

Climate strike: “Under capitalism, we can’t save the climate”

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Fridays For Future, an international anti-climate change movement, called for demonstrations around the globe last week. In total, there were 1,700 strikes and protests worldwide in more than 80 countries. In Germany alone, more than 620,000 people demonstrated in 470 cities. Members of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Germany discussed their statement on the issue with participants.

Many of the organizers hoped the demonstrations would strengthen the position of the German Green Party in Sunday’s federal elections, spreading the illusion that the party would be more receptive to pressure from the streets. But many ordinary participants were aware that there can be no solution to the climate issue within the capitalist system.

“All parties are dependent on money and therefore beholden to the stipulations of money,” explained one demonstrator in Berlin. “Working people have to fight for themselves because nobody else is doing it for them, even if it is said so.” It is not enough to appeal to politicians, said another. “Politicians make so much money lobbying and working for big corporations. We are here to show resistance, to show what we can do.”

“We have to intervene quite strongly in the economy—the issue is where the most CO2 emissions take place,” explained one participant in Stuttgart. “After all, it’s already weighing on us. For example, what happened in [the floods in] North Rhine-Westphalia or how warm the summers are,” explained another. “And if not so much has been done by politicians so far, we just have to take to the streets,” she added.

Asked what concrete measures need to be taken, she said, “As it stands, probably the most radical ones possible. The parties already have something in their

programs, but compromises like that don’t seem to work very well.”

Yet the measures taken by all the bourgeois parties are in no way sufficient. A student explained, “It is much too late in 2050, if you only shut down coal power then. That would have to happen much sooner, and we would have to be chasing other solutions much more. Such rules are simply enforced far too little, and no one in politics really gets involved.”

“All the time they pretend to be saying something, but then whether it’s enforced [or not] is another question and when it will be enforced,” a classmate agreed with her. Regarding the fact that the climate programmes of all parties are not enough to prevent a catastrophe, she explained, “They are easily not enough. You have to do much, much more. It’s our earth, we’re going to live here. Even the Greens aren’t doing enough”

When asked why that is, she elaborated, “Because it’s about money and because a lot of things just aren’t feasible, in that a lot of people would lose their jobs. But I think if we paid more attention to climate change, you would find new opportunities and also new jobs. It would certainly weaken our capital, but we have to take that.”

Other demonstrators explained that intervention is needed in big industry, because that is where most emissions occur. “Actually, the responsibility tends to be shifted to individuals. But when there’s so much to offer all the time, there’s no point in being an individual who wants to push back and can’t achieve anything.”

“It should not concentrate so much on the fact that it’s always the small citizens who must carry out so much, but make demands that those above also act sometimes,” another participant said.

On the question of whether the parties will change their policies after the election, she said, “I think that if we don’t have a clear change of system, nothing will really be done. So the demands of the Greens are all well and good, but in a certain way we just need a radical upheaval.”

She supported the fact that workers have to fight for these demands themselves. “I think we need more class consciousness in general—not just when it comes to the climate crisis. There are simply far too many of us who are not included in democratic decisions, and accordingly we need to stand together more.”

As the IYSSE and Socialist Equality Party (SGP) explained in a statement distributed at the demonstrations, climate change, like all major social issues, is a class question. “It requires an international, socialist response. Such an answer is not compatible with capitalism, which is based on profit maximization and competition between nation states.”

Appeals to the bourgeois parties are useless. The climate change measures they promise in their election programmes do not even achieve the totally inadequate targets they themselves have adopted. And everyone knows that even these are empty promises.



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