

In times of crisis, many respond by narrowing their horizons. There is a nationalist narrowing going on in the world today. From Trump's America to Modi's India and across Europe, there are right-wing forces calling for walls to go up, blaming foreigners and foreign governments for people's problems. If these forces are allowed to win, we face a dark future.

Foreign workers are not the cause of social problems: to say so lets the real culprits, the super-rich (of all nationalities) off the hook.

Anti-migrant sentiment is extremely dangerous. As climate change continues, extreme weather events will force millions of people from their homes. If these climate refugees are met with the kind of callous violence we see in the Mediterranean or on the US-Mexico border today, horrible atrocities and even wars will result.

We say: free movement for all. Migrants don't drive down wages; bosses do. Organise across borders to level up pay and conditions. The international labour movement must demand co-operation, aid and assistance between nations in the fight against climate change: not competition and passing the blame.

### Get involved!

Contact Workers' Liberty via our website or the details below. Get in touch with your local group. If you agree with the politics in this broadsheet, consider joining. We want to bring the energy and radicalism of the climate movement into Labour and workplaces. Get active at work, and organise with people you know to bring these politics into your local Labour party. Workers' Liberty can give you information and resources to help you do this. Immediately, we want to organise labour movement support for the youth climate strikes.

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# WORKERS' LIBERTY



## How socialists think WE CAN STOP CLIMATE CHANGE

Workers' Liberty are socialists. We have a different view from some others in the environmental movement about the way forward and we've printed this leaflet to explain our view.

- By nationalising the big energy companies, not trying to out-compete them or threaten them using divestment measures
- By putting industry under democratic control: we want to see workers and trade unions take the lead in drawing up decarbonisation plans
- By taxing the rich to fund big renewable energy and carbon capture projects – not leaving it to the market

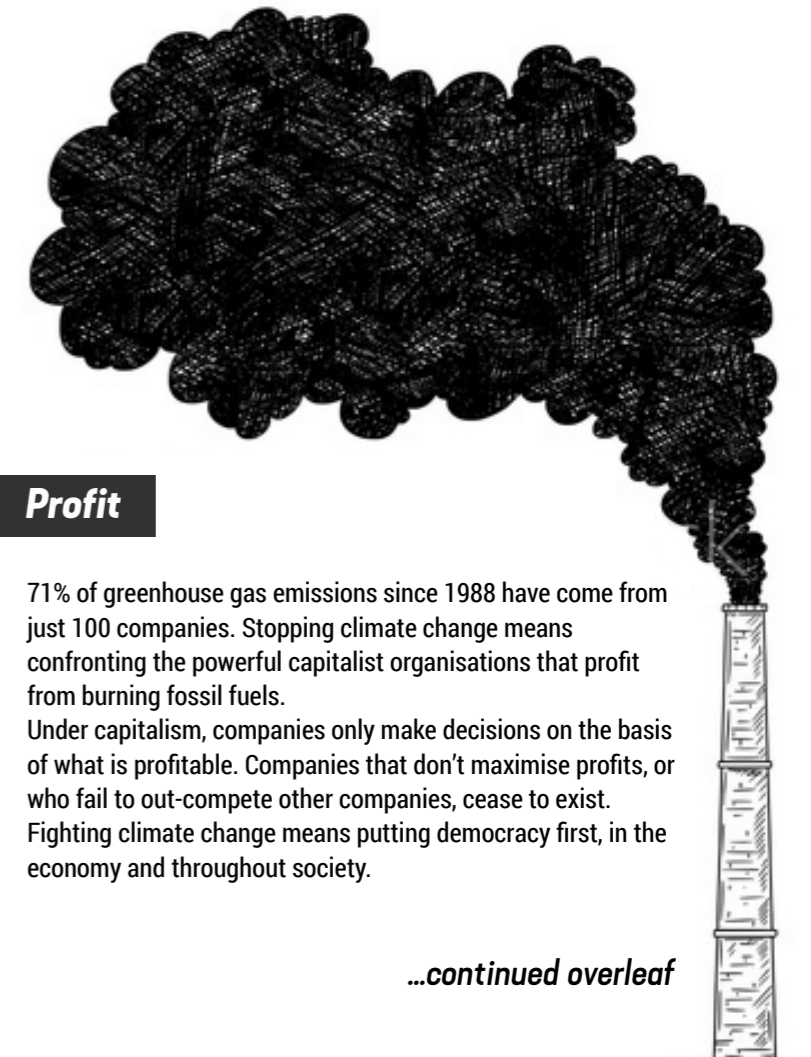
### What's the problem?

Climate change is being caused by the release of greenhouse gases like methane and carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. As these gases concentrate, they trap heat. The simple way to stop climate change is to stop emitting greenhouse gases, and to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. But as this process continues, "feedback loops" are being activated which would accelerate warming regardless of human activity – for example, die-back of forests, which capture CO2 naturally; or the melting of the ice-caps, which reflect heat into space. Scientists reckon that unless we radically reduce human emissions within the next decade or so, many of these "feedback loops" will spiral out of control.

### Profit

71% of greenhouse gas emissions since 1988 have come from just 100 companies. Stopping climate change means confronting the powerful capitalist organisations that profit from burning fossil fuels. Under capitalism, companies only make decisions on the basis of what is profitable. Companies that don't maximise profits, or who fail to out-compete other companies, cease to exist. Fighting climate change means putting democracy first, in the economy and throughout society.

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### LOW PAY? NO RIGHTS?



That drive for profit means exploiting labour (and fighting hard against workers when they demand their rights) and trying to “externalise” costs – making society pick up the tab for pollution, physical or mental health conditions or other problems caused by a company’s actions.

The Darwinian rule of competition and profit mean that the way that capitalists make decisions doesn’t follow rational, human patterns. Morality, the needs of society, the will of the majority: they can’t come into it. Many individual capitalists are surely moral people: but the system they serve will spit them out if they deviate from the rule.

And if one company stops doing something profitable, others will try hard to step into its place.

If stopping climate change is not profitable, then there is no “market mechanism” for stopping it. Only taking matters out of the hands of capitalists can work.

## Carbon bubble +

### “divestment” campaigns

If we are to stop climate change, we need to keep at least 60%-80% of currently-known fossil fuels in the ground. But the fossil fuels in the ground are worth a lot. American investment bank Citigroup has calculated that the value of fossil fuels under the earth is something like US\$100 trillion. To put that in perspective, the value of all the work done each year by the entire human race is only worth about US\$80 trillion.

For fossil fuel companies, agreeing to stop climate change would mean wiping out that vast source of wealth, overnight. The shock of the “carbon bubble bursting” would likely have a knock-on effect throughout the world economy.

If you’ve got a cheque for a hundred trillion dollars in one hand, there isn’t much that anyone could put in your other hand to “incentivise” you to drop it. There is no meaningful economic incentive that can be offered fossil fuel capitalists to get them to stop.

That’s why we think that campaigns to “divest” – to get different groups or governments to sell their shares in this or that fossil fuel company – are mistaken. Divestment can’t cost these companies more than giving up fossil fuels would cost them.

We think the answer instead is political and industrial action: government action and mass action to take matters out of the fossil capitalists’ hands.

## Unlock

### labour movement power

Capitalists’ money comes from the people who do their work. Without their workers, the rich are powerless.

The people who do the work are also the people who best understand it. If a company introduces “green” policies, it is the company’s employees who will know whether the policy is effective or bullshit green-washing.

To coerce capitalists (rather than trying to offer them “incentives”); and to ultimately take decision-making out of their hands altogether, the environmental movement has to unlock the strength of the organised working class.

A group of activists can shut down a power station for an afternoon by staging a direct action, risking jail. But that is nothing compared to the potential disruptive power of the people who actually work in the plant.

Whatever shortcomings the UK trade union movement might have, it has one major advantage: it is not shackled by the logic of profit – unlike big business and the politicians that serve them. Instead, the labour movement is influenced by the interests of its members. And these are human interests, about dignity and decency at work, but they’re not only narrowly about work and jobs. Workers don’t only work, they also think – and worry! – about the communities and world they live in. That thinking can be turned into great power.

## Workers’ Plans

The transition to a zero-carbon economy needs to happen fast. It needs to be planned in a joined-up way (not on the basis of companies hiding their intentions from each other so they can compete); it has to be effective (and not just public-relations greenwashing); and it has to be socially just: if the transition involves throwing workers on the scrapheap and creating misery, it simply won’t work.

In any industry, workers have the power to enforce a decarbonisation plan; the expertise to know what will work and what won’t; and they have the strongest interest in ensuring that the plan is socially just.

The most famous example of a workers’ plan was the detailed plan drawn up by workers at Lucas Aerospace in 1976. Also in the 1970s, workers on building sites in New South Wales were using their industrial power to enforce “green bans”, stopping environmentally or socially irresponsible construction projects from going ahead.

Workers’ Liberty thinks we need to revive that culture of workers’ plans. In every workplace, workers can organise with their colleagues to draw up more or less detailed plans and demands. The whole environmental movement should promote this idea and fight for legal support for trade union oversight of decarbonisation plans.

## Councils in the UK

Immediately, this is a big issue for councils and council workers. In many cities, councils are passing “climate emergency motions”, setting targets for decarbonisation and drawing up plans. Trade unions, Labour members, and climate activists in every town and city should press for mass involvement and community and workers’ control of the process, to make sure that the plans are real, effective, and socially just.

We need central government to reverse austerity in local government and unlock the funds needed for local



transformations – you can’t decarbonise an economy on the cheap. All councils who have declared a climate emergency should show they are serious, by mounting a joint campaign to force the Treasury to pay up.

A major re-organisation of the local economy is an opportunity for the workers’ movement to press for greater social justice across the board. We should be pressing for aggressive measures to tackle housing, fuel poverty and air quality. Decarbonisation means renewing the transport system: new vehicles and new routes. That is an opportunity for profiteers, but also an opportunity for a fight for an integrated, expanded, free and fully-public service, run by the people who work in and use it.

## Organise the unorganised!

There are about six million trade union members in the UK today. But they are concentrated in only a few industries, especially in the public sector.

To defeat climate change and make a just society, we need a drive to bring democracy to the whole economy. That means re-energising existing unions and drawing them into the climate struggle. But it also means organising whole new sectors of workers.

In the years after 1890, a series of explosive strike waves created trade unions in the UK in previously un-organised, insecure industries. The process then was called “New Unionism”.

Workers’ Liberty thinks that we need a “New Unionism” today. Stopping exploitation, winning better lives and stopping capitalist destruction of the environment all require workplace organisation, including in workplaces dominated by zero hours contracts. Fights like the one being waged by young Deliveroo couriers across the UK are opening the way to a new wave of workers’ organisation. Organising new industries is a part of the climate fight.

## Nationalise the Big Six!

The UK energy market is privatised and dominated by six energy giants. The existence of a market in energy is absurd: after all, there is only one national grid, the “market” is just made up of companies finding different ways to sell consumers the same electricity, from the same grid.

These companies fleece consumers with enormous price increases each year, causing many to suffer in the cold months.

Big and small energy companies try to advertise themselves as “green”. But behind the greenwash, private money in energy generation is a block to cutting out fossil fuels.

Some in Labour propose setting up small, publicly-owned energy companies to compete with the Big Six. Others suggest giving the Big Six incentives to behave better.

We think that these schemes are not realistic. The UK energy sector must be taken out of the hands of the private companies altogether. It should be publicly-owned, integrated and placed into the hands of the people who work in the industry.

## A Workers’ Government

Ultimately we will need state action to solve the climate crisis. But that means we need a government that is independent of those capitalist interests that are stacked against serious climate action.

We can’t expect a Conservative government, or a pro-big-business Labour government, to willingly go to war with Shell, ExxonMobil, or the major energy companies. The Green Party is not in a position to make a government any time soon.

We need to fight for a government that doesn’t rely on big business for its power and support. We need a workers’ government, that fights as hard for the majority as the Tories fight for their class. That means a fight for democracy in the Labour Party, and a deepening of the left-wing turn that Labour has made under Corbyn.

That means organising a grassroots movement for the climate to express itself through the Labour Party. That means getting stuck into Labour Party structures, passing motions, and selecting representatives who are serious about the climate fight. Big business exerts major influence on the Labour Party – even with its new left wing leadership. We need the workers’ movement and the Labour membership to shout louder than the bosses, and hold Labour’s leaders to account.

We welcome initiatives like “Labour for a Green New Deal”, which are working to sharpen up Labour’s climate policy. On some questions we would like to go further than Green New Deal, and put more emphasis on workers’ power at work. It also means building a movement that can enforce the policies that we need in workplaces and on the streets.

## Internationalism

Workers’ Liberty are internationalists. We recognise the urgent need for international co-operation to defeat climate change and ensure that humanity and not hatred wins out in the crises to come.

Workers’ Liberty oppose Brexit, not because we are fans of the European Union, but because we want to defeat the hard right forces driving Brexit.

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