

Teen leads battle against climate change, calls for workers to strike

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Swedish environmental campaigner Greta Thunberg addresses politicians, media and guests with the Houses of Parliament on April 23, 2019, in London, England. Her visit coincides with the ongoing "Extinction Rebellion" protests across London, which have seen days of disruption to roads and transport systems, in a bid to highlight the dangers of climate change. Photo by: Leon Neal/Getty Images

Greta Thunberg is just 16 years old. However, she can draw a crowd. She leads other students in pushing for leaders to fight global warming.

Climate change, or global warming, is the heating up of Earth's climate. Scientists believe it is caused by burning fossil fuels. Oil, coal and natural gas are some examples.

Greta is from Sweden. She said the students need more support from older people to get leaders to keep their promises.

Protests have been going on this month in London, United Kingdom (U.K.) Speaking at an event in London as protests continued there, she was honest about the problem and the effect her efforts have had. "People are slowly becoming more aware, but emissions continue to rise. We can't focus on small things. Basically, nothing has changed," she said.

Emissions are the release of gases, including greenhouse gases. They trap heat and make the Earth warmer. These gases are released when we use fossil fuels.

Greta focused on challenging the companies and governments responsible for most emissions.

She said the protests need to spread. This is not just young people being tired of government leaders, she said. She called it more serious. "It is something that will affect the future" of our world, she said. "We must take action," she said.

Time For A General Strike

Franny Armstrong made a movie about climate change. In a question-and-answer time, she asked if it was time for a general strike. "Yes," said Greta. In a general strike, workers in most companies do not go to work.

Workers' groups have so far been slow to join the strikes. Some fear it will hurt their jobs.

The talk took place on Earth Day, April 22. It followed a week of protests, which made the climate top news.

Police arrested more than 1,000 protesters. However, hundreds remained in a part of London where Greta spoke on April 21.

What the protesters are doing is good, Greta said. "We need to do everything we can to put pressure on the people in power," she told the crowd on Earth Day, getting cheers.

Interest in the event was strong. A long line of people stood waiting for the doors to open.

When Greta appeared on stage, people cheered and clapped.

Armstrong said she had been to talks over the years, but had never seen anything like it. She called Greta a star.

Greta told the crowd she was surprised at the quick spread of a movement that began less than a year ago. It began when she went on strike alone outside a Swedish government building.

"It is hard to understand what is happening during the last months. It has all happened so fast. I don't have time to think it through," she said.

Her trip has included meeting with leaders in Europe.

Pushing Leaders To Give Attention To Climate Change

Some say she has pushed U.K. leaders to give more attention to climate change.

Some lawmakers in the United Kingdom said they hope groups will work together on the climate.

Caroline Lucas is one of these lawmakers. She said the protests and school strikes gave her hope. "It feels like a turning point in the history of how we defend our planet," she said.

Calling Out A Broken System

"Young people are calling out against a system that is sadly broken," she said.

How to deal with people in power was a subject of questions to Greta.

Someone asked Greta how she deals with people who deny that climate change is happening. "I don't," she replied.

Anna Taylor is with the U.K. Student Climate Network. She shared Greta's views. Young people are not going to accept leaders "saying 'we support you' and then walking away," she said.

Posting online is not enough, she said. That is why they have to keep striking, she explained.