



# ECOSOCIALIST HORIZONS



## THE FIGHT FOR ECOSOCIALISM

We are fighting for an end to Labour's austerity agenda— itself a continuation of the Tories' austerity economics. The idea that the public sector is 'too expensive' and needs to be cut back is neoliberal capitalist logic. Instead of an economy based on need, we have one limited to what the capitalists and their politicians think is 'reasonable'— and it's getting less every year.

Anti-Capitalist Resistance (A\*CR) is fighting for the full restoration of public sector funding (linked to inflation) and a wealth tax on the super-rich, as well as significant increases on corporation tax of profits and assets.

We must shift the resources in this country towards the people and away from the billionaire class and their companies. This fight against Labour's neoliberalism is also central to combating the far right: constant cuts and austerity create a climate in which attacks on refugees, immigrants and disabled people increase, as reactionaries blame them for 'taking scarce resources'.

### Ecosocialism

But we need to go further. A\*CR is an ecosocialist organisation. That means we are building a movement to fight for a good life for all humans within planetary limits. Wealth redistribution is a good start, as are trade union rights. More workers' co-ops and mutual aid are important things we can organise here and now.

We also need to seize political power, seize the property of the rich and socialise major industries. We must collectivise and decommodify essentials like food and housing.

This is the basis of us beginning to reorganise the economy around human need. A needs-based economy would reduce the working week considerably, reduce waste, dismantle the military industrial complex and move towards a society where we work for human good instead of profit.

This is why we support the creation of a democratically planned and socially owned economy to replace the market and private control. We must align human society with planetary limits. Capitalism does not allow us to achieve this because it is based on endless growth and a constant drive for profit.

### Radical abundance

Capitalism requires scarcity, even though it is also an economy with huge amounts of overproduction and waste. Who gets what, how far wages go, and the constant commodification of life are all part of capitalist-generated scarcity. Capitalists get rich because they control supply and set prices as they wish. They holiday on super yachts while we fight over housing, access to health care, or jobs.

In opposition to scarcity and the reactionary mindset it creates— turning workers against ►





each other and fostering a hatred of refugees and foreigners – we work for a society based on radical abundance. This does not mean an abundance of consumerism and ‘stuff’, but an abundance of time and freedom, of culture and play. It’s a society where our needs are met without compromising the future of our planet and our sense of self is not defined by how much we own.

### The movement we need

We are in late-stage capitalism. Continued business growth is predicated on climate disaster, liberal democracy is tarnished by delivering neoliberalism and is under attack from authoritarian right-wing populists, and fundamental rights are being rolled back. All the reforms and gains of the postwar period are being called into question or outright torn up.

We must work to coordinate struggles and develop clear anti-capitalist demands. These problems are rooted in a society structured by class and power, where social oppression is a tool to divide and control us along lines of gender, ethnicity or nationalism. We support the self-organisation of the oppressed and the central struggle of the working class in its broadest, most universal sense (including those who cannot work!), not just around economic workplace demands, though those are important, but as tribunes of the oppressed.

Only a struggle against capitalism, and its expressions like austerity and imperialism, can build a society that provides for everyone fairly and equitably. When challenging the cruelty, sado-liberalism and increasing militarism of late-stage capitalism, we fight for empathy, solidarity and a universal humanity. ★

## DISABLED PEOPLE: BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

The current attack on benefits for disabled people is a continuation of the austerity that began under the Tories following the 2007–8 financial crisis. The move from Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to Personal Independence Payments (PIP) shifted focus from the extra costs of living in a disabling society to evaluating an individual’s functioning. This changed people’s eligibility for, and access to, these essential benefits.

Labour’s benefits cuts leave disabled people caught between a rock and a hard place. Disabled people are portrayed as ‘unwilling’ to contribute to ‘society’ by selling their ability to work, and are therefore ‘scroungers’ living off the labour of others.

This leads to the inevitable call by government for disabled people to be ‘self-reliant’. But if the daily living portion of PIP is removed, then for ►

the majority of disabled people, the only means of survival is to rely on the support and assistance of family members.

Tory and Labour governments refuse to recognise that the neoliberal race to the bottom means stagnating wages and undermined working conditions. These make it harder for disabled people to be hired or to do paid labour. Cost-minimising capitalist employers are resistant to hiring disabled workers, since the potential need to comply with the Equality Act by making reasonable adjustments may undercut their profits.

The state’s position is contradictory: successive governments insist, on the one hand, on the ‘benefits of working’, while on the other hand they continue to institute policies that make it harder for disabled people to access those benefits. Withdrawing, limiting or reducing state support removes access to the money that makes it possible for disabled people to live decent lives, let alone be able to seek or do work.

Where disabled people want to do paid work, this should be facilitated and must include the right to retain state benefits if the trial in paid

employment proves too difficult or turns out not to work. The insistence that disabled people must be waged labourers to ‘contribute’ to society – as though this is the only contribution those unable to live off their wealth can make – has led the Labour government to propose making it harder to obtain the PIP daily living component used by many disabled people to stay in paid employment.

Most disabled people who require financial and social support live complex lives because of personal and social restrictions. As a result, a holistic approach is needed to ensure independent living solutions can be found to enable them to live within their communities and challenge the disablism they encounter. To achieve this vision, a broad notion of independent living is required. We must acknowledge how, through inclusive practices, disabled people can contribute to maintaining and improving their communities by addressing both the barriers within, and the threats to existing ecosocial environments from without. This vision can only be realised through financial support by central government, along with the social support and assistance to make that possible. ★





# FIGHT LABOUR'S AUSTERITY

In the recent local elections, many people were angry with Labour over the removal of the winter fuel allowance from 9 million pensioners. This was not in the Labour manifesto; nor was the maintenance of the two-child benefit cap, or cutting vital the Personal Independence Payment for 1.32 million disabled people. More than 35,000 children have fallen into poverty since the general election. Labour voters, as well as many Labour members, councillors and MPs, are saying that this is not what Labour governments should do.

Labour's austerity has led to its polling falling to around 20%; meanwhile, Reform is pushing 30%. Farage's bubble is not bursting anytime soon, and even independent specialists are saying he has a chance of forming either a Reform government or a hard right-wing coalition with a Tory rump.

Keir Starmer is now talking about U-turns at least on fuel allowance and the two-child cap. This is not because he has found a heart or principles; no, it is mainly down to the electoral threat of Reform. Indeed, Farage has suddenly become a big defender of child benefits and pensioners' heating. It is nothing new for reactionary far right parties to combine racist and pro-business policies with a few that favour workers: the fascists did that in the 1930s.

The general anger and organised opposition to Labour's austerity is the other factor forcing a slight reset. Over 100 MPs threaten to vote or abstain on the welfare cuts. Angela Rayner,

deputy prime minister, with her leaked alternative tax-raising policies, is letting everyone know she could replace Starmer. Opposition extends beyond the diminished Socialist Campaign group. Unlike Tory governments, the historic ties of Labour to progressive movements and the trade unions mean there are likely to be greater divisions when it imposes such austerity measures.

Organising resistance pays. However, the U-turns could be limited. Labour is talking about a three-child limit and is hazy about how many pensioners will get their fuel allowance back. The Warm Homes Initiative, which helps poorer pensioners, is also being cut. Special Needs budgets are being targeted, so austerity could be reconfigured rather than stopped. Actual changes will not happen until later this year.

Ending austerity and tackling inequality requires a strategy which breaks Labour's partnership with capital and betting on growth. It means a wealth tax: the richest 50 families own more wealth than half of the whole population. Taxing company profits is the other way to raise the money we need. Even Gordon Brown, no revolutionary, has proposed taxes on the gambling industry and banks. Fake fiscal rules demanded by capitalist markets can also be changed; the International Monetary Fund has said this is possible.

John McDonnell has called for a leadership campaign to remove Starmer and implement policies for the many, not the few. For the first time, he even envisages the end of Labour if there is no decisive change. Given the weakness of the Left inside Labour at present, this challenge may seem optimistic.

Nevertheless, we should organise the broadest possible action with any MPs or others who take a stand against austerity. But we cannot just rely on Labour MPs finally doing something. Opposition should also include the ongoing process of building a left electoral alternative. Independent local and national campaigns are crucial too. The People's Assembly demonstration on 7 June is a welcome step forward. ★

Photos by Made From The Sky (p2); Sandra Wyman, Roger Blackwell, Mika Baumeister (p3); Hooman R. (p4)

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FIGHTING DISASTER CAPITALISM WITH ECOSOCIALISM

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