate action can be key to making the more equal society we need. There's no choice between climate action and fairness — they're one and the same thing.

We must use the upcoming Cop26 talks in Glasgow as an opportunity to make the case for governments that are driven by the need to help people and planet, that set out the clear goals for society to overcome the climate crisis, and create a better future, reshaping a new economy and society.

COP26 Is Our Last Chance – We Can't Let the Tories 'Greenwash' it

By Olivia Blake, MP for Sheffield Hallam



Last month, the COP26 President and Conservative cabinet minister Alok Sharma set out his four priorities for this year's United Nations Climate Summit.

Writing in the Guardian, Sharma spoke of the need to 'take action today', finishing with a rallying call to turn 'ambition into action', because this is 'our last chance – and we must take it.'

Sharma is right. According to the 2018 IPCC report on climate change, humanity has twelve years to take action – this is our last decade to avert catastrophe, and since global CO2 emissions continue to rise, action must begin at COP26.

As co-hosts, Britain could break up the decades of missed targets and get us back on track with net-zero emissions, limiting the global rise in temperature to 1.5°C and curbing the worst effects of climate crisis.

But that's about all Sharma got right. If the government's track record on the climate are anything to go by, there is a very dangerous possibility that this summit will be more of the same – half-hearted targets, broken promises, undemocratic decision-making, and unjust outcomes.

It's down to climate activists and the labour movement to ensure this isn't the case. Historically, COP conferences have provided a focal point for climate movements. COP26 must build on and go beyond this.

We live in a different world than that which existed during the last talks. Re-energised by the youth strikes for climate, Extinction Rebellion, and the campaign for a socialist Green New Deal, our climate movement is much stronger.

We're also in the midst of another global crisis—the Covid-19 pandemic—which has demonstrated the painful realities of government inaction to billions of people.

In this time of crisis, we can and must use COP26 as an opportunity to push for a transformative, accountable, democratic and just response to the climate emergency.

As much as this summit is about setting decarbonisation targets and deciding how to finance the transition, COP26 is also our opportunity to present a vision of a fair and just society after the pandemic.

As well as rapidly phasing out fossil fuels and massively investing in renewable energies to actually 'build back better', we must break with the system that has wreaked havoc on people and the planet and build anew.

In the same way, COP26 will also be the first major opportunity for world leaders—and the fossil fuel companies who support them—to advocate a return to the old normal. Without strong opposition, we will see that 'build back better' will only ever mean carrying on as before, and we must absolutely refuse this reversion as a real solution.

We must also use this summit as an opportunity to call out government inaction and hypocrisy on a global stage, ensuring that all decisions made and targets set are accountable to the people.

The countdown to Cop26: can world leaders save the planet? - George Monbiot



Three weeks from today leaders will gather in Glasgow for the Cop26 climate summit. But will their individual pledges to reduce emissions carry enough weight to avert the growing threat of catastrophic global heating?

Next month, government officials from every country in the world will gather in Glasgow for the Cop26 climate conference to agree not on how to avert global heating (it's too late for that) but to try to find ways to limit the damage that we're living with, and that our children will live with.

The conference, delayed by a year because of Covid, is the first chance since leaders met in Paris in 2015 to hammer out an agreement on how their countries can limit emissions.

The Guardian's George Monbiot is a veteran of climate conferences and tells Michael Safi that, while his expectations are low, the only way the planet can avert catastrophe is to agree radical and far-reaching changes to our way of life.

Following the failure to reach a meaningful deal at the Copenhagen conference in 2009, Christiana Figueres was handed the job of executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and tasked with getting a deal in Paris. She tells Michael that in order to get an agreement that everyone can sign off on, one must consider every angle and go over every detail – right down to the size of the room and the shape of the tables.

For people around the world who feel powerless in the face of governments who are too slow to act, Monbiot has three words: "Mobilise, mobilise, mobilise."

[Listen to the Podcast](#)



How to Change Everything :The Young Human's Guide to Protecting the Planet and Each Other

By Naomi Klein Pre-order for 2022

Full of empowering stories of young leaders all over the world, this information-packed book from award-winning journalist and one of the foremost voices for climate justice, Naomi Klein, offers young readers a comprehensive look at the state of the climate today and how we got here, while also providing the tools they need to join this fight to protect and reshape the planet they will inherit.

What has climate change got to do with trade unions?



Trade unions already have plenty on their plate, with austerity, automation and low pay, and then Brexit to worry about but climate change is bigger than all these for a region.

Here in Yorkshire and the Humber region, the TUC is taking a proactive approach to tackling climate change.

Our region has probably the highest concentration of the UK's heavy industries and coal and gas power stations in the UK. This includes major power plants like Drax, as well as steel, cement and chemical works, glass manufacturers, and heavy energy users in brewing and food manufacture.

The regional TUC reckons that up to 28,000 people work in these major plants, and three or four times as many in their supply chains. No UK region has a bigger carbon footprint than this, or a bigger question to answer: How to protect and develop our foundation industries and deliver the jobs, skills and training for a just transition to a low carbon economy?

Sometimes this comes very close to home, as with the floods which hit Leeds over Christmas 2015. One particular story is still very fresh for those affected - an engineering company closed its plant on Kirkstall Road in the aftermath, with the loss of around 100 well-paid, highly skilled jobs. It was a plant that had provided several generations of employment and all the pride that came from making car parts that were used in popular cars.

The workers put a plan forward to keep the jobs, but the company moved the production elsewhere. Union officials on our Task Force are very clear this was due to climate change. They are desperate to make sure that similar disasters don't happen again – communities losing out through job losses, in which those most affected have no say.

One thing is for sure – 'business as usual' is not a viable strategy, so a Just Transition will be central to future economics. It's about protecting employment and enhancing the skills of existing workers and the generations to come to provide great jobs.

The recent United Nation's report warned there is only a dozen years for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5C, beyond which even half a degree will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people. Urgent action is needed in all sectors of the economy – in manufacturing, power supply, transport and energy savings.

There is every reason for trade unions to get involved.



Jenny Patient is the Climate Change Officer for the Yorkshire & Humber TUC and is currently studying for a Phd at Sheffield University and is part of the Low Carbon Task Force





Demand a just energy transition for all!



Cerro de Pasco mine, Peru. A source of transition materials used in "green" energy technologies.

Take action today by emailing UK COP president Alok Sharma to demand a just energy transition.

https://secure.waronwant.org/page/91801/action/1?ea.tracking.id=Email&utm_source=Email&utm_medium=WOW&utm_campaign=/024-Y21AQKicker&ea.url.id=5553119

Rising energy prices will leave millions in the UK worrying about heating their homes or putting food on the table this winter. Our broken energy system, which puts corporate profit above the needs, health and rights of people and the planet, has already left half the world's population trapped in poverty and denied access to clean and affordable energy.

The UK government claims to be a climate leader with plans to mobilise huge investments in 'clean energy.' However, their dirty secret is that they are still backing new fossil fuel projects and their vision for the transition to renewables is rooted in exploitation, extraction and injustice. Intensifying the unsustainable mining of so-called transition metals and minerals, which are used to produce technologies like solar panels, wind turbines and electric vehicle batteries, is devastating communities from Chile to China and causing untold environmental destruction.

Communities are being driven from their homes, the farmlands which they rely on made barren, water supplies made undrinkable, and the air made so polluted its unsafe to breathe. The pursuit of profit and the blinkered approach to CO2 reductions ignore the child labour, unsafe working conditions, repression and violence commonplace in securing 'transition' materials.

We need to send a clear message to the UK government. We can have a just energy transition, one that cuts carbon pollution but also respects the rights of affected communities and workers; by making UK energy corporations legally responsible for eliminating human rights abuses in their energy supply chains; by setting legally binding targets on reducing resource use and ending the wasteful use of energy.

The global energy transition must not leave billions around the world locked into energy poverty. We need a Global Green New Deal that sees energy as a public good, not a commodity for corporate profit, that is shared equally to ensure everyone can live with dignity, heat their homes and feed their families whilst protecting the planet.

KEY WORKERS UNITED

FOR A NATIONAL PUBLICLY-OWNED SOCIAL CARE SERVICE!

Norwich No 8, September 2021

THE TORY GOVERNMENT has made its long-awaited announcement on 'reform' of social care, but amidst all the agonising about the costs, there was **no mention at all** of how to reward and support workers in the sector. Care workers are amongst the lowest-paid and least-supported in the country, despite being in the forefront of the Covid-19 pandemic for which several hundred paid with their lives. North Norfolk Trade Union Council has

launched a Good Practice Charter for workers in social care, as the foundation for a campaign to achieve justice on pay, working conditions and training for these vital staff.

WHAT THE CHARTER SAYS

The Charter calls for a living wage (the present average hourly rate is £8.67), paid travel time, realistic time to carry out duties, parity with health care workers, a real commitment to training and health

and safety, and trade union membership. There are 112,000 vacancies in the industry, with some 430,000 people leaving every year. 1.54 million people work in social care with some 17,700 organisations providing or organising at some 39,000 establishments.

For more information contact North Norfolk Trade Union Council Secretary Martin Booth via email at mbooth0853@outlook.com

BY A NORWICH CARE WORKER

CARE WORK should be one of the most rewarding jobs a person could do. Unfortunately in our society it is often one of the worst. Below are some of my thoughts and experiences from working for 16 years in social care.

During my first few years working in care I was employed by Social Services. Wages were not great but they tended to be better than in the private sector. Staff also had access to the local government pension scheme. Staff were encouraged to attend numerous training courses to improve their work practice. The council even paid for me to attend a three-day swimming life-saver course so that I could safely take service users swimming.

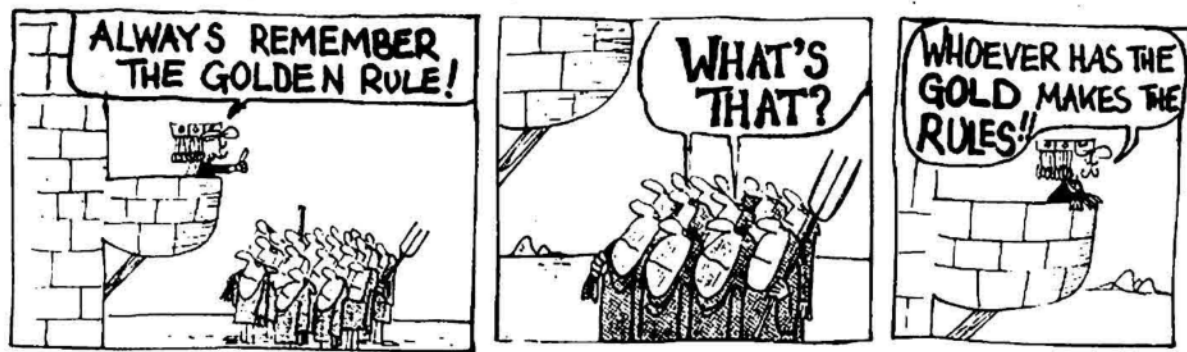
Unison was the recognised union at the county council. After a fight for equal pay, many care workers received several thousand pounds in back pay. This was due to the fact that care work, which is predominantly undertaken by women and often women of colour, was paid less than other jobs of equal skill.

After the coalition government came to power in 2010 they were determined to force councils to outsource social care to save money. I was no longer employed by the council but by a social enterprise. This resulted in a two-tier workforce. New staff were put in the inferior Nest pension scheme. Holiday entitlement was cut and pay was cut to the minimum wage.

Things got even worse when I became an agency carer. Often my shifts were cancelled on the way to work. Sometimes I was lucky to be offered one shift a week. The use of casual contracts is often the preferred employment practice by employers now. Wages are rarely above the minimum wage and there are an estimated 100,000 job vacancies in social care. If supply and demand actually worked, care wages would rise until these vacancies were filled.

A toxic combination of low wages, staff shortages and poor training means that carers can rarely provide the standard of care they would like to. Stress levels can be unbearable. It is often a challenge in care homes to keep all residents safe. Care managers are under pressure to respond by denying problems. In my experience, managers have claimed there are no staff shortages, putting pressure on the carers to work harder. If staff are stressed they will be offered six free counselling sessions to build 'resilience'. Thus blame is placed on individual care workers when they cannot cope with unbearable pressure.

It is very clear that care is not a priority and is instead seen as a burden under capitalism. This situation will only get worse with an aging population. Our fight is to build a better world where care is central to all we do.



BOOK REVIEW

Ben Phillips @BenPhillips76 has written what I found to be an inspiring book ***How to Fight Inequality and Why that Fight Needs You***.

IT'S FULL of quotes that inspire and get to the heart of the matter, for example "The change we need won't be given to people, it will be fought for by people". The first part chronicles the damages inequality does to all in society by increasing crime, decreasing trust, and the exacerbation of inequalities of race and gender.

Then he identifies when the fight to reduce inequality has been successful - in Latin America from around 2000 to 2010/15 and earlier on, in the first 2/3 of the 20th century in North America and Europe. From the 1930s to the 1960s the US marginal tax rate on the super-rich ranged from 70% to nearly 95%. During the same period, the rise of people joining unions correlates with the reduction in inequality. And he points out that the process requires long-term organising, and isn't free from conflict. Most of the civil rights leaders lauded today were considered troublemakers, radicals, in their time.

His idea for how we change government's agenda is threefold: overcome deference, build power together, and create a new story. Overcoming deference is about being unpopular, and labelled as

disruptive. Extinction Rebellion protests are being policed with increasing aggression, and the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill is set to make this the default. Zambian musician and human rights activist Pilato is quoted: "it is not only the perpetrators who defend the status quo - many ordinary people do too, and those who go against the social norms are treated as outlaws".

As trade unionists we know the power of organising. Of finding a key issue and building from that, extending the campaign and so growing the movement. The movement will need to encompass different groups. Phillips quotes Emad Emam, an academic and development campaigner: "Fragmentation is how we are kept vulnerable". Unite Community extends trade union membership to the unemployed and IWGB aims to organise workers in the gig economy. Faith groups are also key to extending a movement.

Finally, creating a new story. We know that socialism is about hope and optimism. It will be hard, but it's been done before. And creative ways of telling the stories will reach more people. In Norwich the Common Lot theatre group tell of Norfolk's radical past through humour & song. Phillips mentions an Irish saying: "History is written by the rulers, but the sufferers write the songs, and in the end the music wins!" There is hope: we will need to overcome ideological differences and unite across groups, but together we can bring the change that's needed.

Rachel Henderson (UCU)

SHORT CHANGED

SHOULDN'T WORKERS get paid for all of the time they are at work? Of course they should! But say you work on a till here. Your shift ends at 6pm - the same time as the store closes, yet customers are allowed in until 6pm to make a purchase. So your till must remain open until the last customer leaves and you are not allowed to leave your till until the cash is removed by a supervisor. You do not get paid for the time all this all takes. You used to - it was 30mins, it got cut a few years ago to 15mins but after the store opened following the first lockdown, cashing up time was in your time.

A similar situation exists at the start of a shift if you work on a till. Your shift starts at 9am - the same time as the store opens but staff are encouraged to be on duty a few minutes early, unpaid, in order to get the cash float and other admin sorted before 9am. Paid

tea breaks were largely abolished before the pandemic by reducing shift lengths for part time staff, who make up the majority of workers, to 4 or 4 and a half hours so that they don't qualify. Now shifts have been reduced even further, to 3 or 3 and half hours so that part timers need to work more days in a week which involves extra travel and getting ready time.

In these KWU leaflets I have written how shop workers here were not given the respect they deserved during the pandemic, but also how when it suited the company they could sack staff using the furlough scheme as a disguise and then hire new workers, push through unfair disciplinary measures and work practices, individualise blame, and make staff use phone apps to get their shift times and read other information in their own time. Clearly the pandemic has been cynically used by the company as an opportunity to increase exploitation and control the workforce.

Attila the shelf stacker



Boris Johnson sent packing after he says Thatcher was a climate campaigner when she decimated the coal industry.

KEY WORKERS UNITED

Norwich No 9, October 2021

1979: CRISIS WHAT CRISIS? 2021: CROESUS WHAT CROESUS? OR BORIS JOHNSON'S PLAN

(Croesus was a Greek Lydian king who reigned c.560-c.546 BCE and was notorious for his huge wealth)

*Thus mingled still with
wealth and state,
Croesus himself can
never know;*

*His true dimensions
and his weight*

Are far inferior to their show.

From Isaac Watt's
poem *False Greatness*

PLAN A: PUBLIC SECTOR CUTS, PAY FREEZES, MASS REDUNDANCIES, AND MAKING THE WORKING CLASS PAY FOR COVID.

THE TORY 'Great British Railways' will usher in the most vicious and sustained attack on services and workers since the Beeching axe of the 1960s. So although LNER (formerly run by Branson) and now South-Eastern Rail run by Go-Head, due to a 'significant breach of good faith', have been brought into so-called public ownership, the Tory government plans to destroy thousands of jobs in

Network Rail and then call the private companies in through the back door to pursue cuts to operating staff levels.

But this will be only one part of the attacks on public sector jobs and services in the coming years via privatisation of the NHS, side-lining of social care, break-up of the national education service and restructuring of the fire service.

THE FUTURE OF RAIL

AT A TIME when Transport workers are keeping that country running through the Pandemic and are being patronised by a callous government in words and clapping we are simultaneously facing the biggest attack in the Transport industry in a generation. Not content with imposing a 2 year pay freeze on most key workers the Government are using Covid as an excuse to cut jobs, wages, terms and conditions and even pensions. The great "reset"

will in the Government's view result in less services, lower wages and less jobs, even those about to retire will be robbed of a final salary pension and instead take home about half of what they were due. The short term fall in passengers will be even in the Governments modelling be greatly reduced within a year, nevertheless they are intent on cutting services with the resultant pollution that will occur when people are forced to use their cars.

Rather than create a green integrated transport network the Government by

proposing to cut public transport will exacerbate the climate crisis by forcing people back to polluting private vehicles. The RMT will of course fight tooth and nail against every cut mobilising our members and our allies in the passenger, disabled and other user groups. Together we can force the Johnson regime into another U-turn, one which prioritises the environment and workers' rights. The future is as yet unwritten but together we can change the narrative to benefit us all not to mention our planet.
Steve Hedley, RMT



'Boris the Tank Engine'

PLAN A, OR B, OR C.....???

Hello friends, I hope you are all keeping well. Barney here from the trains. This will give you something to read while you sit in that long queue at the petrol station.

"While stocks last ..." has never sounded so important. GREAT BRITISH TRAINS (G.B.R.). September was supposed to be the launch of the great plan for the future of our railways. It is October now so I suppose the plans are still being formulated. Will get back to you as and when. Ironically, "I'm Still Waiting" is being played the radio as I write. The Diana Ross song. Trains have been very busy of late. Less foreign holidays means staycations. Good for the railways. Lovely to see people back. Shortage of petrol is another factor. Fuel shortages, energy bills rocketing, empty shelves in supermarkets, chronic shortages of lorry drivers. Must be the Brexit Bounce the PM crows about.

Any road, take care all of you.

Hopefully next time I can talk about Grant Shapps' master plan for GBR.

From a Government we can all trust !!!!

Bye for now. Barney

NHS PAY STITCH -UP

by Jan Pollock, UCU Retired.

WE REMEMBER the shock and outrage we felt when Johnson's Government first decided it would offer a mere 3% pay "rise". The BMA, the doctors' organisation, described it as "callous and unjust" for workers who were risking their lives for us. Over the summer health-workers' own trade unions held consultative votes on whether their members wanted to accept or reject the offer. UNISON, the largest of the health unions voted 80% against acceptance. And the Royal College of Nursing, renowned for never taking strike action, not only voted 90% to reject the miserable offer, but, for the first time ever, set up its own substantial strike fund.

Since the results of the consultations were declared, the offer now looks even more unattractive despite its being imposed with no negotiation with the health unions. Health-workers, like the rest of us, are suffering petrol shortages which the Government appears unable to solve – even with the support of the army. A big hike in inflation on energy and food bills, etc. makes a 3% pay rise look increasingly ridiculous. Rents are constantly increasing as it becomes more difficult to find somewhere to rent in East Anglia and the South East. And many health-workers are given such low pay, they qualify for Universal Benefit which has now been cut by £20 a week (after all, the Tories' view this as no more than the cost of a good glass o of claret!)

We are now suffering from the fourth wave of Covid, while the Government has removed the legal imposition of mask-wearing and social distancing. Meanwhile, the number of vacancies in the NHS has now risen to 100,000 – increasing the hours of work for many NHS staff; many patients don't realise what long hours NHS staff work – often putting in extra unpaid hours to cover for vacancies just because patients need them. No wonder waiting lists are still rocketing! And no wonder NHS workers are exhausted and demoralised, as one nurse said 'the cracks in the NHS are widening all the time' The Tory programme to increase privatised medicine both within and beyond the NHS continues apace.

The vast majority of us value our health-workers highly and understand they cannot live on clapping alone! As health unions move to sending out to their members ballot-papers for action, we repeat its absolute support for all NHS staff who believe they now have to vote for strike action – perhaps for the first time in their lives.

KICK OUT TO KICKSTART

Attila the shelf stacker

FREE LABOUR courtesy of the Government rolled up at the store in September. Four young men turned up one morning for inductions and training without any prior knowledge by shop floor staff, their labour at the minimum wage being paid for by the taxpayer until June 2022. A quick induction to make sure that if they hurt themselves then it would be their own fault because the company had warned them of the risks and it was immediately on the job, with other workers training them up. Not long ago a lot of the older staff had been sacked. Many part time workers cannot get the extra hours they want.

At this store, serving customers requires a lot of product knowledge and life skills. Those older experience staff, sacked by foul means more than fair ones, were replaced by QR (Quick Response) codes. Let me explain. Where you may in the past have asked about tools needed for bricklaying or painting and decorating for example, a member of staff would talk you through the merits of the different ones and discuss the job you had in mind. The company's great idea was that you now point your smart phone at a square of a black and white pixelated image. I'm saying no more, I think you get it.

There was a notice in the tea room that said "Thieves are stealing your wages". I knew the directors should pay us more but this wasn't what the notice was about. No, it said we should be more vigilant for shoplifters, however the tone of the message, I felt, incited shop staff to apprehend thieves. This is something trained security staff should do, and something that the company regularly says it cannot afford. Shop workers should never put themselves in harm's way. Our job is simply to report theft or bring any suspicions to a manager's attention and let them deal with it.



'Fair Tips' protest by Unite on 6th October at Pizza Express in Norwich.