Wales's new Climate Change Ministry bodes well for the future – possibly

Red-Green Labour's Sean Thompson gives a cautious welcome to Welsh Labour's plans.

In May's Welsh Senedd elections, Labour equalled its best result since the Welsh Assembly was established in 1999, winning 30 of the Senedd's 60 seats. Labour's manifesto had contained a number of modest, but welcome pledges, including the banning of most single use plastics, the creation of a new national forest stretching the length of the country from North to South and a moratorium on planning permission for large incineration facilities. During the election campaign, the First Minister, Mark Drakeford had repeatedly declared that if re-elected, he would *'embed our response to the climate and nature emergency in everything we do'*.

Such fine words are to be expected during election campaigns, but all too frequently disappointingly little is done to put them into practice. However, within a week Drakeford announced a major reorganisation of his administration, creating a powerful new Ministry for Climate Change, which has responsibility for transport, housing, planning, regeneration, energy and environment. The Minister and Deputy Minister are, respectively, Julie James and Lee Waters, both on the left of the party, and their key role is stated as being to *'ensure all Welsh Government policy on new infrastructure projects, energy schemes, and planning decisions can meet environmental targets and be justified in the context of Wales' current and future climate challenges'*. In an early indication of how the new ministry may combine policy areas with the climate crisis in mind, Drakeford announced a commitment to build 20,000 new social homes for rent that will

be built to zero-carbon standards, piloting the use of new design and production methods and making use of the underused resource of Welsh timber, currently largely used for pulp.

On 15 June, the administration's Programme for Government was published, laying out its delivery plan for the next 5 years. Lee Waters has been quite open about his view that the Ministry for Climate Change's plans are extremely modest in the light of the scale and urgency of the climate crisis, nonetheless they mark a significant step forward both in ambition and recognising the need for a properly integrated programme. In addition to the policies already mentioned, the 2021-26 action plan includes the following main commitments:

- Legislating to abolish the use of more commonly littered single use plastics.
- Introducing a Clean Air Act for Wales, consistent with WHO guidance.
- Maintaining the policy of opposing the extraction of fossil fuels in Wales.
- Supporting the Wales TUC proposals for union members to become Green Reps, with the same rights as H&S Reps, in the workplace.
- Aiming for a 30% target for working remotely.
- Implementing a new 10-year Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan for a zero-carbon economy.
- Reviving the Swansea Tidal Lagoon project as part of a wider'Tidal Lagoon Challenge' and supporting initiatives that can make Wales a centre of emerging tide and wave technologies.
- Expanding renewable energy generation by public bodies and community groups in Wales by over 100MW by 2026, as well as supporting other community-led initiatives, such as cooperative housing and community land trusts.
- Lifting the ban on local authorities setting up new municipal bus companies, expanding flexible demand-responsive travel across Wales, making 20mph the default

speed limit in residential areas throughout Wales and hitting a target of at least 45% of journeys by sustainable modes by 2040.

- Delivering good quality jobs and training through the housing retrofit programme, using local supply chains.

There is much else in the Programme to applaud; strengthening the protections for ancient woodlands, funding additional flood protection for more than 45,000 homes and delivering nature-based flood management in all major river catchments, to expand wetland and woodland habitats, creating a new system of farm support and developing a Wales Community Food Strategy, as well as a commitment to *'explore options for workers to take an ownership stake in our national transport assets'*. However, as ever, words are cheap. Some of the commitments are not entirely in the Welsh Government's gift, others will, at the very least, be at the very boundaries of the government's powers – or even beyond them.

For example, the commitment to work towards 30% of office based workers working remotely makes a lot of sense in terms of both encouraging more employment in the valleys of south east Wales or the isolated rural communities of mid and north Wales, as well as helping to reduce the congestion in the major urban areas (pre-Covid, Cardiff had to deal with an influx of over 80,000 commuter vehicles a day, while the antiquated rail services were unbearably overcrowded). However, while the government is proposing a number of sensible measures, such as developing new remote working hubs in former mining communities, they are going to be dependent not only on co-operation – and probably co-funding – with cash strapped local councils, but also on the co-operation of employers. Wales has the largest proportion of its workforce in the public sector of any part of Britain, so getting the active support of local authorities, the NHS and the Higher Education sector is going to be key to the success of the policy.

Supporting, the Wales TUC proposals for Green Reps in the workplace is laudable, however it is beyond the Welsh Government's devolved powers to enforce it. It will require the government, as part of its Social Partnership policy, to include this reform in the package of fair employment measures it will be seeking to 'persuade' employers to accept through the leverage of its (along with the NHS and Higher Education) public procurement muscle.

A number of important measures, such as ensuring that Wales gets its fair share of the *Shared Prosperity Fund* and the so-called *Levelling Up Fund* from Whitehall and getting a fair share of vital rail infrastructure and R&D investment for Wales, rely on the the Tories being prepared to spread largesse to the ungrateful Welsh in the manner of Lady Bountiful – an eventuality it would be unwise to hold one's breath waiting for. And relaunching the Swansea Tidal Lagoon (as it were) would almost certainly require the Treasury (motto: 'Out of my cold dead hand…') to relax its grip on the Welsh Government's borrowing limits.

The Tories have always been hostile to the direction that even its current very limited devolved powers have taken Wales, and the performance of the Welsh Government and NHS during the Covid crisis in contrast to the fiasco in England has clearly intensified that hostility. The Westminster Government has already demonstrated that it intends to use the funds meant to replace those from the EU that were devolved to the Welsh Government, that have been so important to the poorest parts of Wales, itself, with (up to now) no consultation with the Welsh Government. Johnson has even threatened that the Westminster Government might seek to impose the environmentally disastrous M4 Extension project, rejected eighteen months ago by the Welsh Government, on Wales as though it was a colony of England (luckily, this idea is about as workable as Johnson's other wheezes, like the Scotland-Ireland bridge). But in these circumstances, the Welsh

Government's hope that, for example, the under-funded Health and Safety Executive might be devolved to Wales is probably a pipe dream.

Even where the Welsh Government has both the powers and the funding to implement its programme there remains the question of whether it will, in practice, do so. Its record of delivery is patchy. For example, for some years the Welsh Government has – rhetorically at least – had a progressive policy of increasing tree cover in Wales. Since January 2008, under the 'Plant!' scheme, a tree has been planted for very child born in Wales (and since 2014, another has been planted in Mbale, Uganda) and the government has had a target of planting 2,000 hectares of new woodland each year. However, since 2013 new woodland has averaged less than 1,000 hectares a year and in 2019/20 just 80 hectares were planted, though the Climate Change Commission estimates that tree planting in Wales needs to be moving towards 5,000 hectares a year if we are to achieve 24% woodland cover by 2050. Given that the idea of a National Forest is Mark Drakeford's personal vision, one can only hope that the government gets its act together in the most dramatic fashion over the next couple of years.

Another example: the Welsh Government has been committed to a desperately needed green housing retrofit programme for some years. 32% of homes in Wales were built before 1919, we have some of the oldest and least thermally efficient homes in Europe, and there are currently over 250,000 households living in fuel poverty.

But while the Welsh Government has implemented a number of worthwhile initiatives to address these issues, including its Warm Homes Programme, the Welsh Housing Quality Standard and most recently the Optimised Retrofit Programme, these initiatives have largely involved social housing, not privately let or owner occupied homes, though both of those latter sectors are on average in poorer condition. A major programme is needed to retrofit all existing homes in Wales to

at least an EPC ‘B’ rating within the next ten years that would not only tackle both greenhouse gas emissions and fuel poverty, but would create thousands of new, well paid, unionised jobs (10,000 FTE jobs a year over 15 years, according to the Institute of Welsh Affairs).

However, as with many of the commitments in the Programme for Government, no targets or timescales for the housing retrofit programme have been published, just statements of good intentions, although given the speed at which the programme has been put together and published since the election in May, that is not entirely surprising. It is vital, though, that those statements of intent are transformed into practical action over the coming months.

Despite the Welsh Government’s less than stellar environmental performance record, the relative modesty of the environmental goals in its new Programme for Government and the increasingly problematic issue of its limited legislative and financial powers under the current devolution settlement, there are reasons to be optimistic. The creation of a new Ministry explicitly concerned with the climate crisis that is responsible for most of the key areas where radical change is needed – including transport, housing, environment and energy – is potentially extraordinarily important. The fact that Drakeford has put this Ministry in the charge of two of his key supporters – both firmly on the left of the party when the majority of Labour MSs (Senedd Members) are on the right – is a hopeful sign that radical action that challenges the status quo may start to creep onto the political agenda.

And evidence that that hope is not totally unfounded was provided on 21 June when Lee Waters announced that all new road building programmes in Wales have been frozen with immediate effect in order to be subject to an independent review. In his announcement, Waters said: *‘I don’t think people realise the amount we have to do. Since 1990 we have reduced emissions by 32% and by the end of the decade we have*

to more than double that and it's up again by 2040. We really do have to ramp up what we have been doing. In 10 years, we need to achieve more than the last 30 and in those years we have done the relatively easy things, there is no low hanging fruit. If we're going to hit this target we're going to have to do things differently.'

When asked what he would say to people who face regular traffic jams on the roads where schemes have been halted, he said: *'If we do nothing, we are facing catastrophic consequences for our communities. A lot of this is going to be uncomfortable change and it's not going to be easy and I am not pretending there's simple answers. There will be tensions and will be contradictions, we need to make it easier for people to do things that help us tackle climate change…For most people, the reality is that using public transport is not easy and isn't attractive and we need to change that to make it easier. We can't do that if we're spending all our money on road building. We have reached the point where we have to confront the fact we can't keep doing what we have always done'.*

Republished from RedGreen Labour

Glasgow school students hold Fridays For the Future protest

Youth climate strikes are back in Scotland! To coincide with the end of the school year in Scotland, a protest was organised in Glasgow on Friday 25th June 2021 at the Buchanan Steps in the heart of Glasgow's shopping area. Dozens of

school student activists gathered to call for urgent action on climate change. Further protests will be organised when schools return after the summer break.

Further information from:

@FFF_Glasgow
#FridaysForFuture

Fridays For Future Scotland

Some lessons of the Podemos Experience

22 Jun 2021

Dave Kellaway looks back at the Pablo Iglesias era which found the Spanish left in the political ascendancy.

A month or so ago, Pablo Iglesias failed in his bid to push back the right wing ascendancy in the Madrid regional elections. The defeat turned into a personal turning point for him as he resigned from all his leadership responsibilities both in in Unidad Podemos (United We Can) party and in the PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers Party) government.

It marked the bitter end of a personal journey in which he had played a leading role for a time in trying to radically challenge the 1978 regime that emerged from the end of the

fascist Franco dictatorship. He had 'reached for the sky' and helped create what he called 'a great electoral war machine' that threatened, momentarily, the hold of the PSOE on the left of politics in the Spanish State.

His political background was within the old Izquierda Unida (IU – United Left) as a left Eurocommunist. In the end ironically he had led his grouping full circle back into that sort of framework. It is a junior partner, a left cover for what is essentially a social liberal government that is no challenge to the 1978 regime. Some pundits even suggest that the current incarnation of the IU will recuperate the crumbling remains of the Podemos movement.

Nevertheless as the Anticapitalistas' comrades, Miguel Urban and Brais Fernandez correctly note:

> *On the one hand the balance sheet is disappointing. Podemos was not capable of reaching the objectives it had set at its foundation and has been converted, in Gramscian terms, into a 'transformismo' project [=as a strategy to prevent the formation of an organized working-class movement by co-opting and neutralizing its ideas and leaders within a ruling coalition, a passive revolution with no self-organised movement –**Tr**]. However its establishment led to the opening of a new, unexpected political cycle . For the first time in decades, an anti-neo-liberal force aimed to conquer political power.*
>
> *MIGUEL URBAN AND BRAIS FERNANDEZ*

Rise of Broad left or class struggle movements

In the last few months there have been a number of articles and books on the ***Pasokification*** of European social democratic parties. It refers to the way the Greek social democrats of

Pasok led their party into disintegration through becoming more and more moderate. Progressive, mass radical movements like Podemos, Syriza in Greece, Corbynism in Britain, Mélenchon's party in France were partly reactions from the left to this process of Pasokification. They responded to the increasingly social liberal line of the social democrats exemplified by Blair or the Zapatero government in the Spanish state.

The restructuring of global capital from the 1980s with the destruction of the old European industrial heartlands severely weakened the trade unions and communities which were the historic base of these traditional left parties. Neo-liberal austerity policies following the 2008 financial crisis also fuelled some social mobilisations particularly in Greece and the Spanish state with the 'indignados' (angry ones) bringing tens of thousands onto the streets for sustained periods. The younger generation, including many unemployed or underemployed graduates, joined forces with trade unionists, especially from the public sector. People wanted proper work and decent education and welfare.

Social democratic parties were no longer able to provide any reforms to protect working people as they had done during the post war boom when the bosses were able to make profit while conceding an increase in workers living standards and welfare provision. Even later during periods of capitalist growth stimulated by the fall of the Berlin Wall, cheap goods from China and an expansion of credit we saw a social democratic leader like Blair keen to embrace the new capitalist reality even while providing some concessions on social spending.

However it is now clear that all of these radical movements have been defeated and failed to sustain their challenge to capitalist stability. It is worth examining the Podemos experience both for specific lessons and because its strategic problems mirrored some of the problems facing the Corbyn project.

Origins of Podemos

Podemos was formed in January 2014. The mass demonstrations of the 15th May movement popularly known as the 'indignados' were ebbing. A group of university politics professors in Madrid and the Anticapitalist Left, the section of the Fourth International in the Spanish State, decided the time was right to set up a new political movement that could channel the hopes of the indignados. According to Urban and Fernandez (op cit.) there were four main influences on their thinking:

a. the historic competitor to the left of the PSOE, the Izquierda Unida, formed from the Eurocommunist Spanish CP, had been completely bypassed by the indignados and had failed to take any real lead
b. the Left Bloc in Portugal had successfully brought together various left forces and had become a national political force that had even overtaken the Portuguese Communist Party
c. Syrizia had at that stage not been defeated and was inspiring people across Europe
d. the Bolivarian experience led by Chavez in Venezuela was particularly important for both Iglesias and his friend, Errejon, who had spent time there.

The initial programme adopted was opposition to austerity. It included removing the addition to the constitution supported by both the PSOE and the conservative Peoples Party that enshrined 'balanced budgets' regulated by the EU. It was for full implementation of the 128th article of the constitution which states:

> *All wealth of the country in all its forms and no matter who owns it, is subordinated to the people's interest.*

Exit from NATO and full abortion rights were other key points as well as a commitment to challenging the rigid unionism of

the Spanish constitution with respect to Catalonia and Euzkadi. It is important to remember these points to assess how far the Podemos leadership moved away from such a programme in subsequent years.

According to a participant in these meetings Iglesias was happy to sign up to all these points but Errejon was much less enthusiastic. This probably reflected both that Iglesias understood that these were just paper positions that could be modified and also foreshadowed Errejon's eventual split from Podemos to a more moderate position.

So we can see this movement formed in a quite a different way to Corbynism which emerged out of the traditional Campaign group of Labour MPs. There were no founding programmatic discussions for this project and while the radical left helped mobilise behind Corbyn we had no leadership role. Although there were some links with the anti-austerity mobilisations of previous years, especially those around student fees, the scale of these mobilisations were much smaller than in the Spanish state. Social Media though played an important role in both movements. There were some similarities in the demographics of the activists.

Opportunities and dangers of explosive growth

Podemos broke through immediately at the European elections in 2014 getting nearly 8% and 5 MEPs. In the 2015 and 2016 general elections it received around 21% of the vote, coming close to an historic overtaking of the PSOE. In October 2014 it had 170,000 members and up to 500,000 members were claimed in 2020 but this was before members had to pay. This was phenomenal growth for a new party. All the forecasts completely underestimated its success.

Something similar happened in Britain with Corbynism – at

least until after the 2017 general election. Politics is much more volatile today because of the crisis of traditional party allegiances, the emergence of new politicised generations and the acceleration that social media can produce. As we have seen with Corbynism it can go up very quickly but also deflate rapidly too.

The initiators of the Podemos project were swamped and overrun by the impact and the sheer numbers who flooded in. As Urban and Fernandez ruefully admit:

> *This huge upsurge in interest and numbers was channelled much more skilfully by the 'populist hypothesis' that the 'anti-capitalist perspective'. The latter always had to intervene within the framework of the former.*
>
> ***MIGUEL URBAN AND BRAIS FERNANDEZ***

The Anticapitalistas (ACs) were the only organised left group involved in the project. It had a few hundred members with a thinnish implantation outside the major cities. Some of the key activists from the social movements were initially sceptical about Podemos. Inevitably once things looked good many of the people who first disdained it then joined and often just followed Iglesias uncritically.

Emmanuel Lopez in this article examines the sociological phenomena underlying Podemos. He points out the key role of the new precarious, unemployed graduate generation which was attracted to the party. We saw a similar phenomenon with Corbynism.

But this explosive growth meant a rapid social promotion or integration into the institutional process for many of these new activists. It also helps explain how the local branches (circulos) became hollowed out. This issue can also affect radical or revolutionaries in new, rapidly growing parties. Revolutionary Marxists from the Socialist Democracy current

experienced this when they helped build Lula's PT (Workers' Party) in Brazil. Bureaucratisation and integration does not just affect reformists. Lopez (op cit.) again comments on this:

> *After the 2015 general election the party had thousands of political positons and jobs available for distribution – MPs, senators, councillors and full time staff. To become part of this 'industry of representation' was subjectively very appealing. In the final analysis this explains why the party was able to keep some sort of base after it abandonment of mobilisation in the communities and workplaces after 2016*
>
> *EMMANUEL LOPEZ*

Neither left nor right, 'construct the people'

The Podemos leadership at the first national congress at Vistalegre accepted an organisational model where minorities like the Anticapitalistas were deliberately excluded from the leadership team. Tendencies were not given any sort of proportional representation. Plebiscitary online voting was established too which meant tens of thousands voted online on proposals put forward by the Iglesias team. Local and regional structures with regular debate and the election of delegates – the 'traditional' form of left political organisation were shunned in favour of social media. This made it more difficult to develop a rich political debate in the local branches.

A few years later this top down, limited form of internal democracy actually made it difficult for a key ally of Iglesias, Errejon, to defend his positions when he broke from the Iglesias political line towards a more moderate position. He had been an enthusiastic supporter of the original internal rules!

Consequently there were large majorities for the Iglesias strategy that was inspired both by Latin American left populism and specifically the ideas of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. In today's conditions to win political power it was argued the left had to abandon some of its historic categories. So Podemos adopted the slogan 'neither left nor right'.

It is true that in terms of the mainstream left and right of centre parties, there were less and less differences in how they managed austerity so there was some support for this approach. However this led to a disconnection with the material world of class exploitation through capitalism, class struggle and the repressive nature of the state. There was an overemphasis on ideological processes so the task of progressive parties is to 'construct the people', through effective communication and marketing, providing a new political narrative that people can understand and support. This popular coalition is transversal in the sense that it can pick up support across all political, ideological currents and is not limited by narrow class definitions or antagonisms.

There is nothing wrong with thinking about how we present a socialist or class point of view to a mass audience but the links to capitalist reality cannot be severed. Conversely of course wooden propaganda from orthodox Marxists does not work either.

On one level, this huge investment in developing a tight-knit centralised team that developed a sophisticated media communications strategy was successful in building support, bringing Podemos to over 20% of the vote. Some electoral material was brilliant in conveying the unfairness of the system was and why change was needed. We can learn from it.

For once the left was being audacious and optimistic about what was possible, that it could challenge a big mainstream party like the PSOE and even overtake it. In some polls it

actually did. But along with the ‘promotion’ of activists into full timers or party representatives, it meant the local circles were neglected. Self-organisation, building alternative political structures and forging a vibrant new culture from the bottom up, were not priorities. As long as it was riding high in the polls it was difficult for alternative voices like the Anticapitalistas to convince people of a different way forward.

As Lopez remarks in his article (op cit.):

> *in this way ‘populism’ fulfilled a role for this generation similar to the one Marxism played for the generation of the 1978 transition; it was like an ‘elites theory’ that articulated an understanding of power not based on a theory of political economy and classes and a consequent complex analysis of the conjuncture but rather as a sort of ‘popular articulation’ converted into a business of communications expertise.*
>
> ***EMMANUEL LOPEZ***

Such ideas sat easily with a leadership predominantly made up of university professors and a membership that was predominantly composed of youngish graduates.Before Podemos, Iglesias had run a very successful political TV programme.

The workers movement had been weakened and become more isolated as a result of de-industrialisation and restructuring. This also means that mass communications have taken over a role and weight that the organic intellectuals and independent institutions of the workers movement formerly contested. We can see this to a degree in Britain too. Look how the mass media assault on Corbyn was more difficult to resist given the weakness of the workers movement’s independent media and institutions.

Three strategic errors

Fernandez and Urban identify three key strategic problems with Podemos:

- *an ingenuous approach to the question of state power*

It adopted mainstream academic political theory, considering the state as a fluid body, a social relation but did not draw out the real implications of such statements. The judiciary, police and the army, because of their class and ideological composition, are bodies that are structurally reactionary and can only be neutralised with active, antagonistic social forces. On the other hand workers in the health, education and public administration, where Podemos had a lot of support, are a potential base for 'constituent' change from within the state itself.

None of the lessons of the Syrizia debacle were taken on board. In the end Podemos won control in certain places and today are junior partners in the PSOE government but are managing the system within the usual limits. Most worryingly the leadership exaggerates and distorts the actual progressive impact of its executive power e.g. with some of the welfare reforms it has lobbied for.

- *a wrong notion of political economy*

The Podemos leadership also saw society as a field of political manoeuvring where economic power was an external force to challenge but not the social relation that configured the whole of society. It went from its early promises to take over key sectors of the economy to a classic Keynesianism. The spell when Podemos governed Madrid exemplified that as it managed the same old urban development led by finance capital.

- *the national question in the Spanish State*

Again initially Podemos was able to lead the debate about re-

founding the constitutional system but this was later abandoned so today it has lost ground in Catalonia and Euzkadi to progressive or independent nationalists who are seen as more militantly against the centralising regime.

Why did a radical or revolutionary alternative not do better?

Readers may say you could be right about some or all of your criticisms of Podemos but why didn't the revolutionaries who were inside Podemos from the beginning not pick up more support and challenge the Iglesias leadership more strongly?

Throughout the process, the Anticapitalists(AC) both enthusiastically built Podemos and maintained an alternative strategy which meant they were excluded from the central leadership team. Comrades took on party posts and became regional or European MPs. The mass media regularly reported on the AC's alternative positions at the two congresses. The fight for a different internal democracy was proven to be justified as the subsequent Errejon split showed the failure of the movement to manage its internal discussions. The very weak or non-existence of local branches today also bears out their analysis.

After the leadership decided to become ministers in the PSOE government it was widely reported on TV and the newspapers that Anticapitalistas had decided to leave the party. They had argued for the Portuguese solution favoured by the Left Bloc of not participating in the government but allowing it to be formed and supporting it on an issue by issue basis.

Participating in such broad based class struggle or left social democratic movements is a good way of building a radical or revolutionary current. As a result of their involvement the ACs have increased and consolidated their membership and strengthened their national profile. Those

groups that stood apart in sectarian purity have not done any better than those forces who helped build the new movements. Indeed we saw the same thing happen with the Corbynist project, those groups who stayed apart from it have not gained from its demise. Today AC leaders strongly defend their involvement. In any case, the final outcome could not be predicted in advance. Just as in Britain with the Corbyn experience the left has not gone back to the position there were in during the Miliband period. Gains have been made.

However this is not to say that the AC comrades made no mistakes or that tactical moves are easy to make. Ensuring that you put resources in maintaining your profile and own organisation while participating in a broader party is essential. It is easy to become the best builders and become sucked into all the broader party's tasks. This is also true for revolutionaries who choose to work inside the Labour Party.

You also have to break out of a small group mentality when you are thrown into a group with mass support. Negotiating with new partners on a national level takes a different skill to the sort of interaction you are used to. Coming to terms with the new communications is also important. The ACs had, to a degree, some difficulty in all these areas.

Another problem is preparing for a possible exit if this movement collapses or moves decisively in a moderate direction. Deciding when to leave and doing it in a non-sectarian way is often difficult. The mass media in the Spanish state commented on how amiable the parting was in areas like Andalusia where the ACs had a strong base and a well-known local leader like Teresa Rodriguez. Ritualistic denunciation of betrayal is not always helpful.

Finally, Urban and Fernandez make an interesting historical reference in considering the Podemos story:

In our opinion here is a tension between the Leninist truth – organisations can be built if there has been an accumulation of cadre prior to their development – and the Luxemburgist one – organisations are built during the process itself. In the case of Podemos this tension was resolved in the worst possible way. Neither the political nucleus of Podemos had a sufficient accumulation of cadre that could structure the emerging process nor did the process itself compensate for those deficiencies. The limitations of the period combined with subjective decisions in the worst form possible.

MIGUEL URBAN AND BRAIS FERNANDEZ

Today Podemos has gone from a party with an anti-system and constituent strategy to occupying a space traditionally held by the Spanish Communist Party but without the latter's organic links with the workers movement. At the same time it has severely weakened its links with the social forces that formed it in the first place. The anticapitalist left has to rebuild the movement from the bottom up both inside and outside the institutions.

Reprinted from Anti*Capitalist Resistance,

E-conference charts new beginning for Radical Indy

The Radical independence campaign held its first ever online conference on Saturday 12 June. The event marks a new beginning for the campaign, which is aiming to ramp up activism on the pro-independence left.

by Jack Ferguson

(Photo by Connor Beaton; RIC contingent on Scottish Independence demonstration, Glasgow January 2020)

E-conference charts new beginning for Radical Indy

Reproduced from Scottish Socialist Voice No 561

by Jack Ferguson

The Radical independence campaign held its first ever online conference on Saturday 12 June. The event marks a new beginning for the campaign, which is aiming to ramp up activism on the proindependence left.

High on the agenda was a discussion about targeted non violent direct action and civil disobedience, demanding Scotland's right to self determination. This drew on Scotland's rich history of direct action, and involved veterans of the anti-nuclear and climate movements sharing their expertise.

Among those addressing the conference were Brenda Eadie of the NHS Workers for Fair Pay campaign, Extinction Rebellion activist Annie Lane and Janet Fenton, Scottish representative to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

A strong theme running throughout the event was the need for internationalism, and for Scotland to play a more positive role in the world than it has historically. Opening the conference, Katie Gallogly Swan, global trade and environmental policy expert, said:

"One of the outcomes of Scottish independence would be a new position for Scotland in global politics. As it stands, global governance is not advancing the rights and interests of the majority of the world– whether working class communities in Scotland or the citizens of the Global South.

‘Institutions built on rigged rules’

“The economic institutions are built on rigged rules, which prioritise profit-making for big firms, while leaving workers and poor people everywhere to grapple with increasing precarity, austerity, and shredded social safety nets—socialism for the rich, and exploitation for everyone else. We can’t let an independent foreign policy mean ingratiating ourselves with powerful countries and entering the race-to-the-bottom on worker’s rights and taxation.

“We can’t jump on the bandwagon of using the massive industrial transformation the world needs to tackle climate change to just be a means to reassert global dominance of economies like our own—it hasn’t served the majority of people here, and it won’t in the future.”

Continuing the international theme, Welsh and Irish comrades joined a session on co-operating across these islands to break the British state. Following this, a discussion on global solidarity was opened by Raed Debiy, a political activist in the West Bank, Aratz Estonba of the Basque internationalist organisation Askapena, Sarah Glynn from Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan, and Paul Figueroa of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, who said ahead of the day:

“This weekend as I share with Scottish comrades about Puerto Rico’s struggle for independence from the United States, Joe Biden will also be meeting with Queen Elizabeth. There is no better time than now for us to come together and reaffirm that the struggles of Scotland and Puerto Rico are connected as we look to forge radical paths towards independence that will defend our national interests, our environment and resources, grow our working class, and unite us with the rest of the world.”

As well as discussion and ideas, the conference had a strong focus on organising.

Throughout the day, participants were invited to use online tools to give their answers to a series of questions about how the campaign should go forward. Training sessions aimed to equip those attending with knowledge about organising locally and communicating a message through social and traditional media.

This process will now continue through RIC's local groups, where members will be actively seeking to engage with their communities and everyone across the pro-indy left.

RIC currently has active local groups in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee as well as Angus and Mearns.

Earlier this year, it was prematurely announced by some former members that RIC had dissolved as a national body, following a controversial meeting convened over Zoom. However, RIC's local groups were not part of this process, and have taken the decision to relaunch the national campaign together.

Hope in RIC's revival

Those involved in organising the conference come from a wide range of backgrounds, including climate activists, peace campaigners, SNP, socialists, Greens and republicans. They include new activists and those who have been part of RIC since its foundation in 2012. Feedback from the event emphasised again and again that RIC's revival had given them hope again, and that many have been waiting for the signal to begin campaigning again.

Since 2014, the independence movement has splintered around a number of key fractures, often contributing to an atmosphere that can become insular and unwelcoming to wider society. This is in a context where the SNP continues to fail to articulate a clear vision for the post-neoliberal era, and of rampantly growing social conservatism within sections of the indy movement.

The need for unity among the left that standsfor a radical vision of independence, and against all forms of discrimination and inequality, has never been greater.

As a key part of the historic 2014 movement, RIC today can play a key role. Following the Scottish Parliament elections, there is once again clearly a democratic mandate to hold an independence referendum.

Yet Boris Johnson and the Tories look set to continue to defy the will of the people, ignoring polls in the last year showing a narrow pro-indy majority. Grassroots pressure must now be ratcheted up if we are to have any hope of escaping the impasse of democracy denied.

To sign up for the RIC mailing list, visit http://bit.ly/RICNewsSignUp · To join your local group or get one started, email contact@ric.scot

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The Big Con: ‘Net zero’ emissions is a dangerous hoax

The Scottish and UK governments are heavily promoting ‘Net Zero’ as the way to combat climate change in the run-up to the COP26 Climate Change Conference in Glasgow in November 2021. Below ecosocialist.scot republishes an article about the dangers of ‘net zero’, highlighted in a recent report by three global organisations. This version of the article was originally published on the ‘Climate & Capitalism’ ecosocialist blog published by Ian Angus in the Canadian state.

‘Net zero’ emissions is a dangerous hoax

June 10, 2021
Corporate ‘climate pledges’ mask inaction and support business as usual.

by Brett Wilkins

A new report published Wednesday by a trio of progressive advocacy groups lifts the veil on so-called “net zero” climate pledges, which are often touted by corporations and governments as solutions to the climate emergency, but which the paper’s authors argue are merely a dangerous form of greenwashing that should be eschewed in favor of Real Zero policies based on meaningful, near-term commitments to

reducing global greenhouse gas emissions.

The Big Con: How Big Polluters Are Advancing a 'Net Zero' Climate Agenda to Delay, Deceive, and Deny was published by Corporate Accountability, the Global Forest Coalition, and Friends of the Earth International, and is endorsed by over 60 environmental organizations. The paper comes ahead of this November's United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, Scotland and amid proliferating pledges from polluting corporations and governments to achieve what they claim is carbon neutrality—increasingly via dubious offsets—by some distant date, often the year 2050.

However, the report asserts that

"Instead of offering meaningful real solutions to justly address the crisis they knowingly created and owning up to their responsibility to act beginning with drastically reducing emissions at source, polluting corporations and governments are advancing 'net zero' plans that require little or nothing in the way of real solutions or real effective emissions cuts. …. They see the potential for a 'net zero' global pathway to provide new business opportunities for them, rather than curtailing production and consumption of their polluting products."

"After decades of inaction, corporations are suddenly racing to pledge to achieve "net zero" emissions. These include fossil fuel giants like BP, Shell, and Total; tech giants like Microsoft and Apple; retailers like Amazon and Walmart; financers like HSBC, Bank of America, and BlackRock; airlines like United and Delta; and food, livestock, and meat-producing and agriculture corporations like JBS, Nestlé, and Cargill. Polluting corporations are in a race to be the loudest and proudest to pledge 'net zero' emissions by 2050 or some other date in the distant future. Over recent years, more than 1,500 corporations have made 'net zero' commitments, an accomplishment applauded by the United

Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the U.N. Secretary-General."

"Increasingly, the concept of 'net zero' is being misconstrued in political spaces as well as by individual actors to evade action and avoid responsibility," the report states. "The idea behind big polluters' use of 'net zero' is that an entity can continue to pollute as usual—or even increase its emissions—and seek to compensate for those emissions in a number of ways. Emissions are nothing more than a math equation in these plans; they can be added one place and subtracted from another place."

"This equation is simple in theory but deeply flawed in reality," the paper asserts. "These schemes are being used to mask inaction, foist the burden of emissions cuts and pollution avoidance on historically exploited communities, and bet our collective future through ensuring long-term, destructive impact on land and forests, oceans, and through advancing geoengineering technologies. These technologies are hugely risky, do not exist at the scale supposedly needed, and are likely to cause enormous, and likely irreversible, damage."

Among the key findings of the report:

- Big polluters, including the fossil fuel and aviation industries, lobbied heavily to ensure passage of Q45, a tax credit subsidizing carbon capture and storage. A 2020 report (pdf) from the U.S. Treasury Department's inspector general found that fossil fuel companies improperly claimed nearly $1 billion in Q45 credits.
- The International Emissions Trading Association—described by the report's authors as "perhaps the largest global lobbyist on market and offsets, both pillars of polluters 'net zero' climate plans"—has leveraged its considerable power to push its

greenwashing agenda at international climate talks.

- Major polluters have contributed generously to universities including the Massachusetts Institute for Technology, Princeton University, Stanford University, and Imperial College London in an effort to influence "net zero"-related research. At Stanford's Global Climate and Energy Project, ExxonMobil retained the right to formally review research before completion and was allowed to place corporate staff members on development teams.

"The best, most proven approach to justly addressing the climate crisis is to significantly reduce emissions now in an equitable manner, bringing them close to Real Zero by 2030 at the latest," the report states, referring to a situation in which no carbon emissions are produced by a good or service without the use of offsets. "The cross-sectoral solutions we need already exist, are proven, and are scalable now… All that is missing is the political will to advance them, in spite of industry obstruction and deflection."

"People around the globe have already made their demands clear," the report says. "Meaningful solutions that can be implemented now are already detailed in platforms like the People's Demands for Climate Justice, the Liability Roadmap, the Energy Manifesto, and many other resources that encompass the wisdom of those on the frontlines of the climate crisis."

Sara Shaw, climate justice and energy program co-coordinator at Friends of the Earth International and one of the paper's authors, said "this report shows that 'net zero' plans from big polluters are nothing more than a big con. The reality is that corporations like Shell have no interest in genuinely acting to solve the climate crisis by reducing their emissions from fossil fuels. They instead plan to continue business as usual while greenwashing their image with tree planting and offsetting schemes that can never ever make up for digging up

and burning fossil fuels. We must wake up fast to the fact that we are falling for a trick. ‘Net zero’ risks obscuring a lack of action until it is too late.”

Lidy Nacpil, coordinator of the Asian Peoples Movement on Debt and Development—which endorsed the report—warned that “proclamations of ‘net zero’ targets are dangerous deceptions. ‘Net zero’ sounds ambitious and visionary but it actually allows big polluters and rich governments to continue emitting [greenhouse gases] which they claim will be erased through unproven and dangerous technologies, carbon trading, and offsets that shift the burden of climate action to the Global South. Big polluters and rich governments should not only reduce emissions to Real Zero, they must pay reparations for the huge climate debt owed to the Global South.”

In conclusion, the reports says world leaders must “listen to the people and once and for all prioritize people’s lives and the planet over engines of profit and destruction.”

“To avoid social and planetary collapse,” it states, “they must heed the calls of millions of people around the globe and pursue policies that justly, equitably transition our economies off of fossil fuels, and advance real solutions that prioritize life—now.”

Published at:
https://climateandcapitalism.com/2021/06/10/net-zero-emissions-is-a-dangerous-hoax/

Saoirse don Phalaistín T

Shirts

The wonderful Calton Books in Glasgow have just launched a new range of T shirts for solidarity with Palestine. Get yourself kitted out for the summer by buying one!

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Trans Liberation and Feminism

Oppression is not a direct result of physiological features but the social role assigned in general to those who have those features, and while the gender binary oppresses us all, it particularly oppresses those for whom it is a daily prison and for whom their/our daily transgression leads to physical and mental violence in the family, in the workplace and on the streets. That's among the many arguments in this document on support for Trans Liberation recently agreed by the Socialist Resistance Editorial Board (and endorsed by ecosocialist.scot). It was originally published here

Back to basics

Our understanding of the term gender is that it is separate from the term sex, the latter refers to physiological features, the former to a socially constructed role. To quote Simone de Beauvoir: 'one is not born but rather becomes a woman'. This has always been the general position of Marxist feminists – oppression is not a direct result of physiological features but the social role assigned in general to those who have those features.

There is obviously a whole lot of nuance available in understanding HOW the fact that MOST people with the physiological features identified with female give birth and nurture children impacted the social role of people with those same physiological (or perceived to be) features. The Fourth international 1979 resolution on women's liberation does not pretend to lay out a complete picture. However it is clear that our analysis and strategic orientation is not that of what we call radical feminists, i.e. that men are the root cause of women's oppression and thus the enemy.

We think neither sex nor gender are determinant in how people perceive themselves, it is possible for people to reject one

or both of them and many people do to greater or lesser extent. Women's oppression does not derive from our sex or biology rather from the societies in which we live that require us to have a primary role in social reproduction which plays an important role both in paid and unpaid labour in 'socially necessary labour time', the labour time that is required to keep production going for profit in capitalist economies.

Social reproduction is the reproduction of the labour power of the working class to serve its role in the capitalist economic system. A part of the production of socially necessary labour is done outside of the labour market in the home where it is not directly covered by wages. It is not physical reproduction only but also basic education, nursing, caring, cooking and cleaning of the family home and care, not only for children but others in our households that need support and assistance. Moreover, when women enter into the capitalist labour market, they often wind up trapped in employment which is based on traditional women's labour which is then viewed as unskilled and of little value and therefore worse paid that traditionally 'male' jobs.

Marxist feminists do not usually use the term 'the patriarchy' and indeed argue against its use explaining that the term gives rise to a conception that there are two systems: patriarchy and 'class society' (or 'capitalism', depending on which Marxists from which tradition you are discussing this with). There are a number of works on the question of 'dual systems' theory and indeed Lise Vogel's seminal work provides one way forward, and is the root of the development of social reproduction theory, which is explicitly Marxist, and called 'Towards a unitary theory'.

This is not counterposed in any way to also adopting an intersectional approach also within a Marxist framework in which different forms of oppression coexist, reinforce and sometimes contradict each other, and in which we have a

political responsibility to stand with the oppressed, working with those differences and turning them from weakness into strength.

A general agreement with this analytical approach is important because it affects how we act politically. If women's oppression derives from social constructs we can organise to change them, but if they are derived from biology then our options are much more limited.

As we understand it, those who call themselves 'gender critical' reject these positions and link the definition of woman **directly** to the physiological features. Note that we have not used the term 'Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists' (TERF) in this document, though it is used by some trans people to describe those that organise against them. The term is confusing because there are radical feminists who are trans inclusive and other feminists who would define themselves as socialist feminists who organise on the basis of 'sex-based rights' and are therefore trans (and intersex) exclusive. It is not helpful to use a term that people see as an insult when attempting rational discussion with those who may be influenced by these ideas.

The 'gender critical' people also demand specific rights for those born with (or assigned as born with, if the 'gender critical' people even envisage that possibility that things are assigned rather than simply wired in) the physiological features judged as women's – what they call 'sex based rights'. Such a road is dangerous – for what it would imply for other physical differences e.g. for disabled people or intersex people as well as trans people – and also completely unnecessary as we can't think of a circumstance where we would argue that rights should be granted on such a physiological basis. Furthermore, there is a hidden political trajectory in the argument of these groups, that for trans people to gain rights means taking them away from cis (non trans) women – this is like arguing for crumbs not the whole bloody bakery.

Binaries and determinism

Acceptance of the gender binary – by which we mean that throughout the natural and human world there are only ever two sexes and two genders – and that the sex assigned to everyone at birth is always in line with their physiology which is assumed in itself to be always uncomplicated – would also politically limit our options. There are many reputable articles which show that there is much evidence to the contrary in the biological sciences for example: https://www.nature.com/news/sex-redefined-1.16943 https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/voices/stop-using-phony-science-to-justify-transphobia/

As comrades have pointed, out there are parallels between some of the discussion in this frame and that about race and biology. It's surely inconvertible on the left that biological determinism has long been used to justify imperialism and racism. Notions of 'women's brains' seem to us to have terrifying parallels with the deeply reactionary notions of 'negroid brains' and so on. The need to think outside the binary is not only based on an understanding of biological sciences but also on the complexities of different human societies. See for example: http://www.gendertrust.org.uk/gender-concepts-around-the-world/.

Feminism in its many forms has always questioned gender stereotypes, whether they are about the socialisation of children into pink and blue, into different types of playthings, of recreational activities or into training and work, or notions of which competences should be more valued etc.

The gender binary oppresses us all, but particularly oppresses those for whom it is a daily prison and for whom their/our daily transgression leads to physical and mental violence in

the family, in the workplace and on the streets. It also leads to exclusion from services or their provision only on the basis of conformity to rules which negate individual selfhood.

A partial history

Gender identities outside the binary have always existed. Gender identities don't necessarily have a relationship to sexuality. But the construction of sexual identities in a more fixed way under capitalism have also had an impact on trans identities. Michelle O'Brien explains it like this in *Abolish The Family: The Working-Class Family and Gender Liberation in Capitalist Development*: 'In the prostitution and sexual subcultures of the industrializing city, people seized on new forms of gender transgression. A lexicon of cross-dressing emerged, as alongside cis sex workers other new transfeminine gender deviants walked the streets of London, Amsterdam and Paris: Mollies, Mary-Anns, he-she ladies, queens. They sold sex to the bourgeoisie on the streets, ran from police, fought in riots, held regular drag balls, and worked in one of the estimated two thousand brothels specializing in male-assigned sex workers scattered across London'. Similar points have been made, perhaps in less detail, by many others.

There is a complex relationship between early theories of gay and lesbian identities and trans identities in some early theories eg those of Ulrichs a very influential German writer and activist in the 1860s who described gay men as being of a third sex – 'Uranian' (derived from Plato's ancient discussion of that possible third category of being). Ulrichs' theories influenced Magnus Hirschfield who in 1897 founded the groundbreaking Scientific-Humanitarian Committee which campaigned for the decriminalisation of homosexuality (and won only partial support from the German Socialist Party before the Nazis took control).

These ideas had international impact, for example on English

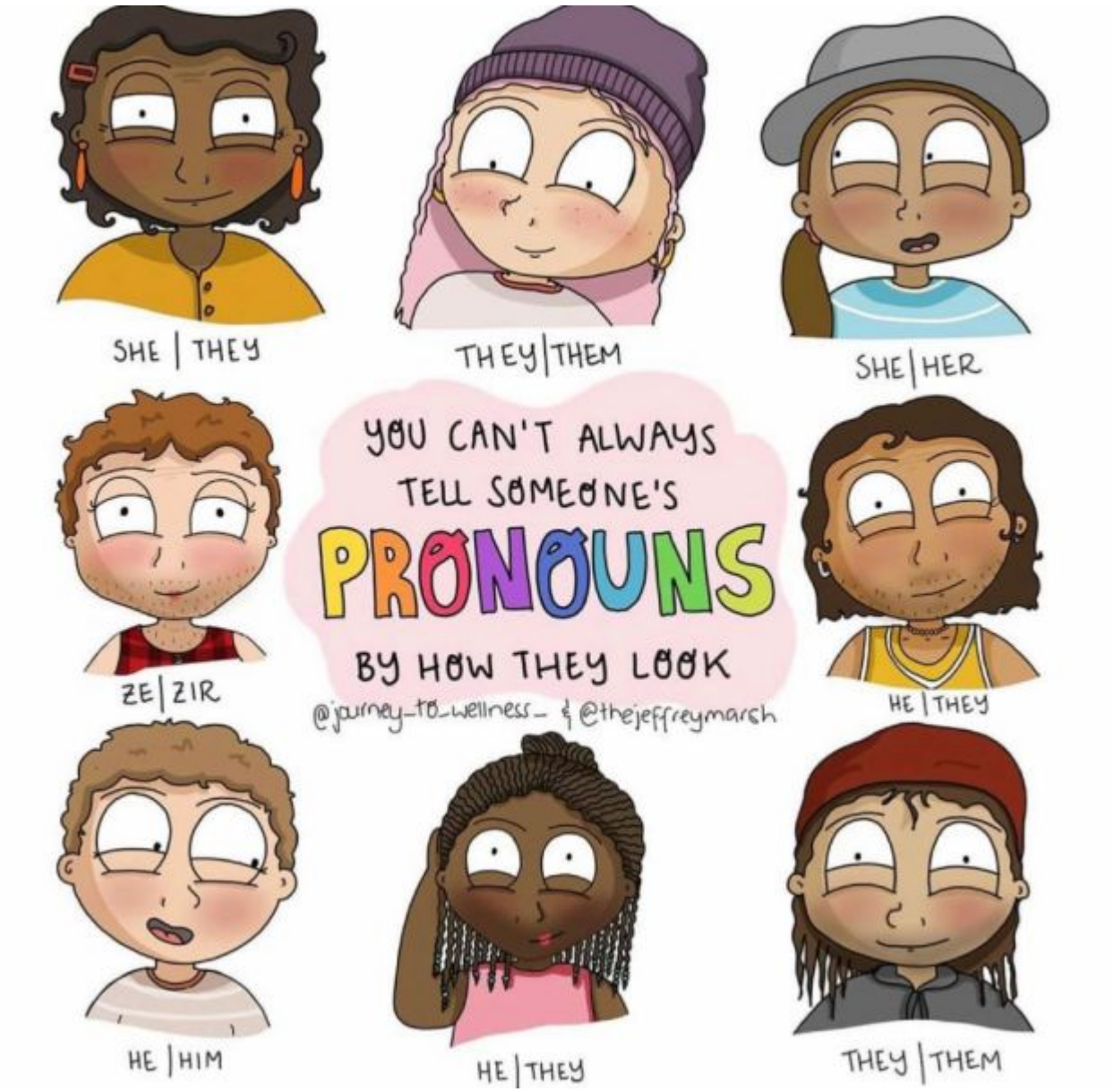
utopian socialist Edward Carpenter (1844 – 1929), who himself was a collaborator with the early socialist William Morris. And while these theories focused more on gay men, Radclyffe Hall's (1929) novel *The Well of Loneliness* also poses things in a similar framework.

The earliest recorded example of gender reassignment surgery is 1917. This kind of surgery became more frequent in the 1970s – with Jan Morris as a prominent example – but was hugely expensive and still pathologised. The Greek model, especially amongst men, i.e. the idea that young men were always passive and effeminate, was playing out in parts of the commercial gay scene as late as the 1970s in Britain.

O'Brien talks of the particular position of trans women of colour: 'Among queers in major US cities from the late 1950s on, trans women of color were the most starkly visible, leaving them the most vulnerable to street harassment and violence. They served as the consistent foil representing deviant queerness for police, mainstreaming gays, and gender radicals alike. Trans women of color were almost entirely excluded from formal wage labor, instead surviving through streetbased sex work and crime. These trans women of color likely numbered in the low hundreds in many American major cities, but acted as the central figures in a broader underworld of thousands of motley lumpenproletarian queers, including other non-passing gender deviants, homeless queer people, queer drug addicts, sex workers, and gay criminals'. While her account is based on the US it has much in common with developments in Britain and other advanced capitalist countries.

It is important to point out that while there have often, perhaps always, been a trans presence in the LGBTIQ movement, this has been differently described, and there are significant complexities about the relationship between concepts of gender and issues of sexuality. Both trans and other voices from the LGBT movement have pointed out that many of the tropes

directed against the LGBT movement as a whole are now directed primarily against trans people particularly in terms of the denial of the rights of young people.



Assessing trans oppression

Let us begin here by taking seriously key trans stats around mental health for trans people. Although this data is couched in terms of the mental health outcomes actually it contains information about how the actions of others are responsible for very negative impacts on trans lives.

- More than four in five (83 per cent) trans young people have experienced name-calling or verbal abuse, three in

five (60 per cent) have experienced threats and intimidation and more than a third (35 per cent) of trans young people have experienced physical assault. (Youth Chances 2014, sample size – 956)

- More than one in four (27 per cent) trans young people have attempted suicide and nine in 10 (89 per cent) have thought about it. 72 per cent have self-harmed at least once. (Youth Chances 2014, sample size – 956)
- Two in five (41 per cent) trans people have been attacked or threatened with violence in the last five years. (FRA LGBT Survey 2012, sample size – 813)
- In the last year alone, two thirds (65 per cent) of trans people have been discriminated against or harassed because of being perceived as trans. Over a third (35 per cent) avoid expressing their gender through physical appearance for fear of being assaulted, threatened or harassed. (FRA LGBT Survey 2012, sample size – 813)
- Almost three in four (70 per cent) trans people avoid certain places and situations for fear of being assaulted, threatened or harassed. (Trans Mental Health Survey 2012, sample size – 889)
- More than half (55 per cent) of trans people have experienced negative comments or behaviour at work because of being trans. (FRA LGBT Survey 2012, sample size – 813)
- One in four trans people report having been discriminated against at work. (FRA LGBT Survey 2012, sample size – 813)
- More than two in five (44 per cent) trans people have never disclosed to anyone at work that they are trans. (FRA LGBT Survey 2012, sample size – 813)
- Almost half (48 per cent) of trans people in Britain have attempted suicide at least once and 84 per cent have thought about it. More than half (55 per cent) have been diagnosed with depression at some point. (Trans Mental Health Survey 2012, sample size – 889)
- More than half (54 per cent) of trans people reported

that they have been told by their GP that they don't know enough about trans-related care to provide it. (Trans Mental Health Survey 2012, sample size – 889)

We have less information on more precisely what leads to these figures: of how much is violence or coercion to gender conformity within the family, how much discrimination and isolation at work, how much lack of support from health professions, and how much harassment and violence on the streets. UK police statistics show that in 2018 hate crimes against trans people went up 81%.

In her chapter 'Trans Work: Employment Trajectories, Labour Discipline and Gender Freedom' in the 2021 book Transgender Marxism, Michelle O'Brien talks in detail about the way that the rigid gendering of most work settings impacts on the limits the places accessible to trans people within the labour market. She notes that: 'The most systematic report on trans Americans available comes from a 2011 survey by the National Center for Transgender Equality, including 6500 respondents… The data on employment was dire: 28% of African-American trans respondents report being unemployed, and 12% of white trans people, compared to 7% of the general population; 15% of all trans respondents were living in extreme poverty, with incomes below $10,000 a year, four times the rate for the general population… 44% of African-American trans women reported experiences in sex work, and 28% of Latinx trans people'. (p.50)

The recent context in Britain

The debate in Britain, particularly the debate on the left, has been sharper for longer than anywhere else. The conflicts probably became sharper here because there was a push from trans organisations and individuals to reform the Gender Recognition Act. When the Act was passed in 2004 it was a step forward from what existed before though it was less radical

than what was being debated and in some cases passed elsewhere. (see: https://ilga.org/trans-legal-mapping-report)

Under the GRA, people have to prove to a doctor that they were living full time as 'the other' gender for years before they could access a gender recognition certificate (GRC) – and without a GRC all sorts of protections under the act are not there. The act was absolutely based on a (lack of) understanding that there was a single trans path determined by a medical and psychological model very similar to the debates around the 1967 sexual offences act for gay men.

In fact not all trans people want gender reassignment surgery. New terms were being created and increasingly used eg the notion of 'genderqueer' in the 1990s and, increasingly now, 'nonbinary'. According to official statistics, the proportion of the UK population who define as non-binary when given a choice between male, female and another option is 0.4%, which is 1 in 250 people (Titman, 2014). Around a quarter to a third of trans people identify in some way outside the gender binary: –
see: *https://www.allabouttrans.org.uk/about/resources/*

Trans organisations and inclusive LGBTIQ organisations were growing in this period and many more trans people were arguing that the path of the GRA was humiliating, demeaning and determined by the gender binary.

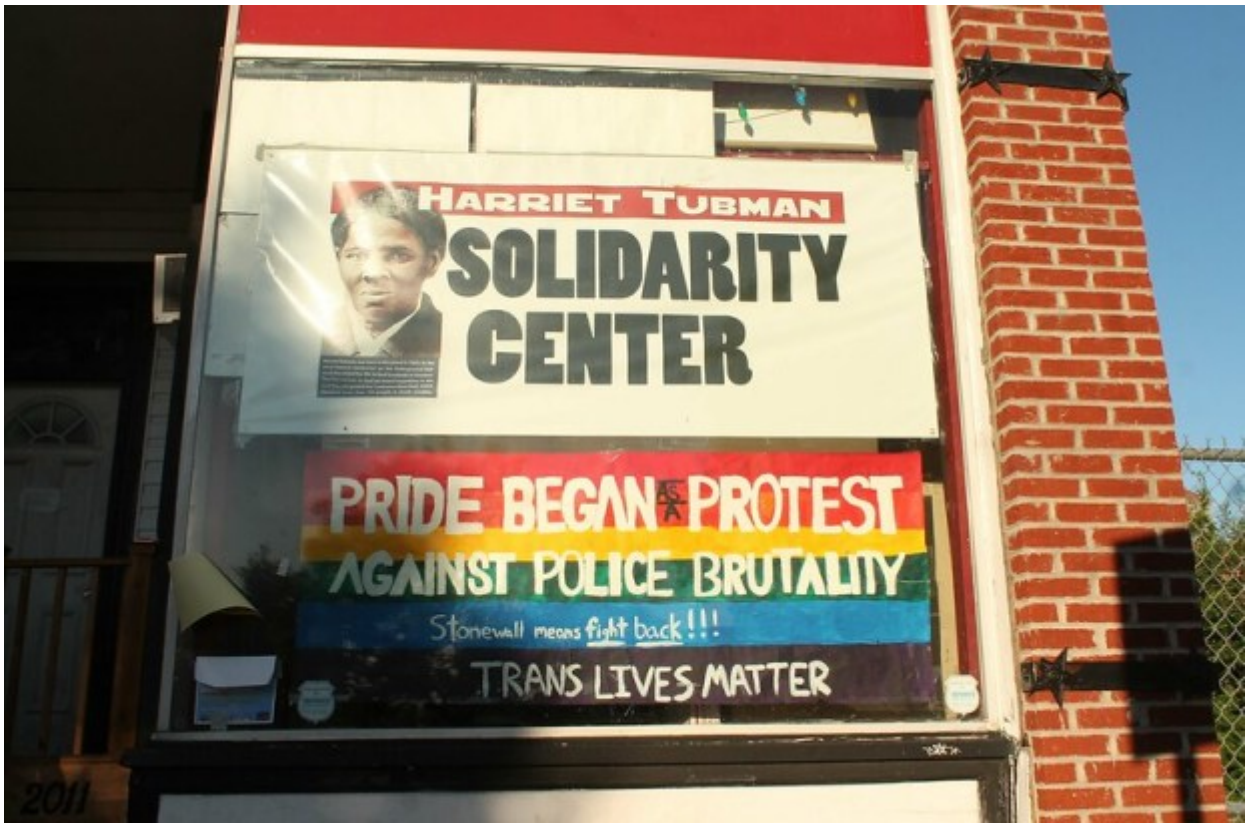
By the 2000s, there were far more vocal trans people speaking about the humiliating way that, for example, access to hormones was dependent on their convincing a doctor that they subscribed to traditional i.e. reactionary views of men and women's roles (even when they did not really subscribe to them at all, but had to pretend they did). There was also increasing knowledge of some of the work cited above in the scientific world that shows that a gender binary not only not universal but rare. There was also increasing work about the extent to which trans identities are embedded in many

different cultures in the global south in Africa and Asia in particular.

Of course, there are trans people who do hold a stereotypical view of the gender binary and of male and female roles (as there are cis people who do) – but the voices of those who don't were becoming louder and arguing that the GRA should be amended to support self id – i.e. the right of trans people to define their gender identity in the same way that people define their sexuality.

As Jules Gleeson points out here, the proposed reform of the GRA still offers virtually nothing to the even less highlighted position of intersex people. But discussions about changes in the law that would improve the lives of many trans people were used, consciously or not, by forces who wanted to prevent this happening.

Their ability to gain exposure for their reactionary views was enhanced by the weakness of socialist feminist thinking and organising in Britain at the time. It's instructive for example to contrast the powerful response of Irish feminists to an attempt to export such backward notions there. It was also and continues to be enhanced by a heavy bias in their favour in key media outlets – most notably the Guardian and Radio 4s Woman's Hour. And of course the Morning Star has played a particularly pernicious role in stoking up hatred towards trans.



Gaslighting

This was the context in which Womans Place UK was set up in September 2017 as they themselves put it: 'to ensure women's voices would be heard in the consultation on proposals to change the Gender Recognition Act i.e. from the beginning denying that trans women are women. They organise/d around 5 demands – which again are premised on that exclusionary principle. While their focus is debating with women, they also have a not insignificant and loyal following amongst men on the left.

The LGB alliance came later but takes a similar approach though its focus is to argue for a movement based only on sexuality- denying the actual history of queer movements.

They both focus on trans women in public speech – trans men are generally ignored, although can sometimes be subject to particularly vile abuse as 'traitors'. They claim to support trans rights and take great exception to being told that any of their demands, writings or speeches are transphobic – but in practice they don't support any of the demands trans people

make – of which self id is clearly the pivotal one.

Much of their rhetoric focuses on body parts in an almost scatological way – particularly impactful in a culture which is generally uncomfortable with bodies.

Parts of their rhetoric instrumentalise women who have experienced violence including sexual violence. Not only do they assume that all of us are cis but that all of us agree with them.

Their focus on toilets is particularly extraordinary. Many people's privacy and indeed health is far more impacted by the lack of accessible and free public toilets than by anyone you might meet there. There is nothing to stop someone who wanted to physically and/or sexually attack women – including trans women – from entering a toilet block to do that – especially when they are badly lit and rarely staffed. The attacks on the rights of young trans people are deeply reminiscent of attacks on LGB people from previous eras.

The misuse of the term 'no platform' has become a favourite trope for these groups who make a huge amount of noise, get a massive amount of media exposure to claim they have been silenced! We need to keep in mind that there is a legitimate, nay necessary debate about when an actual tactic of no platform should be use ie to physically prevent an event taking place by the mass mobilisation of the labour movement. Such should in my view be reserved for fascists – though it does have important analogies with effective picketing. This is an important discussion not least because the National Union of Students has taken a much broader position on when to take a No platform position. But that is different from politically choosing who to invite as speakers to trade union, LP or campaign meetings etc.

In general these organisations and their primary advocates use bad faith arguments which are based on bad/non-existent

science and denial of diversity of contemporary and historical human culture

More recently this has also been an increasingly polarising topic of conversation including within Plaid Cymru, the SNP, around the formation of Alba and within the Scottish Greens.

Our position

The practice of the Fourth International is trans inclusive (most evidently and over a long period of time through our youth camp), that is, **trans women are welcomed in our women's spaces**, and our most recent resolution on the women's movement is clearly trans inclusive.

This does not at all mean that we retreat from our position that the autonomous women's movement is a necessary strategic subject in the class struggle. That would mean for example that we are not in favour of erasing the mention of women, for example, from discussion of pre-natal care but of being inclusive.

The founding conference of ACR (Anti Capitalist Resistance [1]) overwhelmingly agreed a constitution which talks about 'trans people currently experiencing the sharp end of a backlash against their right to existand to unconditionally self-define their genders' and explicitly mentions transphobia as one of the things that the organisation opposes. This was strongly supported by the then 'Women's caucus' which subsequently agreed unanimously to rebadge itself as a 'Women's and non-binary caucus'.

There are moves to set up an LGBT caucus within the ACR which will include at least one comrade who identifies as nonbinary. We support these developments. Our activity in ACR is in line with a trans-inclusive position, and we will argue for that as we build that organisation.

Notes

[1] Anti Capitalist Resistance is a new revolutionary marxist organisation in England and Wales within which supporters of Socialist Resistance, British Section of the Fourth International, are active.

Reading list

Left resources

https://www.vice.com/en/article/9k7mzv/intersex-experience-gender-recognition-act-reforms Jules Gleeson

https://newsocialist.org.uk/whats-debate/ Jules Gleeson

https://www.anticapitalistresistance.org/post/notes-on-british-transphobia Rowan Fortune

https://redfightback.org/read/transphobia_in_the_left

To Abolish The Family: The Working-Class Family and Gender Liberation in Capitalist Development. *Endnotes* 5.. *Michelle O'Brien*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8pIj9KTxKsg Transgender Marxism book launch as part of Red May

https://www.plutobooks.com/9780745341668/transgender-marxism/
https://www.rs21.org.uk/2020/07/21/i-was-born-a-baby-not-a-boy-sex-gender-and-trans-liberation-2/?fbclid=IwAR0s7T53-GOqbuDBb2E1oXdj7Xif0lYdtL-FcktJahDN3qm7hFFjv167KV8

https://www.socialistparty.org.uk/keyword/LGBT_Pride/Trans/30302/19-02-2020/labour-party-and-trans-rights

https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/49506/The+fight+for+trans+rights

https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/49414/Socialist+Workers+Party+conference+debates+where+next+for+the+left

https://www.historicalmaterialism.org/articles/intersectionality-and-marxism

Far right and trans people

https://qz.com/807743/conservatives-have-created-a-fake-ideology-to-combat-the-global-movement-for-lgbti-rights/

https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2017/10/23/christian-right-tips-fight-transgender-rights-separate-t-lgb

https://www.thedailybeast.com/southern-baptist-convention-trans-people-dont-exist

Wider resources

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cd20hNQWKrw Dr Adrian Harrop on puberty blockers

https://www.allabouttrans.org.uk/about/resources/

https://www.nyctransoralhistory.org/

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TERF

http://bit.ly/SDtrans
https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/03/26/puberty-blockers-keira-bell-high-court-parent-consent-tavistock-portman-nhs-good-law-project/?fbclid=IwAR1OMCHWl2S826GufEm01yJIB4bO5S2IpTb6n-oYLidKVAaysSnxMxYyz0s
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Ecosocialist Alliance Statement on G7 Conference

Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US (and the EU) have a great part of the immense wealth of the richest countries in the world in 2021. This wealth is more than sufficient to provide for the needs for food, water, health, housing and education of the global population.

We face multiple interlinked and inseparable crises. Climate, environment, mass extinctions, emergent infectious diseases and economic. Oligarchic ownership of industry and the transnational corporations are key contributors to environmental degradation and to emergent infectious diseases crises. They are inimical and a core barrier to the urgent measures needed to address the nested crises we face.

The world and its population need system change, a just ecosocialist transition from the unsustainable chaos of neo-liberal capitalism.

We call upon the G7 nations to agree a plan in preparation for the COP26 meeting in November this year:

On the Covid-19 pandemic and emergent infectious disease crisis to:

- Immediately introduce a patent waiver for Covid-19 vaccines that would allow countries to manufacture treatments locally, fully fund COVAX, and set up an aid fund to help with vaccine manufacturing, research and development.
  Increase funding to the WHO.

On the Climate Crisis:

- Agree that fossil fuels must stay in the ground – (no new coal mine in west Cumbria, UK) – We need a massive global program of green public works investing in green jobs to develop renewable energy, replace harmful technology reliant on fossil fuel energy in homes, industry and agriculture, with free technology transfer for developing countries.
- Agree and implement a significant cut in greenhouse gas emissions of 70% by 2030, from a 1990 baseline. We need honest and transparent accounting in measurement of emissions, taking account of outsourcing, exposing the dishonesty of offsetting calculations, and including military greenhouse gas emissions in calculations of the reductions needed.
- End emissions trading schemes and make genuine reductions in harmful emissions.
- Recognise the particular impacts of the long-term global crisis and the knock-on effects on the localised catastrophic events on women, children, elders and disabled people – catastrophe climate events and sea level rises produce the casualties of the event, but the victims are the result of systematic abuse, discrimination, and failure of governmental and

corporate responsibility.

On the environment and mass extinction crises:

- Move away from massive factory farms and large scale monoculture agribusiness as a method of producing food and support small farmers and eco-friendly farming methods, and invest in green agricultural technology to reduce synthetic fertiliser and pesticide use in agriculture, replacing these with organic methods.
- End deforestation in the tropical and boreal forests by reducing demand in G7 countries for food, timber and biofuel imports.
- End food and nutrition insecurity for small farmers in the global south by promoting an agricultural system based on human rights and food sovereignty through giving local control over natural resources, seeds, land, water, forests and knowledge and technology.
- Commit to a massive increase in protected areas for biodiversity conservation, both in the G7 countries and make funding and support available to do this in the global south.
- To recognise that migration is already and will increasingly be driven by long term environmental change and degradation resulting from climate change, driven primarily by the historic emissions of the metropolitan countries of the global north – accommodating and supporting free movement of people must be a core policy and necessary part of planning for the future.

On the Economic Crisis:

- Increase wages and cut working hours for all G7 workers and involve trade unions in the economic transition without any loss of living standards, and to allow for greater worker involvement in workplace safety and resilience.
- Adopt ‘Just Transition’ principles, creating well paid

jobs in the new economy.

- Outlaw tax havens, so wealthy corporations and individuals pay their fair share to the economic recovery. The economic costs of the pandemic should not be borne by those least able to do so.
- Cancel all international debt of the global south
- Support urgent development of sustainable and affordable public transport
- Provide resources for popular education and involvement in implementing and enhancing a just transition

If groups/individuals would like to add their name to this statement please email eco-socialist-action@proton.com, stating your country of residence. Also, get details of our Zoom public meeting on 9 June, 19:00 hours (BST).

Groups

Green Left (UK)

Left Unity (UK)

RISE (Ireland)

Anti Capitalist Resistance (UK)

Ecosocialist Independent Group (UK) Lancaster City Council

Global Ecosocialist Network (International)

Anti-Fracking Nanas (UK)

Green Eco-Socialist Network (USA)

Socialist Project (Canada)

System Change Not Climate Change (USA/Canada)

Pittsburgh Green Left (USA)

Individuals

Beatrix Campbell (UK) (OBE, writer and broadcaster)

Romayne Phoenix (UK)

Victor Wallis (USA) (ecosocialist author)

Professor Krista Cowman (UK), historian

Dee Searle (UK)

Lucy Early (UK)

Patrick Bond (South Africa)

Derek Wall (UK) ecosocialist author, Lecturer in Political Economy, former Green Party of England and Wales International Co-ordinator

John Foran (USA)

Felicity Dowling (UK)

Steve Masters (UK) (Green Party of England and Wales activist & West Berkshire District Councillor)

Dr. Henry Adams (UK) (ecologist & environmental activist)

Charles Gate, (UK)

Nicole Haydock (UK)

Gordon Peters (UK)

Mark Hollinrake (UK)

Pat McCarthy (UK)

Clive Healiss (UK)

Rafael Arturo Guariguata (Germany)

Declan Walsh (UK)

Jim Hollinshead (UK)

Ken Barker (UK)

Tina Rothery (UK)

John Burr (UK)

Emma Lorraine Coulling (UK)

Andrew Francis Robinson (UK)

Richard Finnigan (UK)

Frank McEntaggart (UK)

Roger Silverman (UK)