

# **Climate Camp Grangemouth – 12-17 June 2023 – Indigenous leader and Ukrainian activist among international speakers**

**At Climate Camp Grangemouth  
community groups, local people,  
workers and climate activists will  
assemble for a people-powered  
‘festival of resistance’.**

Learn practical skills, watch local and international talks and films, meet new people, explore local nature and history, play games and take collective action! Vegan food will be provided on site and the camp will be fully equipped with compost toilets and camping space.

□

## **[Book a place](#)**

INEOS Grangemouth is Scotland's most polluting site and billionaire owner Jim Ratcliffe stashes record profits in a tax haven while the community here are blighted by pollution and struggling with food and gas bills.

Climate camp will be a place to build a just transition led by people, not billionaires, to resist and reimagine a greener

future together.

Details about the programme, travel and practical information can be found in [the Camp Guide](#). And remember to [book your place](#) and donate to [help us cover our costs](#).

## Climate Camp Scotland Press Release 27 June 2023

### Indigenous leader and Ukrainian activist among international speakers at camp



- Indigenous leader and Ukrainian activist among international speakers to address Climate Camp in Grangemouth
- The programme of events for Climate Camp Grangemouth, taking place 12-17th July, has been released and will include a number of international speakers, as well as sessions focusing on Scottish independence and land rights.

- The Camp will be opened by Indigenous leader Leonidas Iza, Ecuadorian activist (pictured above) and president of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador.
- Grangemouth will also hear from Ukrainian activist Iryna Zamuruieva about the Russian destruction of land and environment in Ukraine, and autonomous resistance in the country.
- Campaigners from Kurdistan and India will also speak at the camp.
- The camp will challenge INEOS's petrochemical plant in Grangemouth, Scotland's biggest polluter, emitting 2,752,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> in 2020 (1)

**Free Photos of speakers and camp at this link:**

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1KG1UspbztIfMgBBLPpJ4\\_tEK7eEoNekX?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1KG1UspbztIfMgBBLPpJ4_tEK7eEoNekX?usp=sharing)

International speakers and activists will join local communities and campaigners as part of the programme at a climate camp in Grangemouth.

Held from 12 to 17th July, the camp is a chance for local residents, workers and activists to meet and build relationships. With guests from Ecuador, Ukraine, Kurdistan and India, the camp aims to forge solidarity between those affected by the fossil fuel industry worldwide.

The camp will be opened on 12th July by Ecuadorian activist Leonidas Iza, leader of the country's biggest indigenous group. Iza led the 2019 and 2022 protests against the Ecuadorian government's austerity measures and rising fuel prices, which disproportionately impacted the country's poorest.

Later in the programme, campaigner Iryna Zamuruieva will hold a session about Russia's destruction of Ukrainian ecosystems and land, exploring the resistance to such practices in the country.

Other international speakers include representatives of the Internationalist Youth Coordination, who will share knowledge on Kurdish ecology and youth mobilisation, as well as a session on LGBTQ+ climate activism in India. Discussions on land rights, rewilding and Scottish independence will also feature, among other topics.

Quân Nguyễn, a spokesperson for Climate Camp Scotland, said:

*"Climate Camp Grangemouth is an orientation point for climate activists to think about our strategies and tactics, and how we can restore momentum to hold polluters and governments to account. Having so many activists and resistance leaders from abroad leading the debate helps us learn from those on the frontline of the climate crisis. This knowledge in the face of an ever intensifying climate crisis is more urgently needed than ever."*

Climate Camp Grangemouth speaker Iryna Zamuruieva added:

*"Ukraine's resistance is also a climate justice struggle. This war reinforces the need to end the fossil fuel economy which Russia uses to fund ecocide and genocide. It also shows the need to join up our struggle with those defending their kin-regions against imperial and colonial violence."*

INEOS petrochemical plant in Grangemouth, the location for this year's climate camp, is Scotland's biggest polluter, emitting 2,752,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> in 2020. Last month INEOS refused to participate in a Parliamentary inquiry about transition at Grangemouth (2) Levels of inequality in the surrounding areas are high, with 25% of children in the

Falkirk council area living under the poverty line (3) while INEOS's owner, Jim Ratcliffe, consistently ranks as one of the UK's richest people (4).

The organisers of the camp say that this same pattern of inequality and exploitation exists across the world. By bringing international leaders and activists together, they hope to learn from each other's struggles for fairness, equality and safe environments.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

*Climate Camp Grangemouth is being coordinated by Climate Camp Scotland, who are bringing workers, front-line communities, and climate action groups together to build the movement for a swift just transition from fossil fuels, and to take mass action that brings about climate justice.*  
[www.climatecampscotland.com](http://www.climatecampscotland.com)

1. INEOS controls four sites in the top 20 climate polluters in Scotland, all in Grangemouth town. See: <https://theferret.scot/rogues-gallery-climate-polluters-top-20-revealed/>

2. Petrochemical giant Ineos snubs Scottish Government net zero committee refusing to 'go on the record' – Falkirk Herald <https://www.falkirkherald.co.uk/news/environment/petrochemical-giant-ineos-snubs-scottish-government-net-zero-committee-refusing-to-go-on-the-record-4126406>

3. One in four children across Falkirk council area living in poverty – Falkirk Herald <https://www.falkirkherald.co.uk/news/politics/council/one-in-four-children-across-falkirk-council-area-living-in-poverty-4179839>

4. Manchester United bidder Jim Ratcliffe up to second on UK rich list – The Guardian – <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/may/19/manchester-un>

[ited-bidder-jim-ratcliffe-up-to-second-on-uk-rich-list-hinduja-family-richard-branson](#)

Republished from Climate Camp Scotland website:

<https://www.climatecampscotland.com/>

---

# **Solidarity with Kyiv Pride! Leaflet distributed at Edinburgh Pride**

*The following leaflet was distributed by Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland at the Edinburgh Pride march on 24 June 2023.*

## **SOLIDARITY WITH KYIV PRIDE**

It is currently impossible to stage Pride marches in Kyiv [due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine](#). Last year, the Kyiv Pride March was held in Warsaw. The Ukraine Solidarity Campaign (Scotland) distributed Kyiv Pride solidarity leaflets at Edinburgh Pride.

This year Liverpool will host Kyiv's annual Pride with the city's own march being held jointly with Ukrainian organisers KyivPride. The announcement comes just a few weeks after Liverpool [hosted the Eurovision Song Contest on behalf of Ukraine](#), which organisers said gave a "massive boost" to the city's LGBTQ+ scene.

Andi Herring, CEO of the LCR Pride Foundation, said. "Even in the UK, we are all aware of how easily these rights can be backtracked on or removed entirely, that is why we are proud to share our March with Pride this year with the LGBT+ communities of Ukraine. It is a message of solidarity, of unity and of hope for people here in Liverpool City Region and in Kyiv." And in Scotland, we have seen the right wing UK Tory government (with no resistance from Sir Keir Starmer's Labour 'opposition') overriding the democratic decision of Holyrood to implement Gender Recognition Reform.

Lenny Emson, who was a founding member of KyivPride a decade ago and has led the organisation as an Executive Director for the last two years, said: "The Russian invasion took our right to march away from us. But international solidarity gives us a chance to keep marching for Ukraine, for LGBTQI rights, for freedom. KyivPride supports self-determination in its national, social and individual senses. and the Ukrainian people's right to militarily resist the Russian occupiers.

### **UKRAINE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN (SCOTLAND)**

**<https://www.facebook.com/USCScotland/>**

### **СОЛІДАРНІСТЬ З КИЇВСЬКИМ ПРАЙДОМ**

Через російську агресію, на даний момент проведення прайдів у Києві неможливе. Минулого року Варшава прийняла київський Марш рівності; Українська кампанія солідарності (Шотландія) розповсюдила листівки про цей марш на єдинбурзькому Прайді.

Цього року Ліверпуль прийматиме щорічний київський Прайд. Хо́да буде проведена спільно з КиївПрайдом,

українськими організаторами київського Маршу рівності. Це станеться всього через кілька тижнів після того, як Ліверпуль прийняв пісенний конкурс Євробачення від України, який, за словами організаторів, дав «значний поштовх» ЛГБТК+ сцені міста.

Енді Геррінг, генеральний директор ліверпульської організації LCR Pride Foundation, сказав, що «Навіть у Великій Британії ми всі усвідомлюємо, як легко можна втратити наші права, тому ми з гордістю ділимо наш прайд-марш із ЛГБТ+ спільнотами України. Це послання солідарності, єдності та надії для людей тут, у регіоні міста Ліверпуль, і в Києві». А в Шотландії ми бачили, як правий британський уряд Консервативної партії (без опору з боку лейбористської «опозиції») скасував демократичне рішення шотландського уряду про реформу гендерного визнання.

Ленні Емсон, який був одним із засновників КиївПрайду десять років тому і очолював організацію як виконавчий директор протягом останніх двох років, сказав: «Російське вторгнення відібрало в нас право маршувати. Але міжнародна солідарність дає нам шанс продовжувати маршувати за Україну, за права ЛГБТКІ, за свободу. КиївПайд підтримує самовизначення в національному, соціальному та індивідуальному сенсі. та право українського народу на військовий опір російським окупантам».

**УКРАЇНЬКА КАМΠΑНІЯ СОЛІДАРНОСТІ (ШОТЛАНДІЯ)**

**<https://www.facebook.com/USCScotland/>**

---



# Climate Change Committee Report – None of this is Working

*Mike Small, editor of [Bella Caledonia](#), reports on the latest report of the government's Committee on Climate Change and exposes the latest incarnation of climate denialism and pandemic disinformation at the heart of Westminster.*

John Gummer's latest (and last) [Committee on Climate Change](#) report has just dropped and it's damning. It says we're falling behind and nowhere close to enough on all fronts in tackling the climate crisis and this is caused by the total vacuum of political leadership at the heart of the British government. The headlines are: "UK has made 'no progress' on climate plan, say government's own advisers".

Incredibly fewer homes were insulated last year under the government-backed scheme than the year before, despite soaring energy bills and a cost of living crisis. There is pitiful progress on transport emissions, and no coherent programme for behaviour change (there's a surprise).

The report also found:

The number of homes receiving energy efficiency improvements under the government's Energy Company Obligation scheme more than halved, from 383,700 in 2021 to 159,600 in 2022. At least 1m to 2m homes should be upgraded each year to meet net zero.

Homes are still being built that will need to be retrofitted with low-carbon heating and efficiency measures, because the government has not yet brought in its promised future homes standard.

No decision on whether to use hydrogen for home heating will be made until 2026, leaving households and boiler companies in complete limbo.

Emissions from transport have remained “stubbornly high” as the government has “made a political choice” to allow an increase in road traffic, instead of encouraging people on to public transport.

There is no clear policy to decarbonise steel production, or emissions from other heavy industries.

In a letter from [Lord Deben \(Gummer\), Chairman of the Climate Change Committee](#), to Rishi Sunak about the 2023 Progress Report he bemoaned “The failure to act decisively in response to the energy crisis and build on the success of hosting COP26 means that the UK has lost its clear global climate leadership.” This idea of the success of COP26 or of Britain’s ‘climate leadership’ is a Tory myth and an appeal to national hubris. He also complained about the ‘Inaction has been compounded by continuing support for further unnecessary investment in fossil fuels.’ Like, No Shit Sherlock.

The illusion of action, the mythology that meaningful change is underway is laid bare.

## **Climate Denialism and Pandemic Disinformation**

Meanwhile (h/t to Leo Hickman) a letter to the Daily Telegraph has revealed for the first time the names and numbers of the tiny grouping of climate-sceptic UK parliamentarians who call themselves the “Net Zero Scrutiny Group”. There’s no surprises:

Craig Mackinlay MP (Con)  
Sir Iain Duncan-Smith MP (Con)  
Sir Jacob Rees-Mogg MP (Con)  
Lord Frost (Con)  
Esther McVey MP (Con)  
Sir John Redwood (Con)  
Dame Andrea Jenkyns (Con)  
Sir Robert Syms (Con)  
Mark Francois (Con)  
David Jones (Con)  
Kelly Tolhurst (Con)  
Sammy Wilson (DUP)  
Andrew Lewer (Con)  
Jack Brereton (Con)  
Miriam Cates (Con)  
Chris Green (Con)  
Jonathan Gullis (Con)  
Philip Hollobone (Con)  
Adam Holloway (Con)  
Julian Knight (Ind)  
Marco Longhi (Con)  
Karl McCartney (Con)  
Holly Mumby-Croft (Con)  
Philip Davies (Con)  
Bob Seely (Con)  
Greg Smith (Con)  
Andrew Bridgen (Reclaim)  
Scott Benton (Ind)  
Baroness Foster of Oxton (Con)  
Baroness Lea of Lymm (Con)  
Lord Lilley (Con)  
Lord Moylan (Con)  
Lord Strathcarron (Con)

The Telegraph splashed with a [front-page 'scoop'](#) from the “Net Zero Scrutiny Group” clearly designed to distract from the Committee on Climate Change’s damning report But as John Bye has pointed out there’s an interesting crossover between the Net Zero Scrutiny Group and the [All-Party Parliamentary Group ‘Pandemic Response and Recovery’](#).

This crossover includes such luminaries as Esther McVey (Chair), Sammy Wilson (Vice Chair), Iain Duncan Smith, Baroness Foster of Oxton, and Lord Strathcarron.



## About the Group

The Group's objective is to provide an open forum for politicians, scientists, economists, business leaders, health professionals and other experts, to facilitate broad, balanced and open discussion, to inform a more focused and flexible approach to government policy; to search for new solutions in pandemic management to prevent suffering and loss in the future.

The APPG will examine evidence from scientists, health professionals, individuals and organisations from both sides of the debate.

### Co-Chairs



Rt Hon Esther McVey MP



Graham Stringer MP

### Vice-Chairs



Miriam Cates MP



Baroness Foster of Otton



Rt Hon Samery Wilson MP

### Members



Sir Iain Duncan Smith MP



Greg Smith MP



The Earl of Leicester



Baroness Mortimer



Dawn Butler MP



Henry Smith MP



Sir Graham Brady MP



Chris Green MP



Ian Paisley MP



Lord Strathearn



Philip Davies MP



Baroness Fox of Buckley



Lord Moylan



Baroness Hoolker



Lord Robathan



Paul Givan MP

The APPG group has some interesting backers. As Byline Times reported the group is “being funded and managed by Collateral Global – the successor organisation to the ‘Great Barrington

Declaration' (GBD), established by two of its co-founders, Oxford epidemiologist Professor Sunetra Gupta and Ministry of Defence contractor Alex Caccia."

"The GBD is a pandemic disinformation group [backed](#) by the Koch climate science denial network, known for promoting a 'herd immunity by natural infection' approach to the Coronavirus crisis."



---

#### Support from HART and Climate Science Deniers

The APPG has also received PR support from the Health Advisory and Recovery Group (HART), which harbours a range of conspiratorial anti-vaxxer views about the pandemic – including the idea that Coronavirus death certificates are fake, that deaths are really being caused by vaccines rather than COVID, and that the both the disease and vaccines are part of a global depopulation conspiracy by elites.

A press release announcing the creation of the APPG was sent out by Jemma Moran – HART's head of communications.

Baroness Foster was conferred a Life Peerage after a nomination by Prime Minister Boris Johnson as part of the 2020 Political Honours. In January 2021, she was elevated to the Lords as Baroness Foster of Oxton. Not to be confused with Baroness Fox (aka Claire Fox, aka Claire Foster), also a great

Koch enthusiast, also present.

This convergence between the far-right, libertarian conspiracism and climate denialism is not a coincidence.

The APPG also include Labour MP Graham Stringer who is a trustee of the Koch-connected Global Warming Policy Foundation, Britain's most prominent climate science denial lobby group which takes funds from fossil fuels companies.

Stringer has denied the IPCC's conclusion that humans are the dominant cause of current climate change. So has his colleague in the APPG, the DUP's Sammy Wilson, that human-induced climate change is a "myth based on dodgy science".

Today's revelations will be no real new news to anyone. We all knew this anyway, but now it's official, laid out by the government's own committee. While we are led to believe that progress is being made and everything is in hand, the government is actually going backwards, introducing anti-climate policies so that nothing can change.

28 June 2023

[Mike Small](#)

Republished

from:

<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2023/06/28/none-of-this-is-working/>

**Support independent Scottish journalism –  
Bella Caledonia  
– <https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/donate>**

---

# **France – Criminal policing, systemic racism, anti-social policies: supporting a legitimate revolt**

Statement by leaders of the NPA (New Anticapitalist Party France)

Since the death of young Nahel, working-class neighbourhoods have been mobilizing. This mobilization is legitimate. And the source of the violence lies with the police, Darmanin and Macron, who are responsible for this situation.

## **An anti-racist, anti-authoritarian revolt**

For years, those in power have been strengthening the police and racist arsenal: police violence is increasingly regular and deadly, at demonstrations and in working-class neighbourhoods. With rare exceptions, the perpetrators of this violence enjoy organized impunity.

In the police force, it is the far right that sets the tone. Remember that “angry” police organizations demonstrated on the Champs-Élysées, and that they are still demanding more freedom to kill.

Macron and Darmanin are collaborating and contributing to all this by supporting and reinforcing this impunity, and through the many racist and freedom-destroying laws that strengthen the police and the far right: the separatism law, security laws, etc. Not to mention the authoritarian management of Covid and the repression of social and environmental

movements.

The mobilization of working-class neighbourhoods is an opportunity for the working classes as a whole and for the world of work: it paves the way for a social mobilization for justice, against police repression, against the authoritarian power that also expressed itself through the anti-democratic methods used during the movement on pensions, with the 49-3, the 47-1, etc. This authoritarianism is at the heart of the social movement. This authoritarianism has been at work for years, with bans on demonstrations and violent episodes of repression, as well as the dissolution of the CCIF (Collectif contre l'Islamophobie) and Soulèvements de la Terre. [[1](#)]

## **Justice for all!**

Justice means, first and foremost, justice for Nahel, for Zyed and Bouna, for Adama, for Alhoussein, for the three young people in the 20th arrondissement of Paris who were hit by a police car, for all the victims of police violence, for the people maimed in the protests. The guilty parties must be punished, and the victims and their families must be compensated.

We must put an end to preventive detention and release the young people imprisoned as a result of the demonstrations of recent nights. Let's not forget that all the responsibility for these events lies with the government.

Public transport must be re-established in the neighbourhoods, and any state of emergency or curfew must be rejected.

The police must be disarmed immediately.

And (minister of the interior) Darmanin must resign.

Beyond that, we need social justice: the anger we are seeing today is at the same time the expression of a much deeper revolt, against racism, against the stigmatization of people



living in working-class neighbourhoods, against racialized people, against Islamophobia, against poverty that is growing, particularly as a result of inflation, low wages, job insecurity, attacks on unemployment insurance, the destruction of public services, etc.

## **Supporting and extending the revolt**

Make no mistake about it: while Macron's government is increasingly repressive, it is not the only one in the world to act in this way. Repression is the rulers' only response to the economic, ecological, social and political crisis into which they have plunged the world.

The NPA calls on people to mobilize alongside angry young people, to gather in front of town halls, every evening if necessary, to express our rage and our demands. It calls on the organisations of the workers' movement, trade unions, associations and parties to meet as soon as possible to discuss how to build a mobilization on the scale and in the forms that will support the current revolt, obtain justice and launch a counter-offensive against the anti-democratic and anti-social power of Macron and his government.

CHRISTINE POUPIN, OLIVIER BESANCENOT, PAULINE SALINGUE,  
PHILIPPE POUTOU

*30 June 2023*

Christine Poupin is a trade union activist in the chemicals sector and a national spokesperson for the NPA in France.

Olivier Besancenot is one of the best-known leaders of the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA), formed in 2009 following a call by the Revolutionary Communist League (Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR), French section of the Fourth International). As candidate for the LCR in the presidential elections in 2002 and 2007, he received 1.2 million votes (4.5%) and 1.5 million votes (4.2%) respectively. He is a

postal worker in the Paris region.

Pauline Salingue is a spokesperson of the NPA.

Philippe Poutou, the NPA candidate in the French presidential elections in 2012 and 2017, works in the Ford cars factory in Bordeaux.

Republished from International Viewpoint:  
<http://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article8146>

Original in French:  
<https://lanticapitaliste.org/actualite/antiracisme/police-criminelle-racisme-systemique-politiques-antisociales-soutenir-une>

---

## Hugo Blanco 15 Nov1934 - 25 June 2023

**Derek Wall celebrates the life of his friend and comrade Hugo Blanco**

Hugo Blanco, who died on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> June, was an almost mythical Peruvian revolutionary leader. I had the pleasure of working with him and it is fair to say all of us who met him found not a cold legend but a warm and beautiful human being.

He led a peasant uprising in the 1960s, which while successful in achieving land rights, saw him spend many years in prison, often in very difficult conditions and for much of the time on death row. He was at the time a leading member of the [Fourth International](#) and maintained warm contact with the FI up until his death. In recent decades, inspired by the Zapatistas and other indigenous movements, he published the newspaper [Lucha Indigena](#) ('Indigenous Fight').

There are three things, at least, which are important about Hugo Blanco. Firstly, he was a continuous active revolutionary militant from his student days right up until final illness. Secondly, he took an open comradely approach to this militancy, working with others and being flexible as to appropriate tactics. Thirdly, he was a pioneering ecosocialist, promoting an ecological approach to revolutionary activism before many of us were conscious of this element.

There is so much to say about his long life, it is difficult to know where to start perhaps. However, a key moment for Hugo was hearing about an indigenous person being physically branded with a hot iron. Though only a school student at the time, hearing of this started him on a lifelong path of working against oppression, particularly the oppression of indigenous peoples.

He became a Trotskyist as a student in Argentina in the 1950s. He, like many other Latin Americans was appalled by the coup led by the CIA in Guatemala in 1954. Attending a demonstration, he heard different speakers from different political currents, he was most impressed by the speaker who called for the masses in Guatemala to be armed. Learning that the speaker was a Trotskyist, Hugo decided he was a Trotskyist too.

He soon became a committed party member and worked at various factories before moving back to Peru to organise the masses. He was held in a police cell overnight in Cusco for organising workers. He shared his cell with three individuals from the La Convención region, bordering the Peruvian Amazon. They asked him to move to their region and help with their struggle for land rights, a struggle that accelerated with landowners murdering the peasants occupying land. In response, Hugo organised armed self-defence groups, with the conflict leading to both victory and imprisonment.

Released in 1970 by the new Peruvian military government, Hugo became active once again supporting trade union disputes and other struggles. He was exiled. Variouslly he spent time in Mexico, Argentina and Chile. He was in Chile during the coup against Allende's socialist government, narrowly escaping death as he was rescued by the Swedish Embassy. His beard was shaved off, he was put in a suit and spirited out under the name of Hans Bloom. His daughter Carmen went to school with daughter of the Swedish Ambassador; but for this he might well have been killed.

He lived for a time in Sweden, returned to Peru and was involved in many more struggles, indeed he was once a candidate for the Presidency and spent some time as a Senator. As Senator he was particularly engaged with environmental protection. Threatened with death by both the state security services and Shining Path, he was exiled, once again, this time back to Mexico.

He was least enthusiastic about his participation in electoral politics and in the last twenty years has been committed to grassroots militancy rather than traditional Leninism. There is, however, continuity in his approach, which has always focused on mass democratic struggles and decision making "I have always respected the indigenous characteristic that it is the community that is responsible, not the individual. Even when we took up arms, it was the masses who decided to defend themselves". ([Hugo Blanco, the Peruvian ecosocialist – International Viewpoint – online socialist magazine](#))

Equally his ecological struggles were rooted though in his life-long commitment to land rights. Lucha Indigena has supported many, many workers', indigenous and ecological struggles not just in Peru but across the world. Hugo has toured many countries in support of ecosocialists' campaigns, and in 2019 met Greta Thunberg in Stockholm. Hugo argued that environmental politics is rooted in the struggles of the oppressed, [noting](#)

There are in Peru a very large number of people who are environmentalists. Of course, if I tell such people, you are ecologists, they might reply, "ecologist your mother" or words to that effect. Let us see, however. Isn't the village of Bambamarca truly environmentalist, which has time and again fought valiantly against the pollution of its water from mining? Are not the town of Ilo and the surrounding villages which are being polluted by the Southern Peru Copper Corporation truly environmentalist? Is not the village of Tambo Grande in Piura environmentalist when it rises like a closed fist and is ready to die in order to prevent strip-mining in its valley?

It is impossible in a thousand words or even five thousand to properly honour and describe his various political campaigns or indeed his numerous often near miraculous escapes from death. However perhaps the best epitaph and summary comes from another Latin American revolutionary.

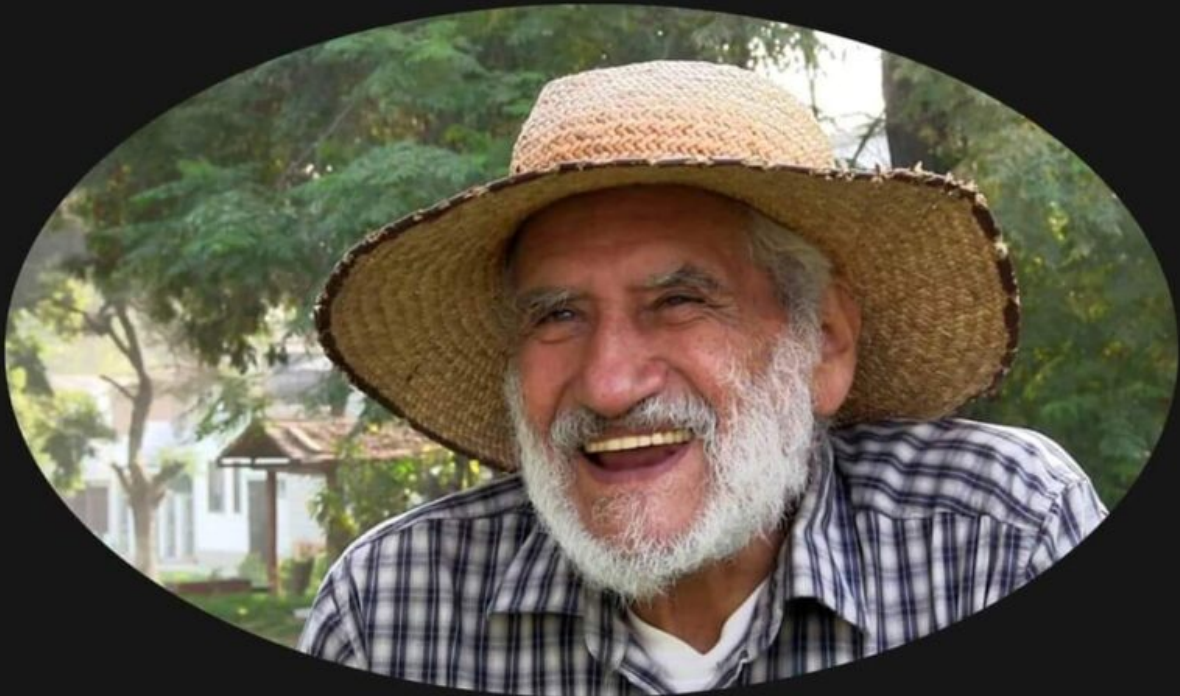
In Algiers in 1963 Che Guevara [noted](#):

Hugo Blanco is the head of one of the guerrilla movements in Peru. He struggled stubbornly but the repression was strong. I don't know what his tactics of struggle were, but his fall does not signify the end of the movement. It is only a man that has fallen, but the movement continues. One time, when we were preparing to make our landing from the Granma, and when there was great risk that all of us would be killed, Fidel said: "What is more important than us is the example we set." It's the same thing. Hugo Blanco has set an example'

And Hugo kept setting the example for decades after, the best way to honour his life is to continue his legacy of indigenous solidarity, ecosocialism and practical, focused revolutionary commitment.

There is a film about Hugo released in 2020, [Río Profundo](#), and many, many interviews from him that can be

read. He was a huge inspiration to all of us who met him.



# ANGEL HUGO BLANCO GALDOS

15.11.1934 - 25.06.2023

THERE ARE MEN WHO STRUGGLE FOR A DAY  
AND THEY ARE GOOD.

THERE ARE MEN WHO STRUGGLE FOR A YEAR  
AND THEY ARE BETTER.

THERE ARE MEN WHO STRUGGLE MANY YEARS,  
AND THEY ARE BETTER STILL.

BUT THERE ARE THOSE WHO STRUGGLE  
ALL THEIR LIVES:

THESE ARE THE INDISPENSABLE ONES.

— BERTOLT BRECHT

Derek Wall wrote [Hugo Blanco: A Revolutionary For Life](#) published by Merlin/Resistance books in 2018

Resistance Books and Merlin also published [We the Indians:—The indigenous peoples of Peru and the struggle for land](#) in the same year.

Republished from Red Green Labour —  
<https://redgreenlabour.org/2023/06/28/hugo-blanco-15-11-1934%E2%80%9106-2023/>

---

## **Ecosocialist Film Night: PickAxe – Tuesday 27 June, 6.30pm, Glasgow**

To book tickets, click >>> [HERE](#)

Join us for a showing of PickAxe, a 1999 documentary about the victorious struggle of American eco-activists to stop the logging of a protected, old growth forest at Warner Creek in Oregon.

When Warner Creek suffered an arson attack which led to a wildfire in 1991, the forest service sold off the protected woods to the highest bidder to be salvage-logged. In order to stop that, activists occupied the logging road into Warner Creek with a fortified camp, tore up the tarmac with pickaxes, and settled in for a months-long battle against the park service, the timber companies, and the police.

A fascinating document of resistance by and for activists,

PickAxe has much to teach a new generation of climate activists who are becoming ever more interested in direct action and protest militancy.

After the showing, there will be time for a discussion of the film and its message: What can we learn from the Warner Creek blockade? Can we take any of the politics and tactics from there and apply them to Scotland? What were the shortcomings of the Warner Creek activists?

Sales of tickets go towards fundraising for the costs of sending a delegation of Scottish activists to this years Socialist Youth Camp being put on by the 4th International over in France! Lend a hand to the comrades, watch a good film and have a good chat about eco-activism!

TIME: 6:30PM to 9PM

PLACE: Red Rosa's event space, 195 London Rd, Glasgow, G40 1PA

TICKETS: You can either pay on the door or purchase a ticket online [here](#).

£5 entry

Or if you wanna be a real gem: £8 solidarity price

(And for all stalwarts who would give yet more to the cause, the fundraising tin will be there too!)

---

## **“Prigozhin’s March”: What Was It All About?**

*The Posle Editorial Collective assess Wagner’s mutiny and its consequences:*



The events of June 23-24 are already being described as the most serious domestic political challenge to Putin's regime. In a matter of hours, Wagner units managed with little resistance to take control of Rostov-on-Don and Voronezh, major cities in southern Russia. They even got a few hundred kilometers outside of Moscow. By announcing the start of a military rebellion, Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin openly challenged the necessity for a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, demanded the removal of Russia's military leadership, and claimed his goal was the restoration of "justice." And while the conflict was resolved with little blood it seems to have forever undermined Putin's promise of stability and regime's unity.

There's no doubt Prigozhin is a war criminal and an opportunist pursuing his personal interests. In the months leading up to the mutiny, Prigozhin made numerous statements bashing the Russian military leadership trying to take control of Wagner units staffed by both former Russian prisoners and retired army officers. Yevgeny Prigozhin, who owes his career to Putin's patronage and has extensive connections in the state security apparatus, has turned out to be the most aware of the regime's weaknesses and the vulnerability of Putin's "chain of command." Generals Surovikin and Alekseev, who have played key roles in the so-called "special military operation" in Ukraine, publicly called on Prigozhin to "come to his senses" and "resolve the matter peacefully." Most of the army stood in silent neutrality toward the rebels. Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov, whom Prigozhin demanded to meet, never commented on what was happening and disappeared. Note that the leaflets distributed by Wagner not only called for their resignation, but also for an immediate court martial for Shoigu and Gerasimov on accusations of the brutal treatment of soldiers, poor supplies to the army, and concealing the truth about the course of the war.

On the morning of June 24, Vladimir Putin delivered an urgent five-minute address to the nation. He called Wagner's

rebellion a “stab in the back” of the Russian army but did not mention any specific actions to crush it down. Putin highlighted the moral and political dimensions of the mutiny and called it a betrayal deserving of the harshest response. He blamed the mutineers for putting Russia on the brink of civil war and military defeat. Yet, the Russian president did not mention any names, revealing his poor preparedness and uncertainty about the situation. Several thousand-armed columns of the Wagner fighters crossed a vast distance in less than a day and voluntarily stopped 200 kilometers short of Moscow. At the same time, President Putin, presumably, rushed out of the capital, recording his addresses from his remote country residence in Valdai. Regional governors and pro-Kremlin politicians swore allegiance to the president and the constitutional order on social media only a few hours after the mutiny’s outbreak.

Predictably, some forces, factions, and citizens did not follow the president’s call to resist the traitors and expressed their support for the rebels. These include neo-Nazis on both sides of the front: the Russian Volunteer Corps fighting alongside the Ukrainian armed forces and the Rusich sabotage group, which has been engaged in armed conflict with Ukraine since 2014 as a Russian proxy. Prigozhin responded unambiguously to Putin’s message. He stated that the president was “wrong” about Wagner’s betrayal, called himself and his fighters “patriots of the motherland,” accused Moscow officials of corruption, and refused to back down. Seeking to expand his support, Prigozhin voiced two hallmark claims of the anti-Putin opposition: Russian regions should oppose Moscow for expropriating the country’s resources and the Russian leadership is made up of crooks and corrupt officials and should be exposed and brought to justice.

Despite Prigozhin relying solely on the armed units, the program he announced was supposed to lend popular legitimacy to the coup d’etat. People in Rostov-on-Don cheered Wagner’s

fighters as heroes, demonstrating that Prigozhin's slogans could gain mass support. The attempted Wagner mutiny also revealed the unwillingness of the security services to actively intervene in the situation.

Prigozhin's "march of justice" ended as unexpectedly as it began. The Belarusian dictator Lukashenko brokered an agreement between Wagner and the Kremlin. According to its terms, Prigozhin was to withdraw his units and the mutineers were to be spared punishment for their alleged "feats of arms." The agreements with Lukashenko also seem to include secret provisions granting Wagner certain autonomy and defining the framework for further relations with the military leadership. The deal was guaranteed by the "word of the President of Russia," as Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov later stated. In other words, the public is kept in the dark as to the terms and content of these unofficial agreements. Although all Russian military units and ordinary citizens were called upon to participate in the mutiny and to resist the rebels, the crisis was resolved by a conspiracy between two war criminals with the Belorussian autocrat playing the role of both a broker and an umpire.

While the consequences of these events are difficult to predict, it's already clear that they have forever changed Putin's political system. If this attempted military insurgency was so successful, why can't this example inspire future attempts to build on its success? Contradictions within Russia's elites have spilled over from the media into the reality of Russian cities and the armed forces. The whole world has witnessed that they were (temporarily) resolved outside any legal framework with the compromise guaranteed by Putin's "word." In Russia, the rule of law has given way to mafia codes. Words backed up by violence are stronger than the prosecutor's office or even the president's declarations of imminent punishment. The war unleashed by Putin's regime is becoming an ever more apparent threat to its stability and

will inevitably result in its eventual collapse. What form will this breakdown take? And could Russia's intimidated and disempowered masses come to the fore? These questions remain open.

26 June 2023

Republished from [Posle](#).

*Posle [после – After' in Russian Language] is a website in Russian and English created in May 2022 to reflect on questions raised by the war in Ukraine for Ukraine and Russia.*

# ПОСЛЕ

---

## Shipwreck in Greece: Why were half those onboard Pakistanis?

At least 298 passengers who drowned in the infamous shipwreck off the Greek coast on June 14 were from Pakistan, *writes Farooq Sulehria for Green Left (Australia)*. Twenty-five came from the same village in Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir. According to some reports, more than 400 people onboard the ship were Pakistani.

Initially, when the news broke, the mainstream media in Pakistan ignored it. The tragedy only got attention when the Pakistani origins of the dead were reported. Suddenly, it was headline news. The Federal government also took "notice" of the tragedy. However, neither the mainstream media, nor

government spokespersons have answered the simple question: why were so many Pakistani citizens onboard the ship that sank to the bottom of Mediterranean?

In general, the government has blamed the rackets involved in human trafficking. A few arrests have been reported. Irritatingly boring, but expected, statements have been issued by the ministers and bureaucrats to condemn human trafficking. The mainstream media, meantime, have been busy blaming the victims. The “chattering classes” ensconced in palatial villas, echoing the heartless media discourse, are also holding the “risk-taking” youth responsible for mindlessly boarding the ship and paying exorbitant sums of money to the mafias.

The fact of the matter is that poverty and an utter lack of hope drives young people to hand over their parents’ life savings to human traffickers and hop on overcrowded boats leaving the Libyan coast in the dead of night. It is not that the government or the media and chattering classes lack the knowledge about obscene poverty all around or the absence of hope in the country’s darkening future.

By blaming the victims or pointing fingers at the people-smugglers, the apocryphal “1%” in control of the government and media absolve themselves. A few savvy ones, acquainted with postcolonial theories imbibed during their student days on Western campuses, also mention “Fortress Europe” in their tweets.

Fortress Europe, no doubt, is the prime suspect in the shipwreck under discussion (more in a while). However, Fortress Europe operates in Pakistan, like other countries on the periphery, in connivance with the native 1%. This 1% is equally responsible for the 300 or so coffins to be dispatched from the Mediterranean to Islamabad. Following is the indictment of Pakistan’s 1% who connived with Fortress Europe in the shipwreck conspiracy.

# Pakistan's One percent:

Pakistan's richest 1% own 16.8% of the wealth.

The richest 10% own 25.5%.

The poorest 40%'s share of wealth is also 25.5%.

This inequality is structured, systematised. One mechanism of this systemic inequality is the elite capture of the country's resources.

The benefits and privileges enjoyed by different vested interest elite groups (constituting the idiomatic 1%), amount to Rs2.66 trillion (US\$17 billion) annually. The taxation system is the largest source of benefits. Almost 50% of the \$17-billion in benefits the elite enjoys, occurs through the tax system (benefitting the landed class, traders and high-income individuals).

The landed elite, for instance, is granted a tax break of Rs195 billion (\$1.5 billion) annually (US\$1 was equal to Rs150 at the time of the study quoted here).

Rs468 billion (more than US\$2 billion) in tax revenue is lost owing to tax exemptions granted to the corporate sector. Similarly, large traders and high-net-worth persons are awarded tax concessions worth Rs612 billion (\$2 billion) respectively. Rs1275 billion tax concessions are granted on an annual basis. Another method benefitting the 1% (the primary beneficiary being exporters) is price mechanisms, accounting for 26%. Likewise, privileged access to land, infrastructure and capital (the military being the primary beneficiary) accounts for 24% of the Rs17 billion collective class privilege.

Ironically, the corresponding cost of social protection programs is roughly Rs600 billion (US\$2 billion). Roughly 10% – if health is excluded – of the population is covered by a

social protection net. “If just 24% of the privileges of the powerful were diverted to the poor, this would double the benefits available to poor Pakistanis,” claimed a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) study.

But how many poor are there? At least 32% in a country of 220 million people are poor. Based on the UNDP’s Human Development Index, in 2021–22, Pakistan ranked 161<sup>st</sup> out of 192 countries. According to the UNDP’s multidimensional poverty index, 38.3% – based on a 2017–18 survey – face multidimensional poverty, 21.5% face severe multidimensional poverty, while 12.9% of the population is vulnerable to multidimensional poverty. The intensity of deprivation is 51.7%.

## **Inequality as panacea**

In the 1960s, a policy of “functional inequality” (*à la* Simon Kuznets) was introduced. In other words, a strategy of unequal growth, accentuating inequality, was deployed in order to enable the capitalist class to accumulate more capital so that the rich had a higher level of savings.

These savings, it was assumed, would be invested into industry, resulting in higher economic growth. As far as inequalities were concerned, Simon Kuznets’ theory was deployed to project an optimistic future: market mechanisms would in time overcome the inequality during the initial stages of unequal growth. This policy has “persisted to this day”, claimed Pakistan’s noted economist Akmal Hussain in his recently published tome.

The result of these policies in the 1960s has recurred almost every 10 years: exports based on primary goods and low-value-added agricultural-based manufactures do not keep pace with the import requirements of a rapidly growing manufacturing sector. This, in turn, leads to the following two consequences. Firstly, a balance of payments crisis occurs

since growth after an initial spurt slows down. Secondly, to overcome economic slowdown, foreign aid was/is deployed. This is one critical way Fortress Europe enters Pakistan to trap the country into forever-ballooning debt.

## Enter ‘Fortress Europe’

Negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were underway at the time of writing these lines. Perhaps, when 300 Pakistanis were handing over Rs2.3 million (US\$7000) each to the human traffickers for their fateful journey, the IMF-Pakistan negotiations were also underway. Pakistan has been begging for months for a \$1-billion tranche. To secure \$1 billion, Pakistan paid \$12 billion during the first half of the 2021–22 financial year (FY).

Pakistan’s total external debt and liabilities have reached \$127 billion (41% of gross domestic profit). Meanwhile, its sovereign bonds have lost more than 60% of their value, exports have declined to 7%, remittances have dropped to 11% and foreign direct investment has dropped to 59%. Amid this situation, its external debt repayment obligations are \$73 billion over 3 years (FY 2023–25). Presently, foreign exchange reserves have been reduced to \$4–5 billion. Pakistan pays more than \$1 billion a month in debt repayments and interest on public debt.

While the capital in the name of “debt retirement” is welcomed in Fortress Europe, Pakistan’s labour is left to drown in the Mediterranean.

22 June 2023

*Originally published in Green Left (Australia) Issue 1384*  
<https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/shipwreck-greece-why-were-half-those-onboard-pakistanis>

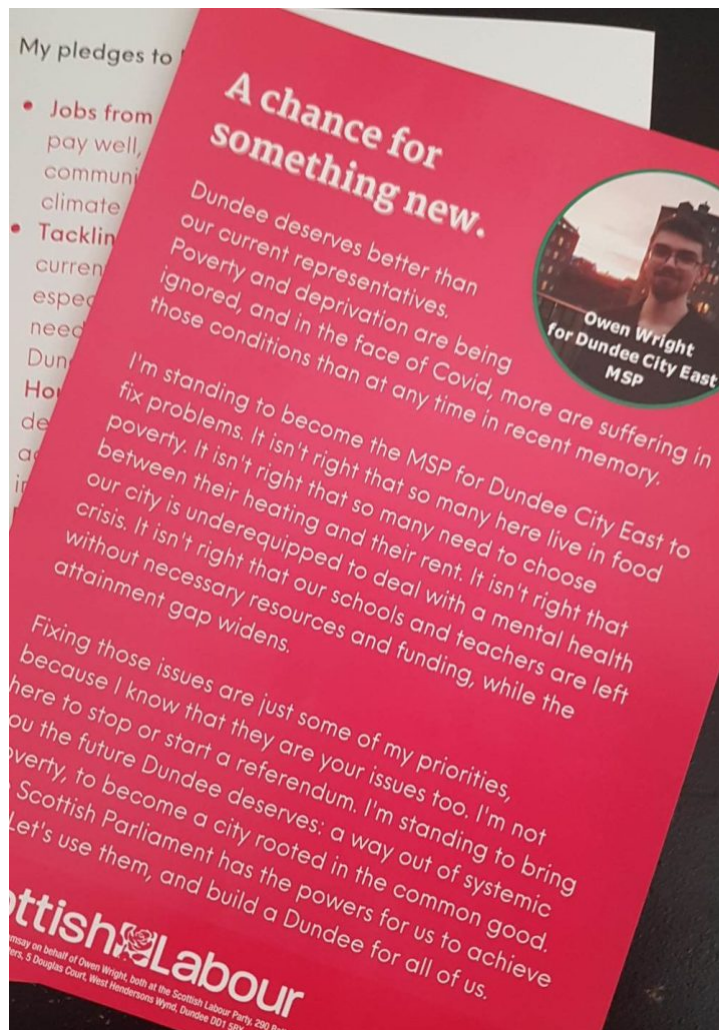


---

# Starmer's Labour is not a force for Good

*Owen Wright, former Labour candidate for the Scottish Parliament, writes for Heckle [online journal of the Republican Socialist Platform, Scotland]*

Sir Keir Starmer's Labour party is not a party worth fighting for. Any Labour victory under his leadership risks entrenching many aspects of Conservative rule which he purports to oppose, and should be treated with fear and concern by all those left of the political centre. Labour now has no understanding of the UK's deep underlying problems and this is reflected in the Starmer leadership's deceptive political practices and increasing propensity to indulge in far-right rhetoric and dog-whistles.



*Pictured: A leaflet promoting Owen Wright's candidacy in Dundee City East.*

Though I am not originally from the UK, I consider myself to come from something like a 'Labour household'. I moved from France to Scotland to study in Dundee after finishing secondary school and, after a very brief stint in the Scottish Greens, joined Labour in autumn 2017, drawn by its platform and policies which appealed to my values of progressivism, international and social conscience.

Having gained campaigning experience through my students' association – at a time when the Brexit saga, the 2019 election and later the beginning of the Covid pandemic was unfolding – I decided to put myself forward as a Labour candidate and subsequently ran in my home constituency of Dundee East in the 2021 Scottish Parliament elections.

I'm still incredibly proud and grateful to my former Dundee

CLP comrades for that opportunity. After the election, I continued to hold positions in my CLP, attended Labour's UK conference twice and acted as an agent for a successful candidate in the 2022 local elections.

Nonetheless, in November 2022, I decided to leave the Labour party. A number of things led to the 'breaking of the camel's back', which, in no particular order, I now want to set out for the record.

## Transphobia

Having lived and worked with transgender people, the Labour party's failure to defend one of the most marginalised groups in British society today sickens me. Recently, Labour [said it "welcomed"](#) proposals from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to strip trans people of some of their current rights under the 2010 Equality Act. This was just days after the party tried to distance itself from trans issues generally, citing the toxicity of the "debate" and its unattractiveness to the general public, which alone is cowardly – but even worse, in the same intervention, Starmer gave legitimacy to one of the spurious position that the rights of women and trans women are inherently in conflict.

This argument is regularly peddled by the most ardent of transphobes, from those in far-right circles to those appropriating the language of feminism, in order to drive a moral panic regarding trans women being in women's spaces. This panic is based on the notion that trans women are just men pretending to be trans to take advantage of women. Similar arguments have been spread regarding trans children's identity and presentation in schools, as well as LGBT+ education. Several Labour MPs have made those kinds of transphobic arguments, sometimes managing to pull the Labour leadership to their side.



*Pictured: A placard from a trans rights demonstration in Dundee in*

2023.

There is reason enough to believe that Starmer is a transphobe himself. He is on record [trampling on Gillick competency](#), effectively arguing that trans children should not be allowed to access treatment for gender dysphoria without their guardian's permission; children with transphobic parents or guardians should be trapped in suffering. He has advocated for schools to out trans children to their parents, again endangering those children unfortunate enough to have parents who do not accept them. These positions make little sense unless Starmer himself harbours an irrational fear of trans people or trans-ness. Labour's position under his leadership is nothing short of cowardice and stupidity at best, or open bigotry at worst.

## The ghost of UKIP

Speaking of open bigotry, let's cast our minds back a few years to the days of the coalition government and the rise of Nigel Farage's UKIP, which was ultimately responsible for Brexit.

Like other fascists, UKIP liked to play a game of hide-and-seek – saying a highly controversial, often racialised statement about migrants, refugees or foreigners, and then hiding behind the language of ‘legitimate concerns’ and the thin veil of plausible deniability. The Brexit disaster is what we got from letting this fester. This was because politicians were incapable of steering the conversation away from migration and towards other issues underpinning the same ‘concerns’.

I make no apology for saying that I do not think migration is a fully controllable variable in politics. Migration is a natural human phenomenon, often in response to developments in people’s environments, those ranging from war, famine and drought, disease, etc. Even an economic downturn in a region of the world today can be a perfectly natural cause for someone to migrate. Migration is a fact of human life; to try and stop or control it on any kind of permanent basis seems to me a fruitless task. I’m surprised the UK’s political class hasn’t given up on “fortress Britain” after meeting failure after failure over decades.

The likes of Farage and the far-right elements of the Conservative Party seem to me to be playing nothing but a massive con to drive up their popularity. Their goal was never to control migration but to whip up an angry population in the throes of deep, painful austerity to back them and their main political projects: Brexit, then followed by a steep and purposeful decline in our living standards. Labour’s shameful surrender to that anti-migrant politics in 2015 only legitimised UKIP and likely cost Labour the election. The 2019 election firmly cemented the victory for the Conservative-Brexit camp.

During the height of the Covid pandemic, when migration was not in the spotlight of national politics, national sentiment on migration softened; polls began to show people in Britain seeing immigration as a boon, particularly as labour shortages

took the media spotlight. In this time, Labour made absolutely no attempt to solidify those views, which could have blunted the resurgence last year of Conservative scapegoating tactics around migration and refugees. Instead, the Labour party is now again embracing UKIP language of 'concerns' with migration. In a BBC interview about NHS staff shortages, Starmer – referring not only to the NHS but the whole country – said “there are too many migrant workers”.

Describing migrant workers as too numerous implies they are a problem, rather than people who benefit our society and should be welcome here. In the context of the NHS, where there are over 55,000 frontline nursing vacancies UK-wide, and over 130,000 overall vacancies in NHS England trusts, Starmer's simultaneous pledge to train 50,000 nurses and doctors while saying there are “too many” migrant workers in all sectors is also plainly incoherent.

The ghost of UKIP sits well in the Labour party and, with Starmer at the helm, it will haunt and poison our politics for the decade to come. The fact is Starmer's Labour is again ceding arguments to the far-right, based on 'concerns' elaborated to the far-right's benefit, not that of working people. As an immigrant who advocates for the rights of migrants, refugees and their right to a decent life like the rest of the country, I can't stay in or support a Labour party which blindly adopts such far-right rhetoric.





*Pictured: Keir Starmer's 10 pledges in the 2020 Labour leadership contest.*

- My promise to you is that I will maintain our radical values and work tirelessly to get Labour in to power – so that we can advance the interests of the people our Party was created to serve.  
**Based on the moral case for socialism, here is where I stand.**
- 1. Economic justice** Increase income tax for the top 5% of earners, reverse the Tories' cuts in corporation tax and clamp down on tax avoidance, particularly of large corporations. No stepping back from our core principles.
  - 2. Social justice** Abolish Universal Credit and end the Tories' cruel sanctions regime. Set a national goal for wellbeing to make health as important as GDP; invest in services that help shift to a preventative approach. Stand up for universal services and defend our NHS. Support the abolition of tuition fees and invest in lifelong learning.
  - 3. Climate justice** Put the Green New Deal at the heart of everything we do. There is no issue more important to our future than the climate emergency. A Clean Air Act to tackle pollution locally. Demand international action on climate rights.
  - 4. Promote peace and human rights** No more illegal wars. Introduce a Prevention of Military Intervention Act and put human rights at the heart of foreign policy. Review all UK arms sales and make us a force for international peace and justice.
  - 5. Common ownership** Public services should be in public hands, not making profits for shareholders. Support common ownership of rail, mail, energy and water; end outsourcing out NHS, local government and justice system.
  - 6. Defend migrants' rights** Full voting rights for EU nationals. Defend free movement as we leave the EU. An immigration system based on compassion and dignity. End indefinite detention and call for the closure of centres such as Yarl's Wood.
  - 7. Strengthen workers' rights and trade unions** Work shoulder to shoulder with trade unions to stand up for working people, tackle insecure work and low pay. Repeal the Trade Union Act. Oppose Tory attacks on the right to take industrial action and the weakening of workplace rights.
  - 8. Radical devolution of power, wealth and opportunity** Push power, wealth and opportunity away from Whitehall. A federal system to devolve powers – including through regional investment banks and control over regional industrial strategy. Abolish the House of Lords – replace it with an elected chamber or regions and nations.
  - 9. Equality** Pull down obstacles that limit opportunities and talent. We are the party of the Equal Pay Act, Sure Start, BAME representation and the abolition of Section 28 – we must build on that for a new decade.
  - 10. Effective opposition to the Tories** Forensic, effective opposition to the Tories in Parliament – linked up to our mass membership and a professional election operation. Never lost sight of the votes 'lent' to the Tories in 2019. Unite our party, promote pluralism and improve our culture. Robust action to eradicate the scourge of antisemitism. Maintain our collective link with the unions.

Promoted by Jenny Chapman on behalf of Keir Starmer, both at Acre House, 11-15 William Road, London, NW1 3ER

## Starmer is a persistent liar

Without reviewing them line-by-line, as many others have already done, we should be clear that Starmer has broken nearly all measurable pledges made during his campaign to become leader of the opposition.

Starmer sought to present himself to Labour members as 'Corbynism but acceptable' – giving the impression that he would take most of the radical, transformative policies of the previous leadership but sell them to the electorate more effectively than Jeremy Corbyn could. He has since trashed this impression and shown that it was something he invented for convenience during the campaign.

Both Starmer and his supporters argue that many of these radical policies are no longer feasible as the economic

situation has changed due to the Covid crisis, but the timeline for this excuse doesn't add up. By the end of the leadership contest in April 2020, the economic consequences of Covid were becoming clear domestically and internationally. Was Starmer economically clueless, bandying those promises without knowing if he'd be able to keep them, or did he lie to members? Neither possibility produces confidence.

This habit of lying about policy extends beyond the leadership contest. GB Energy, for example, has been presented by Starmer as a publicly-owned company built to compete with the private sector to bring prices down. On further examination, this seems duplicitous; it will not actually compete with the private sector but instead collaborate with it. According to Rachel Reeves, the shadow chancellor, Labour will throw £8 billion into green energy projects, but private sector investment will be required on top of that to make it viable.

The investments made by GB Energy will not be majority public-owned; the private sector will *still* have a controlling stake on the most vital material portions of green energy generation. As a result, GB Energy will do nothing to bring down energy prices – those who keep them high today, for profit, will still be in overall control of our energy sector infrastructure and generation.

Labour's pledges on climate change suffer broadly from this sort of lying by omission as well. Starmer and Reeves' [pledge to borrow £224 billion](#) to invest in tackling climate change is subject to borrowing guidelines which closely match the Conservatives' own borrowing guidelines. If the economy underperforms or if inflation remains high, the actual figure borrowed and invested will be reduced. This does not inspire confidence or trust in Labour's ability to tackle the greatest problem humankind has ever faced. There is also a total lack of an international dimension to Labour's climate plans, which is crucial to reducing emissions worldwide. *(Edit: As this article was being reviewed for publication, Labour – without*



*even being in office – proved the above by [reducing the amount](#) they are pledging to borrow for the first two to three years in office, for the very reasons suggested above.)*

On the NHS crisis, Starmer's Labour suggests the private healthcare sector has a pool of doctors, nurses and specialists ready to go. This is a fantasy; that pool of recruits doesn't exist for the private sector for the same reason it doesn't for the NHS. That is no accident, it would seem, as Starmer and his shadow health secretary, Wes Streeting, have taken donations from wealthy private healthcare executives. This explains Starmer's sudden change of heart on his earlier principle that healthcare and profit should not mix.

All in all, it's very easy to simply observe reasons to not trust Sir Keir Starmer. He has lied about his person, his intentions, and continues to present policies in a duplicitous fashion. How is this man any better in terms of fostering trust in politics than someone like Boris Johnson, who did very much of the same? How could I, as a Labour member, be honest about my party's policies to people at the doorstep when not even the party leader seems to ever be? The answer, to me, is that I could not.

*Pictured  
: Owen  
Wright  
(left)  
with  
supporte  
rs of  
the  
Ukraine  
Solidari  
ty  
Campaign  
at a  
Dundee  
rally  
marking  
the*



*anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine*

## **The Labour left, Ukraine and Soviet-tinted nostalgia glasses**

Another reason I left the Labour party was the 'Labour left' itself, which has proven itself thoroughly incapable of introspection or self-criticism, making blunder after blunder as a result.

The greatest example of this is its reaction to the Russian war on Ukraine, which has left me dumbfounded. While Putin, a near-dictator, made a blood-and-soil speech about Ukraine and its supposed non-existence on the eve of his invasion of the country, the Labour left still could not recognise that as fascism. Instead, many elements of the Labour party's left flank backed the Russian line that NATO is as responsible for this war as Russia. As much as I am not in favour of NATO overall, any such claims can only be qualified as bogus and attempted justification for the invasion.

While initially I thought this was a legitimate response to

genuine concern about escalation of the conflict – as I too spent weeks in anxiety about the possible launch and detonation of nuclear weapons – it became impossible, in the face of escalating Russian war crimes and genocidal acts, to view the repetition of Kremlin talking points as defensible. This became a factor in my eventual decision to leave the party.

With the exception of John McDonnell, who now supports arms for Ukraine and backs the [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign](#), the Labour left has yet to learn from these mistakes. To be relevant in the 21st century, the Labour left must clearly move itself away from Cold War-era geopolitical analysis.

Beyond this, however, the left of the Labour party has also yet to realise that the battle within the party has already been lost. The Starmer leadership is doing all it can to avoid having new left-wing MPs in its next, probably quite sizeable, parliamentary cohort. Moves to restore the electoral college for leadership elections may eventually ensure a left-wing upstart like Corbyn can't take part in a Labour leadership election again, let alone win. The right of the Labour party is on a crusade to eliminate or at least fully suppress the left of the party.

Recently, Labour has [actively prevented](#) the incumbent mayor for North of Tyne, left-winger Jamie Driscoll, from running for North East mayor without clear justification. The notion that the Labour leadership are seeking to purge the left of their party from political positions is exemplified here. The ways the left of the Labour party can resist such a move are in practice, non-existent.

Momentum's argument that left-wingers can stay, fight and win internally falls flat when recognising that the real systemic power of the Labour party doesn't lie with its membership but with the upper ranks of its parliamentary party. The size or prevalence of the left-wing membership doesn't matter, as it

can be – and regularly is – completely ignored by the parliamentary cohort and leadership.

The left in Britain needs to undergo a process of intense introspection and re-establishment outside of the Labour party or it could well cease to exist as a political force entirely. That Momentum and others on the left of the Labour party do not acknowledge this necessity shows how naïve they have become about their systemic position, leaving them perpetually aimless and incapable of achieving their overarching political goals, many of which I share.

## Conclusion

It took agonising weeks of thought to lead me to the conclusion that the Labour party is no longer the force for good that I thought it was. The only people for whom it is now reliable are those who already have wealth and social and material power. Most of us – no matter the size of our payslip, whether we rely on foodbanks or not, or whether we consider ourselves ‘Labour at heart’ – are not these people. There is no shame in calling Labour out for their abandonment of us.

I hope that this state of affairs one day changes again. Hope is not something often repaid in our politics, however, so the only thing left for me, as well as no doubt many others, was action, and that action was to leave the Labour party. I recommend others who care about the truth and honesty in progressive politics do the same; it may be the only way to show our discontent. And perhaps, something new can be born out of it, with time.

*Owen Wright is a former Labour member who ran as the party's candidate in Dundee City East in the 2021 Holyrood elections.*

Article and pictures republished from **Heckle**:  
<https://heckle.scot/2023/06/starmers-labour-is-not-a-force-for>

[-good/](#)



Online magazine of Republican Socialist Platform (Scotland)



**Republican  
Socialists**

Join the Republican Socialist Platform

<https://join.republicansocialists.scot/>

---

## Hope is shipwrecked: Erdogan's regime wins again

After twenty years in power, *writes Uraz Aydin*, Recep Tayyip Erdogan won again in the second round of the presidential elections on 28 May 2023. Faced with his rival Kemal Kilicdaroglu, who won 47.84 per cent of the vote, Erdogan, whose bloc had also obtained a majority in parliament, was the winner with 52.16 per cent. Which means that the "Reis" should normally reign over an autocratic, fascistic and Islamist regime for another five years.

# The reactionary bloc wins the majority in parliament

The bloc formed around Recep Tayyip Erdogan is probably one of the most reactionary coalitions in the country's political history. Already, since 2015, the AKP [*Erdogan's party*] had been in alliance with the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). For this election Erdogan included in his bloc the Islamist party Yeniden Refah, led by Fatih Erbakan, son of the historic leader of political Islam in Turkey, Necmettin Erbakan.

Another more Islamist wing of the far right, the Great Union Party (BBP) also forms part of Erdogan's camp. This bloc was also joined by HÜDA-PAR, the legal party of Hezbollah in Turkey, mainly established in the Kurdish region and which in the 1990s had been used as an armed force by the Turkish Gladio against the PKK [*Kurdish Workers Party*] and had committed numerous massacres. The regime will try to use this organization to break the hegemony of the Kurdish political movement, which has maintained itself despite a level of fierce repression since 2015.

During the legislative elections of 14 May, which were held at the same time as the first round of the presidential elections, the pro-Erdogan bloc obtained, with 49.4 per cent of the votes, 323 deputies (out of 600). Although his votes were down compared to the election of 2018 when he obtained 344 deputies, Erdogan still has the majority in parliament which allows him to adopt or prevent bills. The results obtained by the AKP were also down, but the MHP, which was estimated to have fallen to 6-7 per cent, almost regained its 2018 level, reaching 10 per cent. However it should be noted that the bloc came first in almost all the cities of the earthquake zone.

## **A defeat for the opposition**

Opposite this bloc was the Alliance of the Nation, whose main party is the Republican People's Party (CHP), a centre-left party whose origins lie in the foundation of the Republic. The other "big party" in this bloc is Meral Akşener's Good Party (İYİP), which is a far-right split, representing a more secular nationalism than the MHP, but trying to reposition itself towards the centre-right .

Also part of this alliance are two parties whose leaders were previously leaders of the AKP, one led by Ahmet Davutoğlu, former Prime Minister, and the other by Ali Babacan, former Minister of Economy. Finally, the Saadet Partisi (SP), which comes from the historical current of Islamism from which the AKP emerged, also participates in this bloc, as well as another small right-wing party.

Politically, this opposition alliance defends a return to a parliamentary regime (abolished by Erdogan in 2017 following a referendum) and the recovery of the economy through a restored neoliberalism with certain "social" traits. With 35.4 per cent of the vote, the opposition bloc obtained 212 deputies, 23 more seats than in the previous election.

The parties of Babacan and Davutoğlu , as well as the SP, whose candidates were presented under the CHP lists, seem to have contributed 3 per cent to the results of the CHP. These right-wing parties thus obtain 40 seats, while they only brought in 22 more. The eligible places reserved for right-wing candidates in these lists had sparked debate among the rank and file of the CHP.

## **Nationalist turn of the opposition**

## after the first round

During the 14 May presidential election, despite all the opposition's predictions, Erdogan won 49.5 per cent of the vote, thus beating the leader of the Alliance of the Nation by 5 points, the latter only receiving 44.8 per cent. Given the importance of the President of the Republic in the autocratic system, Kılıçdaroğlu's victory was decisive for regime change. He led a campaign that was able to embrace large sectors of the population. The fact that he is an Alevi Kurd (a minority stream of Islam seen as a heresy by traditional Sunnism) had generated debate, with many believing that he could not unify the opposition. However, the leader of the CHP led a campaign proudly claiming his adhesion to Alevism and calling for a reconciliation of the population of Turkey in the face of the polarizing policies of Erdogan.

A third candidate, Sinan Ogan, an ultra-nationalist from the ranks of the MHP, won 5.2 per cent. He was the candidate of a small nationalist, anti-migrant and anti-Kurdish bloc, who refused to support Kılıçdaroğlu, in particular because the latter was also supported by the pro-Kurdish party HDP. He thus held a crucial position for the second round.

In order to be able to rally the electorate of Ogan , Kılıçdaroğlu, himself a candidate from a bloc made up of various centre-left, conservative, Islamist and far-right currents, thus operated a nationalist turn.

He argued that, in the context of a victory for Erdogan, 10 million new migrants would arrive in the country, that the cities would be under the control of refugees and the mafia, that young girls would no longer be able to walk around on their own, that violence against women was going to increase (because of the refugees) and that finally Erdogan was going to make concessions in the face of "terrorism" (therefore of the Kurdish movement). He was thus trying to ride the



(massive, among Turks and Kurds) anti-migrant wave by declaring that he was going to send them all back to their own country, but also to reverse Erdogan's main argument during his campaign, that the opposition supposedly supported the "terrorism" of the PKK.

Indeed, the fact that the HDP (pro-Kurdish left) supported Kilicdaroglu, himself Kurd and Alevi, and that it promised to release Selahattin Demirtaş (former HDP leader, imprisoned for seven years) had been Erdogan's main angle of attack against the opposition. After having maintained a more democratic discourse before the first round, Kilicdaroglu ended up criticizing Erdogan himself for having conducted negotiations with the Kurdish movement (in 2009-2014).

Eventually Ogan preferred to express his support for Erdogan, but the most prominent party in the bloc for which Ogan had been a candidate, the Victory Party, whose main political stance was anti-migrant nationalism, declared its support for Kilicdaroglu. On this, the latter signed a protocol with this party, where the anti-migrant position was reaffirmed but which also promised (within the framework of the laws) the continuation of the appointments of administrators in place of HDP mayors in the Kurdish region, who were accused of having links with the PKK (about fifty municipalities are concerned by this). While in the initial programme of the opposition it was a question of new elections for the town halls concerned... Although the HDP protested this decision, it continued to call to vote for Kilicdaroglu, but the percentage of participation in Kurdistan, which was already below Turkey's average in the first round, fell further in the second round. Despite everything, the opposition candidate emerged a winner in all the towns of the Kurdish region.

## **HDP, TIP and the "Work and Freedom"**

# Alliance

Another opposition alliance was the one called “Work and Freedom,” made up of the HDP (Democratic People’s Party, left-wing party from the Kurdish movement), the TIP (Workers’ Party of Turkey, in which our comrades of the [Fourth International](#) are active) as well as four other formations of the radical left. For the presidential elections this coalition supported Kılıçdaroğlu. For the presidential elections the HDP participated in the elections under the name of its “replacement party”, against the probability that it would be banned, the Green-Left Party (YSP).

The TIP did not present itself in the cities where the HDP had a large majority (Turkish Kurdistan) and in some where it risked losing deputies to the HDP and the CHP; it submitted slates in 52 out of 81 cities. The fact that the TIP wanted to run within the alliance but with independent slates in some cities is a question that has generated a lot of debate. For the HDP, the TIP should have included its candidates in the lists of the YSP; its opinion was that having two competing lists within the same alliance would divide the votes and lose potential elected representatives.

The TIP had another proposal. The party had been observing an influx of members for several months. It had quadrupled its membership since mid-January, going from 10,000 to 40,000 members in four months, in particular because of its mobilization in solidarity with the city of Hatay (Antioch), seriously affected by the earthquake. This participation, but above all the sympathy that was expressed towards the party and its elected representatives, who for five years had led a very combative policy, came from political and social sectors that were largely different from those who had previously voted for the HDP. An important part came from the left of the CHP, but also from an electorate which previously voted for the right but which (especially through the elected

representatives of the TIP) discovered a combative left, which does not mince its words vis-a-vis the ruling circles and gives a prominent place to workers' rights. It was clear that the TIP could not channel all of these votes to the HDP-YSP lists. So its proposal was that the alliance candidates present themselves in certain cities under the TIP lists (even if it meant putting HDP candidates at the top of the list) and thus having a plurality of candidacy tactics according to the demographic, ethnic and social specificities of the localities. This would have increased the results of the alliance at the national level, but also the number of elected representatives. In the end, the two parties failed to agree on this tactic, mismanaged the controversy (which had negative repercussions on the networks) and the TIP ended up presenting itself with its own lists in fifty cities. Among the TIP lists there were also candidates from two Trotskyist currents, the Workers' Democracy Party (IDP) and the International Workers' Solidarity Association (UID-DER).

The HDP-YSP obtained 8.8 per cent in the legislative elections, 3 per cent less than in the previous ones. It is still too early to make substantial analyses, but it seems that support for Kılıçdaroğlu for the presidential elections was understood as support for the CHP (in the legislative elections) and therefore votes went to this party. On the other hand, the 10 per cent barrier (to enter parliament) was an important source of motivation to vote for this party and allow its representation in parliament (and reduce that of the opposing bloc). The fact that this barrier is currently 7 per cent (a threshold that the HDP should easily exceed, according to estimates) must also have weighed, and part of the left-wing electorate who had previously voted for the HDP returned to vote for the CHP and partly for the TIP. Finally, we know that especially within the Kurdish people, certain more conservative and nationalist sectors are opposed to alliances with the Turkish far left; this must also have had an effect on the results.

The results of the YSP, which are considered a failure by the party, have triggered debates and in particular severe criticism from Selahattin Demirtaş, whose relationship with the leadership had been strained for several years. Having played an important role during the campaign from his cell (through the daily visits of his lawyers and his Twitter account directed from outside according to his instructions), Demirtaş has declared his retirement from “active politics”. The HDP is thus embarking on a process of internal debates which will culminate in its next congress.

In this nightmarish panorama a meagre (but significant) consolation is the result that the TIP obtained. For the first time since 1965, a socialist party defending the cause of the working class has managed to enter parliament with its own votes (and not by being elected under the list of another party). The TIP obtained 1.7 per cent with a million votes, only presenting itself in two-thirds of the territory, therefore probably above 2 per cent in total. It thus gained four deputies, three of whom were already in the previous parliament. The fourth, Can Atalay, who was elected as deputy for Hatay, is a renowned lawyer involved in all the struggles of the country and who has at present been in detention for a year and has been sentenced to 18 years in prison for having been one of the main spokespersons for the Gezi revolt in 2013. Can’s case is being appealed; legally he should be able to be freed to take his place in parliament, but the regime refuses for the moment to release him.

## **Rebuilding class consciousness**

If the conditions for carrying out the campaigns were completely unequal (control of the media by Erdogan, etc.) and many cases of fraud were observed, we must recognize that the regime triumphed despite everything. Neither the economic crisis nor the earthquakes of February, and even less the attacks on democracy have led the conservative and popular

electorate to break with the regime. On the contrary, the discontent of the working classes was expressed within the reactionary bloc, but towards currents even more radical than the AKP.

The results of these elections show once again that to defeat the Erdogan regime the defence of democratic and secular values is not enough. If Erdogan's camp brings together different social classes, so does the opposing bloc. Once again we see that the right wing of the opposition, far from being a solution, further strengthens the regime and the dominant bourgeois, nationalist and Islamist ideology. It is necessary to build another polarization, in order to break the reactionary hegemony, but also that of the opposition bloc. A polarization that would allow the dissociation between the interests of the working class, the oppressed and those of the bosses, whether secular or Islamist. The fight against authoritarianism must be invested with a social, class content. And this goes through the reconstruction of the "subjective factor", of class consciousness, of the capacity for self-organization of the exploited, of women against patriarchal domination, of the unification of local and migrant workers, Turkish, Kurdish, Syrians and Afghans. This is the main challenge facing the radical left, from the HDP to the TIP and other currents of the revolutionary left. Certainly the situation is not easy. We recognize our defeat, but we refuse to bend and give up the fight. Being aware of the fact that freedom and equality will only be the work of the workers themselves, as we like to repeat here, we pour ourselves a tea and get back to work...

1 June 2023

*Uraz Aydin is the editor of Yeniyol, the review of the Turkish section of the [Fourth International](#), and one of many academics dismissed for having signed a petition in favour of peace with the Kurdish people, in the context of the state of emergency decreed after the attempted coup in 2016.*

# **‘Tsunami’ of industrial action to hit oil and gas operators as 1400 offshore workers set to strike – from Unite the Union**

From [Unite the Union](#):

*Dozens of platforms in UKCS set to be brought to a ‘standstill’ with BP, Shell and Total hit*

*Unite the union announced today (Monday 20 March) that major oil and gas operators in the UK Continental Shelf (UKCS) face a ‘tsunami’ of industrial unrest within weeks as around 1400 offshore workers across five companies demand a better deal on jobs, pay and conditions.*

*Unite, whose members will take action at companies enjoying record-busting profits, predicts that platforms and offshore installations will be brought to a ‘standstill’ due to the specialised roles its members undertake.*

*The action will hit major oil and gas operators including BP, CNRI, EnQuest, Harbour, Ithaca, Shell and Total.*

*Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: “Oil and gas companies have been given free rein to enjoy massive windfall profits in the North Sea; drilling concessions are*

*effectively licences to print money.*

*“1400 offshore workers are now set to take strike action against these employers who are raking it but refusing to give them a fair share of the pie. This will create a tsunami of industrial unrest in the offshore sector.*

*“Unite will support these members every step of the way in their fight for better jobs, pay and conditions.”*

*The prospective action includes electrical, production and mechanical technicians in addition to deck crew, scaffolders crane operators, pipefitters, platers, and riggers working for Bilfinger UK Limited, Stork construction, Petrofac Facilities Management, the Wood Group UK Limited and Sparrows Offshore Services.*

*John Boland, Unite industrial officer, added: “Unite has received unprecedented support in favour of industrial action in the UK Continental Shelf. It is the biggest mandate we have received in a generation in the offshore sector. There is no doubt that this is directly linked to oil and gas companies reaping record profits while the workforce gets scraps from the table.*

*“Unite’s members are angry at the corporate greed being shown by offshore operators and contractors. Now these major global companies are set to face the consequences as dozens of offshore platforms will be brought to a standstill in a matter of weeks.”*

### **Details of the disputes**

*Around 700 offshore workers at Bilfinger UK Limited are set to down tools after Unite members voted in favour of taking industrial action as part of a pay dispute. Bilfinger workers are demanding an increase above the base rate of pay set in the Energy Services Agreement (ESA) for 2022.*

Meanwhile, 350 Stork construction workers are set to take strike action after Unite members also supported industrial action in a dispute over working rotas and rates of pay.

Unite members employed by Petrofac Facilities Management Limited on the FPF1 platform also voted in favour of strike action. Around 50 workers are involved in the dispute over holiday entitlements. Offshore workers can be asked to work at any time for no additional payment. The operator, Ithaca Energy, has a 'clawback' policy of 14 days, double the industry norm of 7 days.

Unite members employed by the Wood Group UK Limited on TAQA platforms similarly voted to take strike action. Around 80 members are involved in the dispute which is focused on a 10 per cent cut made to salaries in 2015 worth around £7,000 a year.

The mandates for industrial action follow the recent announcement by Unite that around 200 Sparrows Offshore Services workers will take strike action across more than 20 oil and gas platforms in disputes over pay. Strike action is set to hit various platforms from 29 March and until 7 June in a series of 24, 48 and 72-hour stoppages. This action will hit a number of major operators including BP, Shell, Apache and Harbour Energy.

A further two industrial action ballots are due this week at Petrofac BP involving around 80 workers (21 March), and at Worley Services UK Limited on Harbour Energy platforms involving around 50 workers (24 March) in disputes over pay. The pending ballot results could bring the final total to around 1500 offshore workers taking industrial action.

Unite [recently blasted](#) the UK Government's inaction on taxing oil firms as BP posted the biggest profits in its history as it doubled to £23 billion in 2022. BP's bonanza profits come after Shell reports earnings of £32 billion, bringing the



*combined total profits of the top two energy companies in Britain to a record £55 billion.*

*ENDS*

*Notes to Editors:*

*Ballot results in full*

- 1. Bilfinger – Yes to strike action – 97%*
- 2. Stork – Yes to strike action – 98%*
- 3. Petrofac Facilities Management Limited – Yes to strike action – 100%*
- 4. Wood Group UK Limited – Yes to strike action – 93%*

Republished from:  
<https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2023/march/tsunami-of-industrial-action-to-hit-oil-and-gas-operators-as-1400-offshore-workers-set-to-strike/>

---

# **The political economy of the cost of living crisis in the UK: What is to be done?**

*Özlem Onaran writes on the UK cost of living crisis.*

Soaring prices of energy, food, other essentials and rent in 2022, caused by multiple supply chain disruptions after Brexit and the pandemic, followed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, brought an intensive cost of living crisis, exacerbated by inequalities in class,

race, gender, as well as the care and ecological crises.

While the squeeze in wages is not new, the current scale of cost of living crisis is the deepest in a generation. The Bank of England expects inflation to come down to 3.9% by the fourth quarter of 2023, but the cost of living crisis will continue for many working class households.

Inflation (CPI) in January 2023 fell to 10.1% from its peak of 11.1% in October 2022. Core inflation (excluding food, energy, alcohol, and tobacco prices) declined to 5.8% as of January 2023. However, inflation coming gradually down does not mean prices are falling; they are merely increasing at a slower pace and they will remain high, deepening the cost of living crisis for the many, whose nominal wages have not been increasing at the same pace as inflation. Meanwhile, the inflation in the prices of food and housing and household services – including water and energy bills and rent – are still substantially higher at 16.8% and 26.7%, respectively. Consequently, the inflation experienced by the poorest 10% of households is 11.7% as opposed to 8.8% for the richest 10% ([Resolution Foundation, 2023](#)).

In the UK inflation as of January 2023 is higher than that in the US (6.4%) and the euro-zone (8.5%) and coming down at a slower pace. The UK is forecast to have a poorer performance than the rest of the G7 with a recession in 2023 and at the end of 2022 it is the only G7 economy which has still not returned back to pre-pandemic levels of economic activity.

Particular vulnerabilities due to years of austerity implemented by the 2010-15 Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government, historically low investment in both physical and social infrastructure, a highly financialized economy, high debt levels of households and small businesses and Brexit hurting both investment and international trade with the EU – the most important trade partner – caught the country unprepared to deal with the pandemic and the cost of

living crisis. Yet, fiscal and monetary policy responses are still centred around austerity and increasing interest rates to fight inflation, with repeated warnings against wage-price spirals by government ministers and the Bank of England governor alike.

## **A historical context of rising inequality**

The squeeze in wages is not new. The cost of living crisis of 2022 comes on top of decades of fall in the share of wages in national income due to the deterioration in the bargaining power of workers as a result in changes in trade union legislation, labour market deregulation, structural change, neoliberal globalisation, and financialization, along with historically undervalued wages of key workers in the care sector and public services.

The wage share reached its peak in 1975 at 69.5%. The years of austerity after the Great Recession, followed by the pandemic and now the cost of living crisis brought it down to 63.7% by 2022 -about 6% lower than its peak ([AMECO](#)). Meanwhile, the rising top 1% share in income since 1980 grew from 6.8% to 12.7% as of 2021 (World Inequality Database): the fall in the wage share of the bottom 99% is even more dramatic.

Wealth inequality has also been increasing. During the pandemic, the wealth of UK billionaires grew by 22%, and the share of top 1% in net household wealth increased further to 21.3% in 2021 from 21.1 in 2019 ([World Inequality Database](#)).

The fall in union density and collective bargaining coverage are the most remarkable factors explaining the decline in the wage share and the rise in wealth inequality, and the effects of other factors such as globalisation has to be interpreted in that context. Union density fell from 52.2% at its peak in 1980 to 23.1% as of 2021. The fall in collective bargaining coverage is even more dramatical from 85.0% at its peak in 1975 to 26.0% as of 2021.

Since the Great Recession, real wage rates have been falling. The years of austerity in its aftermath deepened the squeeze in wages and the recovery since 2014 has been slow and incomplete, with real wages still lower than their 2007 level in 2019, and the cost of living crisis reversing any improvements since 2014. As of 2022 compared to 2007, real wages in construction and manufacturing are 9.9% and 3.7% lower, respectively; in the public sector wages are 5.4% lower in real terms compared to 2010. The only sector where real wages are still substantially higher in December 2022 compared to 2007 is finance and business services, with a real increase of 5.9%.

The effects of the crisis and real pay cuts are also gendered. Women are at the frontline of the cost of living crisis, doing still more than 60% of domestic unpaid care work , including budgeting, shopping, cooking, caring, providing for the children, elderly and the household, sewing and mending. These activities increase during cost of living crises to compensate for the loss in real income of households, and this is not due to their own choosing; it is not a hobby but a stressful daily survival struggle when women need to make difficult choices between eating and heating.

Women also constitute a larger proportion of the most vulnerable on the lower end of the wage scale and those with precarious contracts. They make up the majority of workers in the public sector, such as health, social care, education and childcare, who have suffered from pay freezes and dismal increases since 2010. This situation has changed little after the pandemic, despite their being clapped as key workers by policymakers.

Households headed by women and single mothers are more likely to struggle with debt and soaring utility bills. Women also carried the brunt of the rise in the increased care needs after the pandemic with the rise in long-term illness against the backdrop of overstretched healthcare and social care

services, due to years of cuts in the National Health Service and social care. The result was that many women had to leave paid work against their will.

Against the background of these facts, it is difficult to see evidence for the Bank of England governor's warnings of the risk of a wage-price spiral. The big difference to the 1970s is the fall in the bargaining power of labour, as indicated by the fall in trade union density and collective bargaining coverage as well as labour market deregulation that brought a rise in zero-hours contracts and dodgy self-employment.

It is yet to be seen whether the biggest strike wave of the past three decades will be able to stop the real cuts in wages. Nearly 2.5 million working days were lost to industrial action in 2022. Two million of these days of strikes were in the private sector – the highest in three decades. Taking the public and private sector strikes together, the record in 2022 is still much lower than the historical highs of late 1970s, but the severity of the cost of living crisis and the discontent among public sector workers led to 2023 starting with a historical escalation of public sector strikes in rail, education, and civil service.

## **Causes of the current waves of inflation**

The first wave of inflation in 2021-22 was due to the increase in critical imported input costs due to the supply chain disruptions after the pandemic and later due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Brexit added further dimensions to the supply chain disruptions in the UK. Apart from these transitional aspects, longer term problems related to climate change disasters inflated food prices too. All these factors led to soaring prices of energy, fertilizer, animal feed, food, some industrial metals (nickel, copper), neon gas (input for semiconductors). The immediate effects were worsened by commodity price speculation.

Against these exceptional and transitional factors, mainstream economists still try to point at expansionary fiscal and monetary policies during the pandemic. To date there has been little evidence of a wage-price spiral in the UK and policymakers so far have paid very little attention to firms' price setting behaviour, which has driven a second wave of inflation due to increasing profit margins in the UK, as well as the US and the EU. Firms have not only passed on the rising costs of inputs to their output prices but have increased their mark-up rates.

In the UK, some companies increased their profit margins by up to about 60% points in the fourth quarter of 2021 or first quarter of 2022 compared to the 2017-19 average ([Jung and Hayes 2022](#)). Overall, about half of the companies could either preserve or increase their profit margins during 2021-2022's first quarter. This suggests they increase wages without causing higher inflation if profit margins decrease in some industries or firms.

There is a striking variation across firms in the UK with about half experiencing a decline in their profit margins. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are not able to pass high input or wage or borrowing costs to their customers who are themselves cutting back non-essential spending as their real incomes fall. Company insolvencies and the number of listed companies issuing profit warnings have been increasing since the third quarter of 2022.

## **The fiscal and monetary policy response in the UK**

The monetary policy response by the Bank of England, following the conventional wisdom of mainstream central banking, failed to address the root causes of inflation, which was driven by increasing imported input costs and mark-ups rather than demand or a wage-price spiral. On the contrary, focusing

narrowly on the wage-inflation expectation spiral, in an interview in February 2022, its governor Andrew Bailey said that while it would be “painful” for workers to accept that prices would rise faster than their wages, some “moderation of wage rises” was needed to prevent inflation becoming entrenched. He continued to warn of apocalyptic prices and implied that workers must pay for the crisis by moderating their wage demands.

According to its own projections, the current actions of the Bank – relying on increasing interest rates to control inflation – is expected to lead to a recession of  $-0.5\%$  in 2023 and  $-0.25\%$  in 2024 and growth is expected to remain well below pre-pandemic rates.

The political economy of this could not be clearer, particularly after the long squeeze in wages since the Great Recession. Currently, the profit share of the employers and the wealth of the top 1% are increasing, while workers’ share in national income is being squeezed by the spike in the cost of food, utility bills and rent. The current policies of the Bank of England of increasing the interest rate does not tackle the rise in imported input costs or rise in mark-ups at the root of today’s inflation and pretends that it is demand-driven. A recession is seen as an unavoidable outcome to make sure that the bargaining power of labour remains muted and the wage-price spiral does not escalate. This ultimately means that workers will pay for this crisis in the form of real wage cuts.

In this spirit, the Bank puts a lot of emphasis in its monetary policy reports on the tightness of the labour market, low unemployment, high economic inactivity and worker shortages in justifying its rate-setting decisions after ten successive increases in the interest rate within 18 months until February 2023, bringing it to 4%. While the unemployment rate in the last quarter of 2022 at 3.7% is still lower than pre-pandemic levels, it has started to increase. Crucially,

total hours worked have decreased compared with the previous three-month period and remain below pre-pandemic levels.

The economic inactivity rate of 21.4% is still higher than before the pandemic, mainly due to health conditions, unpaid care responsibilities particularly among women, or unacceptable working conditions: the Great Resignation. But recently economic inactivity has started to decrease, putting pressure on unemployment.

This rather narrow mainstream analysis misses the broader range of policy tools beyond interest rates that could address the root cause of economic inactivity and labour shortages. The latter would require investing in the care economy – in both health and social care as well as childcare- and a radical reversal of the new migration policies in the post-Brexit UK. Some migrant workers from the EU returned home during the lockdowns and have never returned, which adds to labour shortages -an outcome partly related to the migration policies after Brexit.

In September 2022, the new Conservative government announced a new revised budget. The main changes included an increase in planned borrowing due to regressive tax cuts for high-income groups, informed by supply side and trickle-down economics.

Markets' reaction to the mini-budget was clear that this will not stimulate the economy, and a blind trust in simplistic low tax supply-side economics will not solve stagflation or long-standing problems in the UK.

This shift in fiscal policy stance coincided with the opposite stance in monetary policy, teaching a perfect lesson on the consequences of a lack of coordination between monetary and fiscal policy. The September 2022 "mini-budget" led to an increase in government borrowing, coinciding with an announcement of quantitative tightening (QT) by the Bank of England. The day before the mini-budget, the Bank committed to



actively selling off government debt by shrinking its quantitative easing gilt portfolio by £80bn over the next year, including, in contrast to other central banks, outright sales of bonds before they matured. This meant both the Bank and the government were selling huge quantities of government debt in the markets. The detrimental lack of coordination between fiscal and monetary policy institutions triggered a financial crisis in parts of the pensions sector, which no policymaker had foreseen.

Eventually, the Bank had to pause QT and buy large quantities of gilts to prevent a financial crisis in the pension funds. The new government's "mini-budget" was abandoned in three weeks, and a third party leader and Prime Minister was appointed by the Conservative Party.

The "mini-budget" is now replaced by a return to austerity policies by the Conservative government. Austerity, including real cuts to public sector wages of nurses, teachers, and civil servants, and a reduction in public debt/GDP are said to be essential to prevent inflation and to plug a "fiscal hole."

This second age of austerity, following the big wave of cuts by the 2010-15 Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government following the Great Recession, will not only be detrimental in a country with already weak social and physical infrastructure. It will be self-defeating on its own terms, as it will lead to further negative effects on national income, thereby leading to a fall in tax revenues, despite some increase in the tax rates. Even the ultimate impact on public debt sustainability is ambiguous.

The new Conservative government has drawn the wrong lessons from the collapse of the previous Conservative Prime Minister Truss's "mini budget". The Financial Times reports that even asset managers say that austerity isn't going to solve many of the UK's problems.

The resistance to increases in public sector pay in health, education, and the civil service after decades of below-inflation pay rises, along with the discourse that the best way to fight the cost of living crisis is to halve inflation, demonstrates the class bias in these policies. Nurses', teachers,' or civil servants' pay rises would not directly feed into a wage-price spiral, as they do not lead to a rise in the input costs of private companies.

In fact, insisting on further real pay cuts in the public sector is a political decision based on the government's class position on the distribution of income. One note about the hypocrisy of this position is also relevant here: public sector workers have suffered more than a decade-long real pay loss following the austerity wave during the 2010-15 Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government. Most of them worked under very difficult and risky conditions during the pandemic and were praised as the "key workers" by policymakers and the public alike.

Increases in interest rates, cuts in public spending and the recession will deepen the crisis for indebted working class households as well as indebted firms at the bottom of the distribution of profit margins. The crisis for indebted households and firms is yet to unravel even when inflation starts to decline in the second half of 2023. The use of interest rates as the tool to fight a surge in inflation fuelled by imported input costs turns a transitional problem into permanent distributional scars for indebted households and companies.

The increase in interest rates has led to higher mortgage and other debt payments by households, who have already been struggling to make ends meet due to real wage cuts and rising food prices and utility bills. More than 750,000 households are at risk of defaulting on their mortgage payments in the next two years according to the Financial Conduct Authority, because their mortgage costs will be more than 30% of their

income. About 200,000 households had already fallen behind on their home loans by mid-2022.

The increase in the interest rates, fall in mortgages and slowdown in activity is feeding a fall in house prices. Mortgage approvals have fallen to their lowest level since January 2009. The Office of Budget Responsibility (2022) forecast that house prices will fall by 9% between January 2023 and the third quarter of 2024. While a correction in house prices might be welcome, this happening in a recessionary climate rather than due to a rise in housing investment, is expected to lead a further deterioration in business as well as consumer expectations and investment. There is also an increase in sales by buy-to-let landlords who cannot cover mortgage payments, which then intensifies the crisis in the rental market.

For companies, on top of supply chain pressures, rising input costs, high energy prices and rents, higher interest rates increase the pressure, particularly on already indebted companies. The total number of company insolvencies in 2022 reached 22,123, the highest since 2009 and a 57.4% increase compared to 2021. Companies in construction, retail and hospitality sectors have seen higher numbers of insolvencies. There are concerns that more companies will fail when the government's energy support package is scaled back in April 2023. Personal insolvencies also reached the highest numbers for three years in 2022.

## **What are the economic policy alternatives?**

In the short-run, two sets of urgent measures are required:

i) First, we need policies to urgently reverse the squeeze on wages and low incomes. The policy tools to achieve this include increasing the minimum wage to £15 per hour in the UK; increasing public sector pay above inflation; tying benefits

to the increase in inflation; and rebuilding the trade unions' power for collective bargaining agreements to ensure adequate pay rise in the whole economy. Mindful of the risk that these measures may increase company insolvencies, in particular at the bottom of the distribution of SMEs, a reactivation of fiscal support for short-time work to avoid transitional shocks is essential.

ii) Second, the extreme nature of the cost of living crisis requires price controls, in particular on energy prices, rents and essential food items. The New Economics Foundation (2022) proposed a package for guaranteeing basic energy needs for households, while avoiding subsidising fossil fuel consumption above a certain threshold. In the international context, France acted early in November-December 2021, directly limiting electricity price increases to 4%, and froze domestic gas prices, with energy subsidies to businesses and households. It enjoyed the lowest inflation in the eurozone with 7.0% as of January 2023. The measures, which included discounts at the pump and cuts to electricity taxes, cost the government just over €34bn in 2022.

Another major component of essential spending for low-income households which increased substantially is rent. The Conservative Government in the UK limited the increase in the social (housing) rents to 7% in November 2022 for the next year, but a genuine policy of rent controls require controls in the private housing market too. Both in the context of energy prices and rents, these policies need to be accompanied by a ban on disconnections or compulsory instalment of pre-paid meters for utilities and a ban on evictions. The latter was implemented during the pandemic.

A third category where price controls could help is essential food items. France with a competitive supermarket sector had lower food inflation because of limits on the rise in profit margins in the retail sector. In the UK where competition has not sufficed to limit food price inflation, some coordination

to curb the rise in mark-up rates or subsidies could go a long way to avoiding the worst poverty effects of the cost of living crisis.

Overall, anti-trust scrutiny and windfall taxes targeting the increase in mark-up rates as well as banning speculation in commodity markets are other short-run policy tools to tackle the rise in inflation.

In the medium run (1-5 years during the first term of a new government), the multiple crises require a paradigm shift towards a needs-based approach to macroeconomic policy, addressing the deficits in the care and green economy and avoiding competition between urgent social and ecological requirements.

Addressing the cost of living and energy crises, as well as reversing the ecological crisis requires a massive and urgent mobilization of substantial amounts of public investment in the green economy, that is, renewable energy, public transport, housing, energy efficiency, sustainable organic plant-based agriculture, forestry, recycling, and repair.

The long-standing deficits in the care economy are no less urgent, and are now behind the labour shortages, and public provision of high quality universal free basic services in social care, health, childcare, and education is key to tackling both the care deficit and inequalities by creating decent care jobs while providing much-needed services. The scale and the urgency of the spending needs to address both deficits in the green and care economy; and the public good character of these services requires a large public spending programme, which cannot be substituted by private investment based on the profit motive. There has never been a better moment to make the case for creating permanent public sector jobs with decent wages to build a caring and sustainable society based on a green, purple, red new deal.

# How to fund a green, purple, red new deal?

The social and ecological needs, and the urgency of an effective response to the multiple crises of inequalities, care and climate change requires the use of all tools of policy.

Public spending even without any increases in tax rates, is partially self-financing, thanks to the strong multiplier effects. However, an increase in economic activity and thereby tax revenues without a change in tax rates will finance only half of the public spending needed in the UK.

Public borrowing to fund the deficit can be justified given the effects on productivity and sustainability, or the expected damage to the ecology, society, and economy, if investment needs are not delivered on time.

Monetary policy should accommodate fiscal policy for public investment in the care and the green economy. The Bank of England's mandate should include a dual target of full/high employment and an inflation target high enough to be consistent with this. There is a major problem with the current mandate of the Bank targeting narrowly the inflation rate at a level as low as possible, which only helps the rentier who make profits by speculation and lending.

National and regional investment banks working in cooperation with the government and central bank are also crucial for funding largescale public infrastructure projects.

However, eventually the large scale of spending needs requires also an increase in the degree of progressivity of taxation of both income and wealth. A progressive scheme of wealth taxation, aiming especially at the top 1% of the wealthiest households, rather than a limited one-off windfall tax targeting only one sector or increasing tax rates merely on

dividends and capital gains, is particularly important after the Great Recession, QE and the pandemic which has increased wealth inequality.

Wealth is more unequally distributed than income in aggregate and in terms of gender gaps. Progressive taxation of wealth is essential to prevent excessive wealth concentration. Wealth taxation also helps to control wealth-demand-driven inflation. Progressive wealth taxes and the consequent decline in wealth inequality are good for private investment, taming speculation, financialisation, market concentration and barriers to entry.

A progressive scheme starting with a high threshold targeting the top 1% wealthiest households, has the advantage that only a small number of households would be valued and is easier to monitor.

The coordination of fiscal and monetary policies with labour market policies eases the funding pressures as higher wages lead to higher tax revenues. Strong, well-coordinated trade unions, equal pay legislation, increased job security, permanent contracts, higher minimum wages, and improved and equitable parental leave are good for an equality-led sustainable development. Labour market regulation for a shorter working week can also promote a rise in gender equality in paid and unpaid work and income, while facilitating a green transition and higher productivity.

At this crucial juncture of food, energy and ecological crises, international policy coordination is vital, especially for the emerging economies. Firstly, the effects of public spending are stronger and negative effects on the current account balance are moderated, if policies are implemented simultaneously in all the countries. Secondly, cancellation or restructuring of parts of the debt of low and middle income countries needs to be part of the international agenda. Thirdly, transfer of technology to support mass not-for-profit

global production of key public goods, from vaccines and medication to solar panels, turbines, or batteries for storing renewable energy, is the only way to tackle global crises such as the pandemic or climate change.

Finally, these multiple crisis open a space to rethink not just the role of fiscal policy but also of public ownership in the care and green economy and finance, with national coordination in combination with collective, municipal, and cooperative ownership and democratic participatory planned decision making.

*Özlem Onaran* Is Professor of Economics, Co-Director of Institute of Political Economy, Governance, Finance and Accountability and Associate Head of the School of Accounting, Finance & Economics – Research and Knowledge Exchange at the University of Greenwich. This article is an edited version of [a working paper published by the University of Massachusetts Political Economy Research Institute](#).

Image: Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng, authors of the “mini-budget” in September 2023, c/o





Article originally published by Labour Hub, 7 March 2023  
<https://labourhub.org.uk/2023/03/07/the-political-economy-of-the-cost-of-living-crisis-in-the-uk-what-is-to-be-done/> Also republished at [International Viewpoint](#) and [Anti Capitalist Resistance](#)

---

# French Pensions: “Victory is possible against Macron, his reform and his 49.3!”

Statement by the [New Anticapitalist Party \(Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste NPA\)](#) of France on Macron’s pension reforms.

The use of the 49.3 by the government is a democratic scandal. [1] It shows the weakness of the government’s social base and of its authoritarian approach. Under the pressure of the movement, despite an agreement with the LR (Republicans: mainstream conservatives) leadership, their members of parliament did not dare vote for the reform. It reinforces the illegitimacy of the government and pushes the mainstream left and union leaderships with positions in the institutions to continue the mobilisation, notably the CFDT. [2] It shows the particularly undemocratic character of the institutions of the Fifth Republic, which allow a minority government to pass a reform. In a way, what has happened is good news for the movement.



The actions that took place throughout the country on Thursday night testify to the anger at the democratic scandal, the repression that has been unleashed, not only against the

demonstrations but also against specifically targeted union activists, such as those in the energy sector, and the hardening of the government's position. Macron and his reform have little support, and the first post-49.3 opinion poll indicates the massive rejection of his draconian action and the depth of the protest, which is not weakening. With the continuation of the mobilisation, it is likely that the government will step up the repression. This will require solidarity and a united response equal to the challenge.

However, nothing is won. The motions of censure will be rejected, and the balance of forces remains uncertain. The movement must take a step forward to win; we can no longer be satisfied with renewable, rolling strikes. The 23rd of March date set for the next national mobilisation announced by the inter-union coordination is too far away. [3] We have to use it to build strikes where there are none by building on the strength of the mobilised sectors. But we need to accelerate the pace so as not to demoralise people and not to leave the most advanced sections of the labour movement isolated.

For us, a victory depends on the combination of different factors:

- Strengthening the rolling strikes, in particular in the public services and state enterprises. In the private sector, it is necessary to broaden the mobilisation to slow down production and put pressure on the employers and their political representatives. Renewable strikes have greatly contributed to destabilising the government. We have to do everything to enlarge them; to make this struggle a daily mobilisation, the movement has to be in the news every day.

What we are aiming for is a general strike.

- Continuing the mass demonstrations which show the depth of the movement and its legitimacy. We call for mobilisations everywhere that directly target political power, as the Yellow Vest movement did. The movement must aim to blockade the country. We need a national demonstration in Paris to politically and massively challenge Macron's reforms and government.
- Responding to the ongoing democratic scandal The government and Macron must go, but we must prevent the far right from ambushing us and gaining the main benefit. It is a question of imposing a policy that starts with the needs of workers, youth, and pensioners and relies on their mobilisations to impose it. We need a government that is as faithful to the interests of workers as Macron's is to those of the employers. It is the responsibility of all the organisations of the trade union, political, and social movements on the left to discuss all these points. We will work to help set up such meetings as soon as possible.

Beyond that, and more than ever, a political alternative around a project of breaking with capitalist policies is necessary—a rupture for an ecosocialist society.

A victory is possible against Macron and his reforms. We must give ourselves all the means necessary to achieve it.

NPA Executive Committee

16 March 2023

Montreuil

#### FOOTNOTES

[1] Paragraph 3 of Article 49 of the French constitution allows the prime minister, “after deliberation by the Council of Ministers,” to force a bill through the Assemblée Nationale

with no vote. The only alternative to prevent the bill from passing is then to overthrow the government. When the prime minister triggers this procedure, MPs have the option of tabling a motion of no confidence within 24 hours. Le Monde.

[2] The CFDT is the largest French trade union confederation by number of members (875,000) but historically less radical than the CP-dominated CGT to which it comes second in voting results for representative bodies.

[3] The inter-union coordination is composed of eight trade-union confederations/federations (CGT, CFDT, FO, CFTC, CFE-CGC, UNSA, Solidaires and FSU) and four youth organisations l'Union nationale des étudiants de France (Unef), l'Union nationale lycéenne (UNL), le Syndicat général des lycéens (SGL), and the Fédération indépendante et démocratique lycéenne (FIDL).

*Reprinted from International Viewpoint:*  
<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article8026>

*Original article (in French):*  
<https://nouveauanticaliste.org/actualite/politique/un-e-victoire-est-possible-contre-macron-sa-reforme-et-son-493-0>

*Main photo credit: Photothèque Rouge /Martin Noda/Hans Lucas*

---

# **Our Power: Offshore workers demands for a just energy**



# transition

An important new report from [Friends of the Earth Scotland](#).

*Over the past two years, we've come together with offshore workers to build demands for a just energy transition. These workers developed 10 demands covering training and skills, pay, job creation, investment and public ownership.*

*We surveyed over 1000 additional offshore workers and over 90% agreed with these demands. This plan is comprehensive in scope, transformative in scale and deliverable now.*

*Below you will find a series of resources setting out the demands and the paths we can take to turn them into reality.*

*We need a rapid transition away from oil and gas that protects workers, communities and the climate. But the government has no plan to phase out oil and gas production in the North Sea.*

*Oil and gas workers are ready to lead a just transition away from oil and gas, but they are caught in a trap of exploitation and fear created by oil and gas companies. Working conditions are plummeting, just as profits, prices and temperatures are soaring.*

*The UK and Scottish Governments must listen to workers to make this transition work for all of us. These demands lay out a comprehensive plan, which includes:*

*Removing barriers that make it harder for oil and gas workers to move into the renewable industry.*

*Ensuring safety, job security and fair pay across the energy industry.*

*Sharing the benefits of our energy system fairly, with public investment in energy companies and communities.*

*Workers have told us what they need for a just transition,*

*now we need to work with them to make it happen.*

## Hear from workers



# Our Power: Offshore workers' demands for a just energy transition

The [‘Our Power’ report](#) is a blueprint for a just transition in the UK North Sea.

*Reproduced from [Friends of the Earth Scotland](#) with thanks to [Red Green Labour](#).*