

Sussex Energy Group Seminar

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Trade Unions & climate change: can they ever be at the vanguard for a green & fair future?

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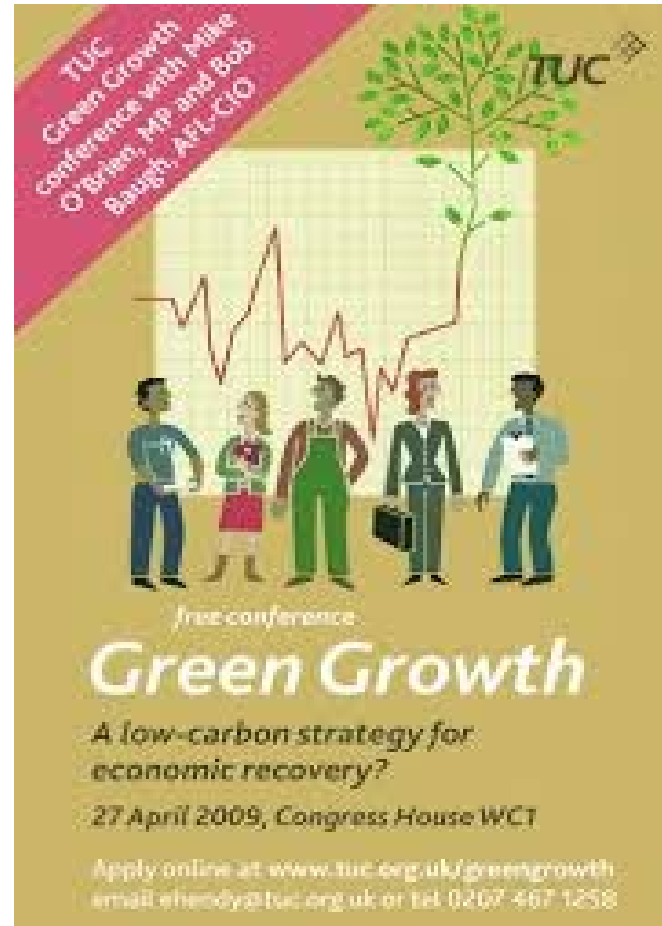
When members look to the union to provide a militant defence of their jobs, it becomes even more important to answer the question:

Why trade unions should concern themselves with climate change?

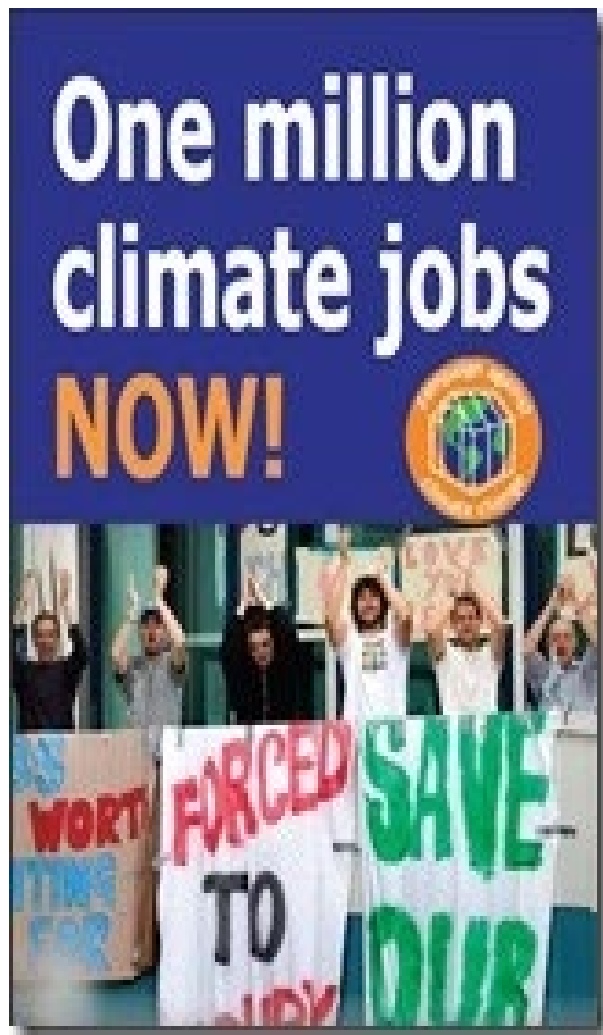
For PCS, far from being a distraction, it opens up the opportunity to develop a response that ensures workers are central to the urgent economic transformation required and debate on Just Transition.

Chris Baugh, PCS Assistant General Secretary

A Green & Fair Future For a Just Transition to a Low Carbon Economy -the lost decade



One Million Climate Jobs Campaign



Supported by:

Campaign against Climate
Change Trade Union
Group (CACCTU)

BFAWU

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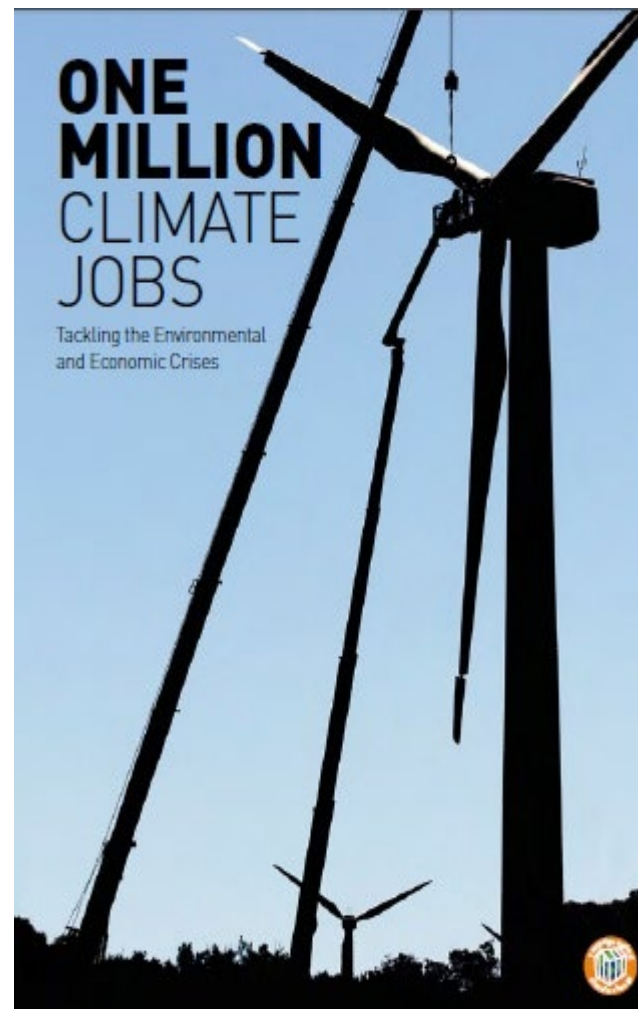
NUS

PCS

TSSA

UCU

Unite



Green tilt to balance of power?

- 1998 – establishment of Trade Union Sustainable Development Advisory Committee (TUSDAC) to direct union input into the policy process to enable constructive dialogue with the Government on sustainable development; to provide a trade union perspective on the employment consequences of climate change and the government response to it; to help mobilise the trade union movement to become more involved in better environmental practice in the workplace.
- 2009 – TUC Beyond Crisis conference Labour Business Minister Pat McFadden announces the creation of a Forum for Just Transition
- 2010 – David Cameron and the arrival of the coalition “greenest government ever” ushered in ever greater attacks on the working class accelerated by austerity politics with tacit support of the Labour Party.
- Also ushered in a number of policy u-turns on climate e.g. discontinuity in the roll out of the Green Deal programme in 2013 and roll back of feed-in- tariffs in 2016 – loss of 12,000 jobs overnight in still nascent solar industry
- 2012 – Trades council motion against fracking passed
- 2014 – TUC national climate conference – Can we ever build a green economy?

A tale of two motions....

TUC Congress 2017 – Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU)

Congress believes that to effectively combat climate change and move towards a low carbon economy we cannot leave this to the markets and therefore need a strong role for the public sector in driving the measures needed to undertake this transition.

Calls on the Trades Union Congress to:

- i. Work with the Labour Party and others that advocate for an end to the UK's rigged energy system to ring it back into public ownership and democratic control
- ii. Advocate for a mass programme of retrofit and insulation of Britain's homes and public buildings
- iii. Lobby to demand statutory rights for workplace environmental reps
- iv. Lobby for the establishment of a Just Transition strategy for those workers affected by the industrial changes necessary to develop a more environmentally sustainable future for all, and develop practical steps needed to achieve this as integral to industrial strategy**
- v. Consult with all affiliates to seek input into the development of a cross sector industrial strategy that works towards delivering internationally agreed carbon emission reduction targets
- vi. Investigate the long-term risks for pension funds investing in fossil fuels, promote divestment, and alternative investment in the sustainable economy

TUC Congress 2018 – Just transition and energy workers’ voice GMB

Congress recognises our country’s legally binding targets for a lower-carbon economy as part of international efforts to tackle climate change.

Congress notes that over 80 per cent of homes currently use gas, and that alongside the objectives of achieving lower and zero-carbon energy sources, governments must also ensure security of supply, meet requirements of industry and infrastructure as well as ensure affordability for the public.

Congress believes a **balanced energy mix is essential to meeting these targets and objectives and that such a mix must include investment in renewables, alongside new nuclear and lower-carbon gas.**

Congress notes that **‘just transition’ is a much-used but often ambiguous term and there is no shortage of voices who believe they are qualified to say what energy workers and communities want and need.**

Congress wholeheartedly believes that trade unions are the best democratic vehicle for working people to collectively make their voices heard in public life and to defend their jobs.

Congress congratulates GMB, Prospect, UNISON and Unite for calling a just transition conference to ask members employed in energy precisely what they, their communities and industries want and need from an energy sector of the future.

Congress believes that the views of the workers affected, as expressed through these trade unions, should be paramount and central to development of all TUC policies on energy, industrial strategy and climate change, and that the TUC should develop a political and lobbying strategy led by the voices and experiences of energy unions and their members.

A JUST TRANSITION STRATEGY FOR UK TRADE UNIONS

REDUNDANCY POLICY

OR

TRANSFORMATIVE OPPORTUNITY

A Just Transition: market, class and society

Paul Hampton – Trade unions and climate politics: prisoners of neoliberalism or swords of climate justice?

- Markets – neoliberal climate discourse
- Society – ecological modernisation
- Class – Marxism

A framing to understand the different policies, behaviours and practices of trades unions with respect to climate change

an alternative Just Transition Paradigm

Initiated 2012 – trade unionists and policy experts

- borne out of frustration of the global community to reach an agreement on climate change
- Seeks to challenge the power of fossil fuel corporations to both suppress action on climate change including the repression of workers in the neoliberal energy system
- Lack of progress in transition to a fairer, democratic & sustainable energy system

Resist, reclaim Restructure - <http://unionsforenergydemocracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Resist-Reclaim-Restructure.pdf>

“Social Dialogue” or “Social Power”? The need for an integrated and transformative politics

- “...the insistence on keeping “Social Dialogue” at the center of such discussions holds trade union debates captive to the narrative of the liberal business establishment, and to a very narrow and de-mobilizing interpretation of Just Transition.”

Working Paper 11: Trade Unions and Just Transition – The Search for a Transformative Politics <http://unionsforenergydemocracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/TUED-Working-Paper-11.pdf>



Transformative transition

Addressing the inherent inequality and injustice of the capitalist system

Creating unionised climate jobs that lower greenhouse gas emissions and pay a real living wage

Socialising ownership and democratising productive processes and energy generation as part of a wider transition to different forms of energy production

Putting workers and their communities at its heart based on social needs including domestic and health care sectors

Rebuilding the strength of organised labour and redefining the relationship between labour and nature

The trickle UP effect

1 in 10 workers now in precarious work inc. in the so called 'gig' economy

Zero hour contract workers third less than average employees

Over 1million people relying on food banks including those in work

2.5 million – 11% of households in England in fuel poverty

Trade Union membership & collective bargaining

2016 – 6.2 million people in trade unions from peak of over 13m in 1979

23.5 % people in employment are trade union members

Majority in public sector and utility industries; least in accommodation and food services

'Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply' seen sharpest decline in membership from 71.9% in 1995 to 32.6% 2016

But also decline in collective bargaining coverage:

Public sector - 72% 2007 to 59% in 2016

Private sector - 19.6% 2007 to 14.9% in 2016

Trade unionism and the nature of work in 2018

- Organised labour / trade union membership is in decline in almost all countries
- 65% of countries exclude workers from right to establish or join a trade union; increased from 60% in 2017
- 87% of countries violated the right to strike
- 81% of countries violated right to collective bargaining
- Increase in repression – murder, physical violence, death threats and intimidation rose from 59 countries in 2017 to 65 in 2018.
- Of labour force of around 3.45 billion - 2.5 billion in the informal economy - migrant labour; precarious work; platform businesses Uber and large MNCs such as Amazon typified by high levels of employer control & low levels of worker control, rights and benefits

Where now for trade unions and climate change?

The good

- Scotland = Just Transition Partnership / Just transition commission
- Public sector / whole economy approach and strengthening alliances
- Rising action direct / political – extinction rebellion, earthstrike, Green New Deal

Not quite so good

- TUC Just Transition statement
- Energy worker protectionism
- Labour party exclusion

Really no good

- Energy trade unions ‘playing fast and loose’ with climate change - GMB, Unison (in part), Prospect, Unite (in part)
- The clock is running down not just on climate