

Britain: London Climate Rising conference - A big success

Sunday 28 February 2016, by [THORNETT Alan](#) (Date first published: 2 February 2016).

Alan Thornett reports from the Climate Rising conference held on Saturday 30 January in London.

The Climate Rising conference on Saturday (January 30th) was the first big climate event in London since the Paris COP. It was organised by Friends of the Earth, the PCS (public service union), and This Changes Everything, in order to discuss the outcome of Paris. Although it was called at short notice it was attended by over 800 people. Tickets were sold out within a week of going on sale.

It was up beat and dynamic event that reflected the radicalisation (and politicisation) that has been taking place in the climate movement (including in the NGOs) over the past year and the new energy that has come out of the campaign for Paris itself. The conference ran from 10.00 a.m. until 6.45 with three plenaries and 20 workshops.

Although the opening presentation by Craig Bennett, the chief executive of FoE, reflected the strongly negative assessment of Paris that the FoE has drawn, this was not reflected in either the mood of the conference itself or by most of the other speakers.

The mood of the conference, rather, was that despite all the problems with the Paris agreement in terms of enforcement gains had been made, under pressure from the movement, that can be built on—in particular the 1.5C maximum temperature increase. Although it is a non-binding target it sets a new benchmark which can be demanded and fought for.

This was the position taken by Caroline Lucas and also by Alice Bows-Larkin the impressive new director of the Tyndale center in Manchester. It was also taken Shehroze Khan from MADE (Muslim Action for Development and Environment) who took the only Muslim delegation to go to the Paris protests.

Clive Lewis, Labour's shadow environment minister (and Corbyn supporter) held a similar view. He went on to say said that he and other shadow cabinet members were discussing policy on the environment (including on growth and just transition) and that they expected to develop the best policy on the environment the Labour party has ever had.

Also speaking (extremely defiantly) was Sheila Menon one of the 13 Plane Stupid activists recently convicted of disrupting flights at Heathrow whilst protesting against a third runway and currently awaiting what the judge has said will be a prison sentence.

Although FoE provided the organisational structure of the conference the PCS played a very significant role in terms of it politics.

Chris Baugh, the PCS deputy general secretary spoke in the first session arguing that we have to

establish climate change and the environment as a mainstream issues in the unions and not as an add-on extra. He argued for a million green jobs and for a just (socially just) transition for workers from high carbon jobs into jobs in a sustainable energy system.

Mark Serwotka, who had come straight from the Labour CND conference, made a brilliant speech talking about the steps taken by his union to convince members working for the ministry of defence on nuclear weapons systems (at Faslane for example) and members in the nuclear power plants that the union is right to oppose both nuclear weapons and nuclear power and that it will defend their right to alternative sustainable jobs at the same time.

He denounced the 'short-termism' of those union leaders who defend nuclear power and nuclear weapons on the basis of the defence of jobs. He argued that they should be prepared to both oppose these things and at the same time fight for sustainable alternative jobs for their members. He said that he would not argue for mass unemployment simply because it meant more jobs for PCS members working in the DWP. This is a very important issue.

The workshops included: how to build the movement, keeping fossil fuels in the ground, the environmental impact of meat production, climate refugees, fossil fuel divestment, a million climate jobs, the biodiversity crisis, air pollution and how to stop fracking. The biodiversity workshop that I went to had 150 people at it.

Throughout the day links were made to other mobilisations taking place that day particularly around cuts and in defence of migrants and asylum seekers. A message of support was sent to the demonstration in Dover against the National Front and the EDL and a mass tweet was organised in support of the demonstration on the housing Bill in South London.

The final session included two impressive live stream presentations - one from Benjamin Zephaniah and the other from Naomi Klein. The conference closed with very radical campaigning speech by Asad Rehman, the International Coordinator of FoE. It was a good round off to a productive day.

Alan Thornett

P.S.

* <http://socialistresistance.org/8054/climate-rising-conference-a-big-success>