

## The Environmentalist Manifesto

*“We stand today ... before the awful proposition: either the triumph of imperialism and the destruction of all culture, and, as in ancient Rome, depopulation, desolation, degeneration, a vast cemetery; or, the victory of socialism.”* So wrote Rosa Luxemburg in 1915. “Socialism or barbarism” were the two alternatives before human society at that time, as Rosa Luxemburg saw it. As history reveals, the world’s working class was unable to overthrow capitalism at that time, and as a result the barbarism of World War 1 (WWI) resulted.

Who could know how prophetic those words would be for today’s world? Who could know, at that time, the form in which a new crisis would present itself – a crisis born out of the contradiction between the very technology that capitalism has developed and the laws of nature?

Yet that is exactly what global climate change threatens – “depopulation, desolation, degeneration, a vast cemetery” as Rosa Luxemburg described the aftermath of WWI. The looming threat is seen in these developments:

- The rising seas (due to ice melt as well as expansion of water as it warms) threaten to flood thousands of square miles of habitable and productive land, much of it heavily populated at present. Already, this is starting to happen, as the people who live in such South Pacific Island nations as Kiribati and Tuvalu are starting to be forced to leave their islands due to rising sea levels. The same thing is happening to some indigenous peoples on islands in Alaska.
- As the seas rise, millions of people will be forced to become environmental refugees. This will enormously add to the ethnic and national conflicts that already exist around the world.
- Global climate change is causing drought in many regions of the world, including severe drought in Australia, parts of the South East United States, parts of Africa, and parts of Asia, including Afghanistan. This is also reducing an already stretched world food supply.
- Global climate change is causing the melting of glaciers all around the world. In parts of the Andean mountains in South America, entire villages have traditionally relied on the natural runoff from the glaciers for drinking water and water for their crops. The tremendous shrinkage of those glaciers has massively cut down on their water supply, forcing many people to abandon their villages and their way of life.
- Global climate change is causing all sorts of other serious problems. In the United States, for instance, the fire season for forest fires has expanded enormously and the fires have become far worse. This is partly

due to the longer and drier summers. On top of this, all sorts of pests, such as the pine beetle, have expanded their range because of the warmer climate. This is killing off huge swaths of forests, leaving a combustible tinderbox of dry, dead trees.

- Global climate change threatens to wipe out all sorts of species, from the tiniest insects to the polar bears. In addition, it is causing the oceans to become increasingly acid, which threatens the entire chain of life there.

### The “Greenhouse Effect”

Today, the “greenhouse effect” and “greenhouse gases” are commonly used terms. It is useful to understand exactly what these terms mean. Much of the Sun’s radiation that reaches the Earth is radiated back out into the atmosphere. Small concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other gases in the upper layers of the atmosphere act as a mirror and reflect some of this radiation back down to Earth. This is the “greenhouse effect” and without it the Earth would be too cold to support human life. The higher the concentration of these gases in the atmosphere, the more of the Sun’s radiation is reflected back to Earth.

For the last 400,000 years, CO<sub>2</sub> concentration in the atmosphere has varied between 200-280 parts per million (ppm). Since the industrial revolution, this concentration has inexorably risen. In 1960 it was estimated at 315 ppm and in 2005 at 380.<sup>1</sup> At present rates of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, it is estimated that concentration levels will reach something between 700-800 ppm by the end of the century.

### Capitalist Denial

For decades the owners of modern industrial and finance capital – the capitalist class – and their representatives denied or minimized the dangers of human-caused climate change. At first, they denied that any change in climate was under way. Then, they denied that this change was happening due to human activity. (They claimed it was due to Sun spots or some other such event.) Then they said that even if human activity was causing global climate change, there was nothing that could be done about it.

Now, they are starting to recognize that human-caused climate change is a fact of life. They are recognizing this not due to any concern for humanity, nor for concern for maintaining the beauty of the natural world. There is one reason and one reason alone, that has caused them to change how they deal with the issue: Profits.

The capitalist class is concerned that global climate change will

destabilize society, which will endanger their rule and hurt their bottom line. This is shown in the report commissioned by the US department of Defense in and published in 2003. That report, written by Peter Schwartz and Doug Randall was called *“Imagining the Unthinkable.”* Initially, this report was not widely publicized; it was for the top corporate strategists in the government, but the public did finally get access to a summary of this report. The report raises the possibility of major storms, droughts, “disruption of energy supplies”, world food shortages, etc.

Schwartz and Randall raise the following scenario: *“As global and local carrying capacities\* ( are reduced, tensions could mount around the world, leading to two fundamental strategies: defensive and offensive. Nations with the resources to do so may build virtual fortresses around their countries, preserving resources for themselves. Less fortunate nations especially those with ancient enmities with their neighbors, may initiate in struggles for access to food, clean water, or energy. Unlikely alliances could be formed as defense priorities shift and the goal is resources for survival rather than religion, ideology, or national honor.”* They conclude: *“In short, while the US itself will be relatively better off and with more adaptive capacity, it will find itself in a world where Europe will be struggling internally, large numbers of refugees washing up on its shores and Asia in serious crisis over food and water. Disruption and conflict will be endemic features of life.”*

In addition, certain particular industries are worried. Foremost among these is the insurance industry. Global climate change will involve increasingly severe storms as well as increased forest fires – in fact it already has. These affect the insurance companies’ bottom line.

### **Past Crises Social in Nature**

Throughout its history, the masses of society have suffered through all sorts of crises: Famine, plague and pestilence, war, invasion and slaughter, even genocide. However, since the rise of capitalism, all these crises have happened due to the class nature of society. For example, even mass starvation from the potato crop failure in Ireland was not caused by potato crop failure itself. Ireland at that time had a huge wheat crop, that was planted and controlled by the rich, often British, landlords. This wheat crop was for export only; the poor were not allowed to eat it. The Catholic Church – acting as the agent of the ruling class – participated in this by telling the peasants that they’d go to hell if they took the wheat.

When shortages arose, due to wars for instance, workers were told that there must be an equality of sacrifice, that everybody must tighten their belt. So, for instance, during World War II (WW II), it was outlawed for workers in the United States to get any significant pay raise. This was justified on these grounds. However, the capitalist class made immense profits during this war. The same is

\* - *“Carrying capacity” is the term used by some scientists and others to refer to the ability of the earth to support a certain amount of life.*

happening today in a slightly different form. All sorts of private contractors and military suppliers are raking in the loot from the US invasion and occupation of Iraq – money provided courtesy of the US taxpayers. Meanwhile, the pitifully few social services that exist are being cut here at home.

The developing new crisis of global climate change, which threatens every corner of the planet, is caused by a conflict between the way the capitalist class has developed and used modern technology and the laws of nature itself. This is something new and not easily accepted. However, accept it we must, and deal with it we must. If we do not, then future generations will look back in anger and ask why we allowed the world to degenerate so.

Those who rule modern society – the capitalist class and their representatives – have proven themselves incapable

of dealing with human-caused global warming and the resulting climate change. It is up to the world’s working class, therefore, to take matters into its own hands. In order to do this, we must start with a scientific understanding of this climate change, including its causes and what can be done as far as technology. There are some who simply want a slightly more human and slightly more “green” capitalism; they and others see no alternative to capitalism. Contrary to their claims, an entire social, political and economic revolution will be necessary to resolve this looming disaster. No less than this is required to bring about the changes in technology that human society uses to produce and distribute what it needs to survive and flourish.

### **Capitalism’s Historic Mission**

Capitalism bases itself on continual change and innovation. Competition forces each individual company to improve efficiency or die.

In previous periods, this unquenchable thirst for a competitive edge led capitalism to play a progressive role in this sense: It led capitalism to develop all sorts of new technologies, to expand human understanding of the natural world, even to partially dispel certain religious superstitions. The capitalist class led the overthrow of the backwards, reactionary feudal class in Western Europe. It even found itself forced to lead a civil war to overthrow slavery in the United States.

Of course, it did so at the cost of immense human suffering. It drove



**US Unemployed in the 1930s**  
*Past crises were social in nature*

the peasants off of their land in Western Europe. It invaded and conquered the peoples from around the globe, leaving chaos, starvation and oppression in its wake. It kidnapped millions of people from Africa to enslave in North and South America. It robbed children of their youth, forcing them to toil practically their entire waking life in miserable factories. It chewed up tens of millions of workers, spitting out broken bodies.

Yet, despite all its horrors, capitalism did advance the means of production. It was superior to the previous social system (feudalism) that it replaced.

The competition between individual capitalist companies is mirrored by the competition between the individual nation-states. A fundamental way in which this national competition is carried out is through military competition and wars. In turn, this has been a huge source of scientific advancement, and the spin-offs from military research and development have also been huge. This was especially so during the Cold War period, when massive federal spending for all sorts of scientific research was made. Part of this research studied weather patterns, for military purposes. First, improved ability to predict the weather would help militarily. Also, it was hoped that it would be possible to affect weather patterns, which could be used for military advantage.

Scientific research and the scientists themselves, however, work to their own methods and their own rhythms to an extent. It is not possible to recruit to and encourage science departments if what they study is strictly regimented; a certain amount of freedom is necessary. Not all scientific research can be for direct profit or military advantage. So it is that some scientists devoted themselves to studying why dinosaurs had gone extinct – a subject that at the time would seem to be without any practical application. But this led to the understanding of how the global climate had changed and from there to the understanding of *why* these changes had occurred.

Meanwhile, history marched on, and capitalism was changing the world drastically. By expanding into every nook and cranny of the world, capitalism vastly expanded its markets, thereby expanding its ability to produce. It enormously increased production overall and through all sorts of new technologies vastly expanded the human species' ability to affect nature. At the same time, the sheer number of human beings on the planet increased massively.

### History of Human-Caused Climate Change – From “Fantasy” to Reality

During the early years of capitalism, the idea that human activity could significantly change the environment seemed like a fantasy. As one writer put it: *“Hardly anyone imagined that human actions, so puny among the vast natural powers, could upset the balance that governed the planet as a whole. This*

*Capitalism comes to life with a congenital bloodstain on its cheek, dripping with blood and dirt from head to foot, from every pore... Karl Marx*

*view of Nature – suprahuman, benevolent, and inherently stable – lay deep in most human cultures. It was traditionally tied up with a religious faith in the God-given order of the universe, a flawless and imperturbable harmony. Such was the public belief, and scientists are members of the public, sharing most of the assumptions of their culture. Once scientists found plausible arguments explaining that the atmosphere and climate would remain unchanged within a human timescale – just as everyone expected – they stopped looking for possible counter arguments.”* <sup>3</sup>Yet capitalism developed humanity's productive ability beyond anybody's imagination. Not only has production per person increased, but the total human population has absolutely exploded – from a historic level of about one billion world wide to over six billion following the industrial revolution.

It took some time for people's understanding to catch up with this changed world. This included an understanding of how human activity could affect the environment on a massive scale. Naturally, it was in the interest of the capitalist class to obscure this fact of life, and obscure it they did (and continue to do).

In addition, a view of the world that is dominated by religion serves the capitalist class's interest. Through religion, all sorts of confusions can be sowed. The opposition to abortion rights is but the most glaring example. Beyond this, looking at the world in a scientific way, trying to understand the causes of events – this is dangerous for the working class to adopt this approach too seriously. It can lead to a clearer, class-conscious view of the world.

The religious view of the world also implies that the basic world is permanent. This includes the world's climate. In any case, recent (past few thousand years) human experience would lead one to believe this anyway.

However, the competition inherent in capitalism created a continued struggle to improve technology. This in turn led to a better, more scientific, understanding of the natural world. In one realm after another, religious mysticism was forced to retreat in the face of science. Modern science has shown that the world's climate has changed drastically over its hundreds of millions of years of existence. Some of these changes have apparently been due to the impact of massive meteors (which may have led to the



**Rachel Carson** - Her book, *“Silent Spring,”* published in 1963, was one of the first warnings of how human activity could seriously damage the environment. It was met with hostility by big business.

extinction of dinosaurs). Other changes in climate have been apparently due to huge volcanic eruptions. Whatever the causes, the climate has been proven to be unstable.

Recent scientific advances have also led to a greater understanding of the ice age that affected Europe relatively recently – a mere 12,000 years ago. This is known as the Younger Dryas period, and it was caused by a general warming that melted a huge ice dam in what is now North America. The melting of this dam sent a massive flow of fresh water into the North Atlantic. This freshening of the North Atlantic brought to a stop the current of warm water that flows up the Atlantic Ocean from near the equator. It is this warm water that keeps Northern Europe relatively warm and once it stopped a new ice age descended in this part of the world for some time. (There is some controversy today over whether a melting of the arctic ice cap and the resultant freshening of the surrounding sea water could cause a similar event in the future.)

*Thus did capitalism drive forward an understanding of the natural world, while at the same time it tried to hold it back in order to protect its profits.*

### **Capitalists' Class Interests Intervene**

Capitalism has brought into existence the modern working class – the proletariat. This is the force which can provide the alternative to capitalism. At every step, at every turn in world events, the capitalist class keeps in mind this working class and tries to devise a strategy to minimize its influence. Likewise, capitalism has helped enormously advance human understanding of the natural world – modern science. Yet now that same modern science has decisively proven that modern production is having a disastrous effect on the environment. So, at the same time, capitalism is continually seeking to counter the very discoveries that its birth-child has helped make.

The Bush administration has been famous for appointing direct representatives of the oil industry to control the pronouncements of scientists. None of this overt censorship by the Bush administration would have been possible had their supposed rivals, the Democrats, not remained more or less silent in the matter. Most certainly, what has been revealed is only the tip of the iceberg. And the acts of overt censorship cause others to modify their scientific judgments in order to be politically acceptable.

Perhaps an even more damaging form of censorship is the self-censorship imposed by most scientists on themselves. Knowing that the capitalist class will not accept any drastic change, the great majority of the prominent scientists as well as the environmental groups shape their discussion and what they call for based on what they consider to be acceptable to capitalism. This is called “accepting political realities”.

### **Corporate-Controlled Media**

On top of that is how the corporate-controlled media plays the issue. Up until recently, the media gave equal weight to the global warming deniers and the global warming realists. They justified this by claiming that they wanted to be

balanced. However, there are still a few people around who claim that the Earth is flat. Why do these people not get equal time to those who understand that it is round?

Today, extreme weather events (floods, droughts, hurricanes) are increasingly in the news as are worsening forest fires. The media does not hesitate to sensationalize these events in order to improve their ratings. Explaining the underlying cause is a different matter, though. As Ross Gelbspan writes: “A few years ago, a top editor at a major TV network was asked why, given the increasing proportion of news budgets dedicated to weather disasters, the network news broadcasts did not make this connection (with global warming). The editor said, ‘We did that – Once. But it triggered a barrage of complaints from the Global Climate Coalition (a fossil fuel funded denier group) to our top executives at the network.’... In the end, he confided, the industry basically intimidated the network into dropping this connection from its coverage.”<sup>5</sup> That was just a few years ago.

In October of 2007, Al Gore won a Nobel Prize for his work in publicizing

*In 1981, James Hansen, a scientist employed by the US Department of Energy, sent the NY Times a report he was about to have published that reported that the world's climate was warming. This led the Department of Energy to renege on promised funding for Hansen, who then had to lay off a number of employees.*

*Corporate America and their political representatives in both major parties have continued to seek to censor scientists. Shortly after G.W. Bush came into office, a representative of ExxonMobil, Randy Randol, sent a memo to Bush seeking the removal of the chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Dr. Robert Watson. They cited Watson's comment that “The United States is way off meeting its targets (for CO2 emissions).” They sought Watson's replacement by either Dr. Richard Lindzen or Dr. Richard Christy, two global warming deniers. Christy's and Lindzen's claim to fame was some research they'd done which purported to show that global warming had not really occurred. Their arguments collapsed when it was shown that they were based on incorrect calculations of satellite orbits. Perhaps the fact that Lindzen was also receiving \$2,500 per day as a “consultant” for the coal industry had something to do with his views also.*

*In any case, they succeeded in getting Watson removed, although getting Lindzen or Christy appointed in his place would have caused too great of a scandal and this was not accomplished.*

*This government censorship has continued throughout the Bush administration. Scientific reports by administration scientists were edited and changed for political reasons by Bush aide Philip Cooney, a political appointee. When this came out in the open, Cooney was forced to resign. He then went to work lobbying for ExxonMobil.<sup>4</sup>*

the issue of global warming. He has established a name for himself as probably the most well-known advocate of the seriousness of global warming. It was not always so. When he was vice president, what he proposed at Kyoto is the same as what Bush is proposing today: The market based cap-and-trade approach as

### **Rhetoric vs. Reality**

*“There is no environment minister on Earth that will stop this oil from being produced,” said Canadian environment minister Stephane Dion in November, 2005, referring to a project to mine and process Albertan tar sands that will double Canada’s CO2 emissions in the course of making available billions of additional barrels of oil. Less than two weeks later, Dion told the delegates to the international climate negotiations gathered in Montreal that “climate change is the single most important environmental issue facing the world today.”*

*The International Energa Agency (IEA), comprising the 26 main oil-consuming nations, recommended that the global oil industry invest \$20.3 trillion in new facilities by 2030 in order to increase oil production. On the other hand, the IEA also warns that unless the world takes action to reduce energy consumption, global greenhouse gas emissions will increase by 52 per cent by 2030. “These projected trends lead to a future that is not sustainable. We must change these outcomes and get the planet onto a sustainable energy path,” said William C. Ramsay, the IEA’s Deputy Executive the (sic) International Energy. 6*

well as a fictional limit on the amount that emissions might rise in the future rather than outright reduction of present-day emissions. (See below for an explanation of the cap-and-trade strategy.)

### **Effects of Human Caused Global Warming**

It is not necessary to detail here all the effects of human caused global warming. They include other effects such as migration of species and extinctions, spread of previously tropical diseases to new regions, flooding in some areas and drought in others, etc. In places in Alaska, people are having major foundation problems with their houses. This is because the tundra is starting to thaw, the ground is softening up, and house foundations are shifting and sinking. All of this and more is well documented and anybody can find the information online or in the many books and articles written on the subject.

However, it is important for workers and youth to know the concrete facts about human caused global warming. Therefore, attached as “Appendix A” at the end of this writing is a partial description of the evidence for and the results of human-caused global warming.

### **Past Predictions and Positive Feedback**

Almost all previous predictions about the pace of global warming and the consequences have been shown to have been wrong; they underestimated how fast things would go. There appear to be two main reasons: The first is that modern scientists tend to be conservative in their

thinking; unless something can be mathematically proven, they have a tendency to fail to draw conclusions. At times, of course, this is necessary; however it can also be carried too far.

The other reason for their incorrect predictions is that up until recently, many of these predictions did not take into account the “positive feedback” effects. These are self-reinforcing cycles, such as the melting of the Arctic ice. The (white) ice reflects a good portion of the Sun’s rays back out into the atmosphere. As the climate warms and the ice melts, it leaves darker-colored sea water in its place. This dark water absorbs more of the Sun’s rays than did the white ice., thus further speeding the global warming. There are several different mechanisms that cause this positive feedback.

### **Deniers**

Today, wings of the capitalist class still desperately cling to denial of the fact of human-caused global warming. Most prominent within that wing is the fossil fuel industry. These industries, often linked with right-wing think tanks like the “Free Enterprise Institute”, have hired “scientists” to provide the arguments for denying this developing crisis. These are really professional public relations experts who use their scientific training to twist facts and invent arguments, much as a defense lawyer does for his or her client (if the client pays enough) or as a prosecutor does once they decide that a particular person will be charged with a crime (regardless of whether that individual is really guilty or not).

Many people are familiar with the arguments, so for this reason these are not detailed and answered here. However, many others are not so familiar, and it is critically important that workers and activists understand the science involved in global warming. For these reasons, *Appendix B* details the arguments of the global warming deniers as well as their economic and political connections.

### **Human Society’s Search for Energy Sources**

One of the tremendous advantages the human species has over all other species is our ability to foresee the longer term consequences of our actions. It is this ability that has allowed us to make all sorts of inventions and discoveries,



*Al Gore - As Vice President, and since then, he has not allowed his concerns over global warming to interfere with the principles of the capitalist class.*

### ***Eye-Witness in Peru***

Thea Gelbspan spent time in the Peruvian Andes when she worked for Oxfam. Here is how she described the effects of global warming there:

*Many times, I'd meet an older person who would say they swam in a local river that came up to their chest. You look out the window and see a river that comes up to the toes. You have to remember that in the Andes there is not a lot of fresh water, and what there is flows from the glaciers down to the ocean. There's not a lot of rainfall.*

*There's a glacier called the Huascarán near this one community. It's just shrunk at an extraordinary rate in the last years. These villages are pretty high, above the tree line, and their sole source of water is this glacier. It's probably the same story in different communities. There's lots of reasons why people migrate out of these communities, but I'd visited a couple of communities where there's almost nobody left there and when I asked why, people would say "there's no water left, and there will be no water for my crops."*

*These people have no insurance and no bank account and they invest their savings in their land; that's what they invest in for their kids and grandkids, so when the water goes away, their future is disappearing before their eyes.*

*I was remembering an older man who said about a newborn granddaughter, "I grew up around here playing in this river. This river was a big part of my life, but my granddaughter won't be able to play in this river."*

*Many of these people have strong indigenous roots, which means that this is part of their culture, part of themselves; a strong sense of who they are is based on that mountain or that river, so moving is doubly hard. People have planned where they live according to natural resources. They plant crops based on where there will be water.*

*There have been years of investment there... They plant crops based on where the water from the glaciers will flow. And now all this is dying. 7*

which in turn have allowed us to dominate the planet. Among other things, it has allowed the human species to develop alternative means of obtaining the fuel that we digest (food). These alternatives can be used to replace sheer human muscle (and nowadays also brain) power.

However, this ability to foresee the longer range consequences of our actions has its limits. Some of these limits are due to our limited ability to understand the complex universe; nobody can foresee everything. However, some of the limitations are imposed by the class-based systems under which

most humans have lived over the last few thousand years. In one sense, the development of global warming can be described as being caused by these two factors combined, as the history of industrialization shows.

The fundamental process was as follows: When human production was on a primitive level, fuel was used (and carbon released into the atmosphere as CO<sub>2</sub>) at about the same rate that plants (especially trees) were able to remove CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere. In other words, wood was burned at about the same rate as it grew. However, as human production increased, natural plant growth was unable to keep pace with the felling and use of trees. Then, human society turned to other carbon sources – carbon stored over millions of years, first in coal and then in fossil oil. *It was this, plus industrialization (which is linked with this development), that allowed for the massive expansion of the human population – from about one billion to about six point six billion in just a few centuries.*

### **Oil and Human-Caused Global Warming**

The date was August 27, 1859, and the place was Titusville (population 125), Pennsylvania. On that date, the world's first oil well started to draw oil up from the ground (from a depth of 69 feet). From ancient Mesopotamia to the Yucatan, peoples had used the black, gooey substance that seeped out of the ground prior to that, but never before had a well been drilled to draw the oil out. The developing success of the first few oil wells in western Pennsylvania led to a speculative frenzy. All sorts of land grabbers and get-rich-quick artists moved in, drove up the price of land, drilled wells, allowed land values to collapse if oil wasn't found or if its source dried up.

The price of oil rose and fell like a roller coaster. In part this was due to pure speculation, but in part also due to the competition inherent in capitalism. Competition, lack of economic planning, struggles to get to the oil deposits first – all of these created the chaotic, anarchic frenzy of the capitalist market along with the rise of massive individual capitalist powers.

No one capitalist monopoly represents this better than Jay Rockefeller and his Standard Oil, which over time came to dominate the US oil industry. As one of Rockefeller's collaborators who later succeeded him explained about Rockefeller, *"He instinctively realized that orderliness would only proceed from a centralized control of large aggregations of plant and capital, with the one aim of an orderly flow of products from the producer to the consumer."*<sup>8</sup> The Standard Oil trust did come to provide a certain orderliness to the market, but at a cost – the cost of impoverishment of millions of workers and farmers whose lives Standard Oil dominated. It was an element of planning, but based on private profit.

For a time, Standard Oil was able to either buy out or crush every competitor or potential competitor. However, it was unable to maintain its absolute dominance forever. First a couple of other global rivals developed – Shell Oil and Royal Dutch Oil, both in Europe. Then others developed. Their relentless quest for and discovery of new oil deposits, their development of new means of drilling for and pumping oil, their development of new means of refining oil – all of this meant a massive advance for human society in many ways. It meant, for instance,

that when the Sun set, people's lives would not necessarily fall into darkness. It meant a massive improvement in the means of transportation. It provided access to a huge, cheap source of energy which fueled a massive advance in production, science and technology. These were advances for which the capitalist system itself was responsible.

However, just as the domination of Standard for a time did not come without costs, neither did the domination of capitalism. The relentless competition between national cliques of the capitalist class meant also competition for empires. Once the underdeveloped world was more or less divided up, then it was necessary to settle the competition by other means – war.

### Oil and Inter-imperialist Rivalries

World War I, a struggle for colonies, also led to the further development of the oil industry. At the outset of this war, military strategy was based on men's physical capabilities as well as those of the horse. By the end of the war, it was the internal combustion engine that was the basis of military maneuver and strategy. Related to this, the struggle for access to oil supplies was both a cause of the war as well as one of the determinants of its outcome.



*Titusville, PA - the world's first oil well  
Little did they know how this was to change the world.*

Thus we see that in the struggle for colonies, each competing colonialist power was forced to use every means at its disposal to vanquish its rivals. If it failed to do so out of some longer range strategic considerations, it would lose the immediate battle.

It is true that the environmental consequences of the use of oil were not fully understood at that time, but even if they had been it would have made no difference. The competing colonial powers could not afford to consider the environmental consequences in this primal struggle. Vanquish or be vanquished. The very laws of motion of capitalism and its inevitable birth-child, imperialism, dictated this. These laws

raised the power of the oil industry to great heights.

### The Rise of the Automobile

The power of the oil industry, in turn, helped dictate how capitalism was to develop society. In the US, this meant the rise of the automobile, the spread of suburbia and the death of most cities.

At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the main means of long distance transportation was the railroad. Inter city travel was often by light rail street cars. The owners of these rail lines and street car lines were extremely unpopular. This was because of how they gouged the public and bribed and bullied politicians. Railroad companies mercilessly exploited the farmers, who depended on railroads to get their produce to market. They also utilized their right-of-way claims to reap massive profits in real estate speculation.

For this reason, the early development of the automobile was seen as a democratic development. It was also widely heralded as giving the average American a certain freedom.

As has often been the case in capitalism, the innovations used for war were later used in the consumer market. In 1916 there were 3.4 million registered autos in the US. Three years later that number was 23.1 million. Not only did the number of autos increase; so did their annual usage. In 1919, the average auto in the US was driven 4,500 miles. By 1929, that number was 7500 miles. Along with this came the advent of the drive-in gas station. In 1920, approximately 100,000 establishments sold gasoline. Most of these were just retail stores that also sold gasoline. By 1929, that number was 300,000, almost all of which were exclusively gas stations or garages.<sup>10</sup>

### Robert Moses

Along with this went massive construction of roads and bridges and the rise and fall of thousands of small towns and cities. One of the most famous individuals involved in the post WW II development of cities and transport was Robert Moses of New York. Moses was head of several agencies in New York, including the Triborough Bridge Authority. In his position, he made and organized the carrying out of plans for development of the greater New York City and surrounding areas. He was known as an autocrat who did not hesitate to use bribes and blackmail to bully politicians into line. His overall goal was the development of a massive network of bridges, roads and freeways, with suburban housing based on this network. He used eminent domain\* to take away urban properties, not hesitating to destroy entire long-standing communities. In one of his most infamous acts, the roads he built around New York City, including those leading to Jones Beach, were intentionally built with overpasses over them that were too low to allow the then-used buses to fit underneath them. This was to keep the poor, and especially the black and Puerto Rican poor, away from Jones Beach, since many of them didn't own cars. Moses was also responsible for the planning of Manhattan's West Side Highway and the adjoining park along the Hudson River. He made sure that this park was only developed below 125<sup>th</sup> St, so that the



***The Destruction of WW I - Part of the struggle for colonies, which was the basis of the war, was the struggle for access to oil. In turn, this access to oil helped determine the outcome of the war.***

black and Puerto Rican residents of Harlem would not receive the benefits.

In another instance, when Moses wanted to develop a freeway in upstate New York, he routed it around the estates of the wealthy. Instead, the freeway made a curve into the land of small farmers. In one case, his freeway cut directly through the property of one such farm, forcing the farmer to travel extra miles to get from one part of his property to the other, eventually forcing him off the farm. While Moses had rerouted the freeway many miles to avoid the estates of his wealthy associates, he was unwilling to reroute it even just a fraction of a mile to avoid destroying this family farm. In yet another instance, he wanted to build a freeway through a long-standing neighborhood on the outskirts of New York City. When residents refused to move, he simply acquired title to the buildings and cut off their heat and electricity.

While Robert Moses was a particularly autocratic figure, what he

**Total carbon emissions by automobiles in the US (2004): 314 metric tons.**

**Per cent of US CO2 emissions caused by automobile use: 25%**

**Per cent of world emissions from autos emitted by auto use in US: 50%**

**(source: Union of Concerned Scientists,<sup>9</sup>**

represented was a conscious plan for the development of real estate linked with the rise of the automobile; he was the embodiment of how capitalism developed in the United States.

Prior to WW I, street car lines ran from the urban centers to the areas surrounding the cities (the suburbs). In the rapid expansion that followed WW II, however,

auto manufacturers such as General Motors (GM) and also the oil industry bought up these street car lines and then closed them down, forcing people to increase their use of private automobiles. Because the suburbs were largely developed on a for-profit basis, as few public amenities as possible were built. Also, catering to the automobile form of transport, as well as the general development plans, goods were sold in stores in strip malls – accessible mainly by autos. While many people comment on the long distances that some workers have to drive to get to and from work, in fact these make up only 22.5% of all miles driven by autos in the US. On the other hand, 33% of miles driven are for personal errands and another 33% for social and recreational purposes.<sup>11</sup> This is because of the spread-out nature of the suburbs as well as the lack of public transport, which in turn is due to the way capitalism developed the US as described above.

### **Mass Workers' Parties in Western Europe**

In Western Europe, capitalism was forced to take a somewhat different route. There, the working class for many decades played a somewhat independent role in society. They did this through their own political parties – the Labour Party in Britain and the Socialist Party (and in one or two countries also the Communist Party) in continental Europe. In Britain, up until recently a very common form of housing for workers was publicly-owned housing. There was not the stigma attached to public housing as there is in the United States, and public housing was not the crime ridden, prison-like towers that they are in the US. In addition, most if not all western European countries have highly developed public transit



***Overpass over road to Jones Beach, NY - In order to keep poor black and Puerto Rican people away from this state park, these overpasses were built too low to allow public transport (buses) to pass under them.***

and rail systems. While it may be true that higher population densities prevented the suburban sprawl that marks the United States, this is not the only reason. The

\* - Eminent domain laws in the United States allow public agencies to take ownership of property if it is considered to be in the public good, such as for the purpose of building freeways, bridges, etc.

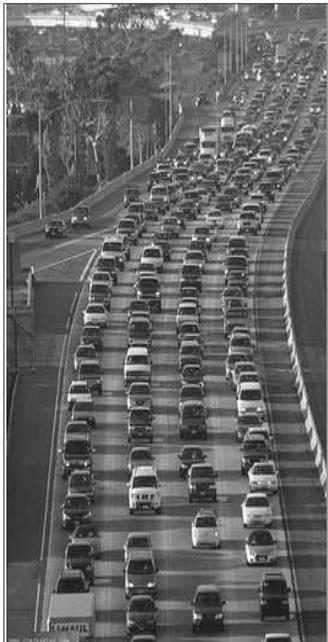
public transit and rail systems are part of the generally much higher level of public services in general. This, in turn, was due to the existence of the mass working class parties that existed there.

### Electric Car

The amount of auto emissions in the US are, in large part, due to the systematic sabotage by the US auto manufacturers of any more efficient alternative. The story of General Motors (and the other auto manufacturers) and the electric car is nearly tragic.

In 1990, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) passed a zero emissions mandate. This mandate required that any manufacturer that wanted to sell cars in the California market must offer a zero emission auto as one alternative. Such a zero emission auto almost necessarily meant an electric car. The CARB mandate required that by 2003, a full 10% of a manufacturer's cars sold in California must be zero emissions.

The auto industry took a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, they organized to undermine and ultimately destroy this mandate. They set up "Californians Against Utility Company Abuse." This populist-sounding front claimed that the zero emissions mandate was an abuse by the utility companies who wanted to sell more electricity. They put ads on TV claiming that there were no environmental benefits from electric cars. They ensured that the mandate would only be in effect if there was a demand for electric cars.



**Traffic jam - Typical result of intentional destruction of public transport.**

Then, while they started to produce the cars in case they failed at undermining the mandate, they did their best to ensure that the demand did not develop. In the first place, their advertising campaign seemed to intentionally turn people off (as opposed to ads for sports utility vehicles and other gas guzzlers, which feature beautiful scenery, sexy young men and women, etc.) General Motors, which started to produce the Electric Vehicle 1 (EV1), only produced four per day, which drove up the production costs per auto. In 2001, GM closed its EV1 assembly plant and fired its sales force for this auto.

One inventor, Stan Oshinsky, patented a new, more efficient type of battery for the electric vehicles. Controlling interest in the company he created to produce this battery was bought by GM, which then ordered Oshinsky not to advertise this battery. For two years after, GM did not use this battery and they then sold the company to Texaco Oil, which of course had a vested interest in killing the electric vehicle.

At the same time, along with the Bush and Schwarzenegger administrations, they started a campaign for the fuel cell auto instead of the electric vehicle. Fuel cell autos are vastly more expensive (about \$1 million presently) and require use of fossil oil for the fuel cells, anyway. Also, electric vehicles can be charged at home. If a home has extensive solar panels or wind generators, this would make their fuel almost free. Fuel cells have to be charged at gas stations, or their equivalent. All the electric vehicles put on the market were leased; there was no option to buy these cars outright. In the first years of the new century, the auto manufacturers started the process of recalling all their electric vehicles, despite the fact that many, many people who had one of these cars absolutely loved them. By 2004, the last EV1 was forcibly repossessed by GM. Other manufacturers did the same, despite public protests by their users. All of the EV's were crushed.

The auto manufacturers also sued in court against the CARB mandates. The Bush administration joined in this suit. At that time, Bush's chief of staff was Andrew Card, former CEO of the Auto Manufacturers Association of America. They also bought off the chairman of CARB by giving him a well-paid position in the fuel cell industry. Following this, the chairman held hearings which resulted in advancing the expensive and impractical fuel cell in place of the electric vehicle.

Now, California Governor Schwarzenegger is talking about the fuel cell highway. This is the alternative, according to him and to the auto and oil industries. Aside from the enormous present cost of fuel cell cars, they are also a lot less roomy because of the large amount of space taken up by the fuel cells. Hydrogen is also expensive and usually produced from fossil oil. Also an entirely new infrastructure of fueling stations would have to be developed.

While it is true that electric autos might not be an alternative for those doing long distance driving, we have to keep in mind that in the US two-thirds of driving is just around town for personal errands and recreation (movies, etc.),<sup>12</sup> Since many US families own two or more cars anyway, there is no reason why at least one of these cars could not be electric. An electric vehicle would be perfectly suited for around-town driving. However, its development was a threat to the profits of the oil and auto industries. Therefore, it had to be squelched.

It is not necessary to detail how capitalism developed agriculture, energy supplies (electricity, etc.) or other aspects of contributors to global warming. In all cases, immediate profit was the overwhelming consideration. In the case of the electric grid, for instance, the further electric power has to be transported, the more power is lost in the power lines. Yet now, increasingly larger power grids are being developed. This increases the power and profits of a few large companies, at the expense of the environment. Relatively little investment is put into developing the means of individual generation of electricity. It is true that there is an increasing trend towards home solar panels, but this is but a tiny, tiny proportion of the overall electric generation.

### Conclusions from This History

Early industrialization and the use of fossil fuels was not simply a product

of capitalist sabotage of alternatives; the fact is that alternative fuel sources did not exist at that time. During this period, capitalism played a progressive role in this sense: This form of organizing production allowed for a vast reduction in the amount of labor hours required to produce society's necessities.

We cannot blame the profit motive for these early developments; there was no way that people could really realize the longer-term consequences of the use of these fuels. However, in the early or mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, these consequences started to become felt. Scientists and journalists started to study and understand them.

The capitalist class ignored the understanding that was starting to develop. Later, they actively sabotaged the development of this understanding. They also obstructed the drawing of any practical conclusions.

As part of this, they sabotaged any plans to develop alternatives to use renewable energy. This was done in part to protect already existing investments. If cheap, clean alternatives to the internal combustion engine were developed, for instance, then all the billions invested in building these engines would lose much of their value. Also, the capitalist class opposed any tendency to increase regulations on air pollution, etc. This is because they oppose anything that stands in their way of making immediate profits or limits their freedom to invest where and how they like. (They do have *some* principles, after all!)

#### **What Can Be Done – The “Free Market” Approach**

Now the capitalist class is worried about the consequences of human-caused global warming. They worry about a hit to their bottom line – profits – due to extreme weather events such as storms, droughts, etc. They worry about a possible collapse of the social stability that is necessary for assured profits. They worry about a social revolt that would lead to a mass anti-capitalist movement. Therefore, they feel forced to try something.



**Crushed Electric Autos** - They were a threat to the power and profits of the auto and oil industries.

However, what the capitalist class willingly does is determined by their own principles. First and foremost of these principles is freedom of capital. The owners of capital will not willingly agree to anything that restricts their ability to invest where, when and how they like. Even on the basis of capitalism, the natural approach would be to write regulations which simply restrict emissions of greenhouse gases. But left to their own devices, the owners of capital and their politicians will never write such regulations.

In the 1980s, capitalism was forced to deal with the threat to the ozone layer caused by the use of chlorinated fluorocarbons (CFCs). These are the gases that were used in spray cans, for instance. They dealt with this issue by reaching a treaty in Montreal Canada in 1987. Three years later, the Clinton administration in the US pushed through the Clean Air Act, which dealt with the issue of acid rain.

In both cases, the approach was the “cap and trade” approach. Under this strategy, owners of capital are granted a certain amount of credits to emit the particular pollutants up to a certain amount. If a company emits less than its quota, it can sell the remaining amount to another company that goes over the quota.

In both cases, this cap-and-trade strategy was fairly successful.

During these same years, the capitalist class was becoming increasingly aware of the threat to profits posed by global warming. They also were concerned that scientists, who they try to keep isolated behind the laboratory walls, were starting to make public comments on their own about global warming. This was not good. They had to be brought under control. Who knows how far some scientists might go?

In 1988, the United Nations founded the International Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC. This was made up of government representatives – that is, representatives of the owners of capital in the various countries of the world. The main achievement of the IPCC has been the Kyoto Accords. These Accords seek to use this same cap-and-trade approach. The problem is that greenhouse gas emissions is a far more complex problem than was emissions of CFCs. The emission of greenhouse gases is central to almost the entire technology developed by capitalism.

One problem with this approach is the potential for fraud. For instance, trees can be planted, the emission allotment sold, and then a few years later the trees can be cut down, and then the process is started over again. Or, take another example: A steel mill owner plans to modernize his or her plant. Part of this modernization would inevitably include a reduction in the amount of energy required. The owner then gets some “scientist” to certify that this is being done to reduce emissions and the owner then has an allotment of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that can be sold.

*“Human history can be summarized as the struggle for efficiency of labor time.”*  
*Leon Trotsky*

Another problem is the potential for untested and potentially dangerous schemes. For instance, not so long ago a company came up with the idea of seeding the oceans with iron filings. Supposedly this seeding would encourage the growth of algae which would then absorb more CO<sub>2</sub>. This would then give this company

emission allotments to sell.

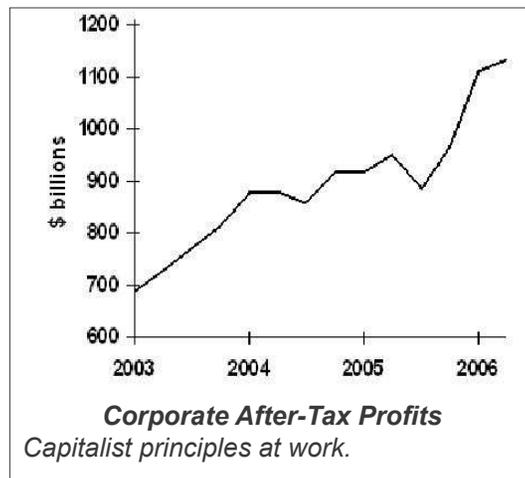
What would be the longer term effects of such seeding? Nobody knows, but one possibility is a massive increase in algae bloom which would choke almost all other living things in the region of the bloom. This doesn't matter, though; all that matters is immediate profits.

The cap-and-trade approach is similar to the speculation that Enron engaged in. One contract on top of another was bought and sold. Nobody could keep track of the comings and goings until the entire scheme imploded. However, that was just one particular company and its stockholders and employees; here we are talking about the world's atmosphere.

The Kyoto Accord requires its signatories (which don't include the United States) to reducing carbon emissions by 5.2% by 2012. This goal is completely inadequate and shows that the capitalist class, itself, knows that cap-and-trade strategy will not work

### Some Real Steps

Recently George Monbiot, the prominent British environmental journalist, published an extremely carefully researched book called "Heat: How to Stop the Planet from Burning." According to Monbiot, many scientists believe that it is necessary to prevent the Earth from warming by over 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Over this and global climate change could spiral out of control. Even this may be overly optimistic. Monbiot writes: "*A conference of scientists convened by the UK's Met Office warned that at less than one degree*



*above pre-industrial levels, crop yields begin to decline in continental interiors, droughts spread in the Sahel region of Africa, water quality falls and coral reefs start to die. At 1.5 degrees or less, an extra 400 million people are exposed to water stress and another 5 million to hunger; 18 per cent of the world's species will be lost, and the 'onset of complete melting of Greenland ice' is triggered. There are, I am afraid, some effects of climate change which cannot be avoided.*"<sup>13</sup>

Monbiot cites experts who believe that limiting global warming to two degrees means that CO2 concentrations must be kept at *the equivalent* of 440 ppm or lower. He stresses "equivalent" because of the other greenhouse gases (such as methane), and concludes that given this, CO2 levels must be kept at today's levels to prevent the worst-case scenarios.

However, the problem is that the ability of the Earth's biosphere to absorb CO2 gas is being reduced from the current 4 billion tons per year to 2.7 billion by 2030. This means that human society will have to reduce its emissions from the current 7 billion tons down to 2.7 billion by 2030 to avoid the worst case scenario. This is an overall 60% reduction and it means an emission level of .33 tons per person per year.

Politically and socially, the only way this could be achieved is for this emission level per person to apply to all societies. This means a far greater reduction of emissions in the industrialized capitalist countries, which emit far greater levels per person than in the underdeveloped countries. Monbiot figures this would mean a reduction in the industrialized countries of 90%.

Is it technologically possible to organize such a reduction? Monbiot devotes his book to calculating how this could be done in one aspect of human consumption after another. Monbiot is one of the most serious writers on the issue of global warming. His book, "Heat", is also probably the most comprehensive and best-researched attempt to document how a massive reduction in CO2 emissions could be accomplished technologically. Therefore, in considering what is necessary, it is worthwhile to start by analyzing Monbiot's proposals.

Take the question of housing, for instance. According to Monbiot, while energy demand has increased by 7.3% overall from 1990-2003, energy consumption in houses has increased by 19% and now amounts to 31% of UK energy usage. (NOTE: As a British writer, Monbiot naturally focuses on the UK. However, we can probably assume that the figures and the patterns are pretty similar for other industrialized countries.) Eighty-two percent of housing's energy consumption is for space and water heating. Thus, it is here that the major consumption reductions must be found.

According to Monbiot, barely over a third of all UK homes even have insulation in their cavity walls. Even the weak codes regarding this aspect of building remain more or less unenforced. Monbiot carefully explains alternative building/insulating techniques. Every aspect of housing is examined, and Monbiot convincingly concludes that a 90% reduction in energy consumption for housing is possible, without reducing comfort. This even includes the energy consumption required for retrofitting existing housing.

Monbiot develops a complex transport system (on paper). This includes massively increased use of buses and trains, vs. individual autos. Many object that use of such mass transport would require too much travel time for the average person. However, what Monbiot shows is that if use of individual autos were radically reduced, this would so reduce traffic congestion that overall transport time would not significantly increase.

### Renewables

As for renewables – wind and solar especially – he does see an important role for these forces. One major problem is how to store their energy, and Monbiot provides one possible option – "pumped hydro-electricity". In other words, when the wind provides more electricity than is called for, the

excess can be used to run pumps that pump water to a higher storage point. When the reverse is the case, this water can be let out and it can run generators as it runs downhill. However, Monbiot makes clear that wind and solar are not the panacea that many in the environmental movement make them out to be.

### **Carbon Sequestration**

Monbiot also carefully analyses the proposal for CO<sub>2</sub> underground storage (“sequestration”). He concludes that this is safe and feasible. There is reason to be skeptical of carbon sequestration, but Monbiot provides some reasonable-sounding arguments in favor. His main argument is that natural gas has been trapped (sequestered) underground for millions of years. However, he provides one proviso: Under the current direction of things, carbon sequestration would merely be used as an excuse to produce even more carbon dioxide. Sequestration can only be supported if it is part of an overall plan to vastly *reduce* the amount of carbon dioxide pumped into the atmosphere.

In every arena that Monbiot examines, he shows that a 90% reduction is possible. The only arena where he concludes that nothing like this is possible is in airplane travel. He concludes that this travel will have to be severely curtailed or outright eliminated.

### **“Political Realities”**

In his book, Monbiot strongly criticizes those environmental groups who establish goals based on what is “politically possible”. Almost all of these groups have abandoned any program for sufficient greenhouse gas reduction because, as they argue, there is not the “political will” to do so. This means, in effect, abandoning what is necessary based on the laws of nature in order for these groups to become acceptable to the capitalist class – the very class that is responsible for the crisis in the first place. However, Monbiot himself unfortunately is guilty of a similar problem in a slightly different way, and in making this error he shows the impossibility of resolving this problem within the capitalist system.

If an overall reduction of emissions by 90% is necessary, then we must consider emissions created by *production*, not just consumption. But here the direct interests of the capitalist class come under attack. In every arena from capitalist agriculture to steel smelting to mining, a 90% reduction is necessary. Is such a reduction possible without significantly reducing overall production? Monbiot doesn’t touch this question.

### **Military**

The military-industrial complex is also another important source of greenhouse emissions. This is completely aside from the human lives lost or destroyed and the homes and incomes ruined by military attacks. The U.S. military, for instance is the nation’s largest consumer of fossil fuel at 340,000 barrels per day. US forces in Iraq alone consume 40,000 barrels per day.<sup>14</sup> In addition, there are the emissions related to explosions of bombs, etc. On top of this are the emissions from producing the steel, aluminum, and other materials for



***Carpenter retrofitting home to make more energy efficient - Massive improvements are both necessary and possible.***

everything from tanks and jet bombers to bullets and helmets. In a time of increased military conflict, the damage done is not only to the masses who lose their lives or are maimed or wounded, nor the destruction of homes and work places; there is also the environmental damage due to massive CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

As an imperialist power, the capitalist class of any major capitalist country cannot afford to relinquish the use of force or the threat of this use in enforcing its interests around the world. Dealing with military-related emissions would mean a direct confrontation with the military-industrial complex – one of the most powerful wings of the capitalist class – as well as with the capitalist class as a whole. So Monbiot and other environmentalists tend to ignore this issue.

### **Consumerism**

Emissions from production of everything from food to clothes to movies is of course directly related to overall consumption. The capitalist system’s economic health depends on a consumer society. If the individuals in the industrialized capitalist countries sharply reduced their consumption, the world economy would very quickly go into crisis.

Capitalism also depends on a consumer society for political reasons.

### ***“Thermal Bridges”***

*It can be useful to consider some technical details in order to understand some of the problems and possible solutions. For instance, Monbiot explains the necessity of eliminating “thermal bridges”. This is the point at which the inside of the house meets the outside environment, including at its foundations. At every one of these points, there must be insulation. Also, there must be no leakage of air from inside to outside or vice versa. At the same time, there is the danger that the inside air can become stuffy and unhealthy if outside air doesn’t enter the house somehow. New techniques have been developed to allow outside air to enter through passages that are above those of the outside air that leaves the building. This allows 80% of the inside warmth to be transferred to the outside air that enters into the building, thus strongly reducing heat loss.*

For tens and hundreds of millions of people in the industrialized capitalist world, access to true satisfaction, to real stimulation of the senses and of the brain, is extremely limited. Consumption of all sorts of frivolous items serves as a substitute for this.

It is true that many millions in the industrialized world live in poverty with scarcely the resources to eat decently or to live in a decent home. However, there are many other millions whose lives are filled by buying the latest gadgets, clothing styles, gas guzzling vehicles, etc. For these millions, such consumption is a substitute for adventure and understanding of the world around us. This substitute is encouraged partly to provide the market in which profits can be made. Perhaps even more important, it also serves to hold back any more serious thought about the situation in which workers find themselves. This is because, for workers, thought and action are interlinked, making a more serious view of society a real danger to the capitalist class.

Of course, crises will tend to break through this veil of confusion. This is exactly why it is so important for the capitalist class to maintain it for as long as possible.

It is not within our realm to calculate exactly how much consumption could be reduced for how many people without moving towards an unacceptable standard of living. However, clearly there is room for huge emission savings here; the problem is that it would be political dynamite.

On top of this is the massive consumption – and resulting greenhouse gas emissions – by the rich and the super rich.

Clearly, then, initially such huge changes would only be possible in the context of an aroused mass working class movement; over the longer term, it would only be possible through a worker-controlled socialist society.

Even the most serious of reformists who deal with global warming, such as Monbiot, completely fail to consider this aspect.

### **Central Planning**

There is another aspect to the issue: In considering the solutions proposed by Monbiot, it is obvious that what is required is a central plan for production, transport and consumption of the goods necessary for modern society. This, then, leads to the question of who, which class, will devise and carry out such a plan?

Some environmental commentators leave open the possibility that such a plan could be devised and carried through by a centralized authority. In other words, some sort of dictator. Leaving completely aside any “ideological” questions, this would not be workable. If such a regime developed under capitalism, it would inevitably be extremely corrupt. The dictator and his or her cronies would inevitably find ways to directly enrich themselves in the execution of the plan. This would mean that all sorts of loopholes would be developed, which would make the plan inefficient, and ultimately the plan would fail to even accomplish its original intent. Although it was not a capitalist system, we saw what happened in the Soviet Union and other similar societies: Pollution was even *worse* than in the industrialized capitalist world. This is because there was little or

no working class check on this bureaucratic dictatorship.

Could a modern state such as that of the present-day United States or the UK regulate the corporations to sufficiently deal with global warming? The record does not exactly leave room for a lot of optimism, and there is a reason for this. At every step of the way, the individual wings of the capitalist class intervene in the decision-making and the carrying out of decisions (through the different regulatory bodies). Even the capitalist media in the US recognizes this when they talk about the overwhelming influence of the “special interests”. We are not talking about a slow, steady reform here. Swift, decisive, widespread action is required. On the one hand, each individual wing of the capitalist class would be seeking exceptions to satisfy their particular interests. On the other hand, the capitalist class as a whole would bitterly resist any tendency towards seriously increased regulation. Overall, they would so clog up the process through bureaucratic measures that such action would be nearly impossible.

It is true that a mass movement of the working class and the youth could have a strong impact on how the capitalist state functions. However, inevitably such a movement must come to a crossroad: One possibility is that this movement will build its own state apparatus, organized in such a way as to meet its class needs, and this workers’ state apparatus will replace that of the current capitalist state. The other possible outcome would be that the movement will be thrown backwards.

In other words, the issue is which class will devise and carry out the plan. When considered from every point of view, and when considered objectively, it is clear that only the working class is capable of doing so.

### **Perspectives for a Workers’ Movement**

It is clear that only a movement of the working class can even start to resolve the crisis of global warming/global climate change. This can lead to a sense of hopelessness since the working class is not exactly asserting its power in society right now, at least not in the United States. However, we should consider what lies beneath the surface.

In November of 2007, the Harris polling company did a poll of attitudes towards big business in the United States<sup>15</sup>. According to this poll, less than 15%



***The Pentagon, US Military Headquarters - Aside from the death and destruction it rains down on the world, the US military is a huge source of greenhouse gases.***

of US adults consider big business to be trustworthy and 84% told Harris that big business has too much power in Washington, DC. The underlying attitude is one of deep distrust of Corporate America, in other words of the capitalist class. This is a basic class consciousness, which in turn is the starting point for any workers' movement.

Since that time, prices of both fuel and food have skyrocketed. This is causing millions of workers around the world to start to take action – from food riots to strikes. This is only the very beginning of this process, and there will be very contradictory tendencies also - in particular the movement against immigrant workers. In May of 2008, for instance, a semi-fascist politician was elected as Mayor of Rome, based on just such propaganda. In the same month, there were riots of slum dwellers in South Africa against immigrant workers from neighboring countries.

Global climate change will exacerbate this process. As sea levels rise, for instance, millions will become environmental refugees. In fact, this is already happening to an extent, as many poor people flee Africa, partly due to persistent droughts in part of that continent. Their desperation is used by the employers to keep wages low. Meanwhile, the capitalist propaganda blames the immigrants – rather than the employers – for this wage cutting.

The main point is, however, that the stability within society will not last.

### **Program**

Although the issue of global warming/global climate change may well lead to the greatest crisis that human society has ever faced, this might not be the starting point of any movement. Workers are likely to respond first to the issues that they feel most immediately. However, any movement of the working class on any issue will tend to flow over into other issues as well. And in any case, the effects of global warming are likely to be felt in all aspects of life. Therefore, it is a mistake to try to impose a single issue program; the best way is to start with a program that will likely attract a layer of workers by speaking to the problems that they directly feel. The issue that most US workers most directly feel is related to the redistribution of wealth that has been carried out in the last decades. In 2001, for instance, the top 1% of households earned 20% of all income and held 33.4% of all net wealth.<sup>16</sup> This is the highest share this elite group has held since the 1930s and it was won through attacks on wages and working conditions as well as cutting the taxes of the wealthy while increasing those of the working class.



This is an important point, because it was exactly in that decade – the 1930s – that one of the most widespread and militant movements of the US working class was ever fought, and it was fought exactly to redistribute wealth downwards. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that it will probably be over this issue that a new workers' movement will spring to life. Such a movement will likely focus on a struggle for higher pay and better working conditions, and therefore the unions will play a central role in this movement.

### **Unions**

It is hard today to see how the mainstream union movement in the US can play a central role in any new movement of workers. Despite the fact that they are the only mass organizations of the working class in the US (where a mass workers' party doesn't exist), the mainstream US unions are so strangled by a conservative bureaucracy that most union members despair of ever changing this. However, the very fact of their existence as well as their relatively long history in the US means that workers won't completely bypass the existing unions. What they might do, however, is to try to bypass the existing leadership. In some cases, for instance, internal union caucuses, originally organized to combat the establishment leadership, might play the role of semi-independent unions, actually organizing struggles including strikes on their own. In other cases, individual union locals could get taken over by an aroused membership and start to play a role that is partly independent of the national body of the union. In other cases, entirely non-traditional organizations, as well as organizations completely outside of the mainstream, could play that role.

In this last case, we see the example of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Originally built at the opening of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the IWW was a transitory organization built to fill the vacuum left by the craft unions. Once the mainstream industrial unions (the United Auto Workers, Steelworkers of America, etc.) came onto the scene, the IWW went into decline. However, it still exists, and today it is starting to actually organize workplaces. Since it doesn't have the ties to the old, conservative way of doing things, the IWW and organizations like it could be an increasing point of attraction to workers in the future.

### **Ending of Economic Period**

As this is being written (2008) it appears that a 25 year period in capitalist history (1982 to the present) is coming to a close. This has been the period distinguished by a relatively stable and expanding capitalist economy as well as the collapse of Stalinism and the expansion of capitalism into new regions of the globe as a result. During this period, it could have appeared to workers throughout the industrialized world that the corporations – the capitalist class, that is – was in near total control. Also, the traditions of the old class struggles as well as the traditions of socialism were significantly weakened. As a result, there did not appear to be much hope for the class struggle.

It now seems that the US economy is headed for serious difficulties. At the same time, the means through which US capitalism put off a downturn

or strongly minimized its effects have been extremely limited. This means that it seems increasingly likely that a new period of turmoil and struggle will be opening up.

Such a period will not be easy. Not all struggles will be carried out along class lines of workers against the capitalist class. Because of the weakened militant and socialist traditions, and because of the failures of the official leadership of the main unions, and because of the lack of a credible socialist alternative, there will be many divisive and even reactionary movements, probably most prominently movements against immigrants.

This will be exacerbated by the crisis of global warming. If, as is entirely possible, the seas rise significantly and droughts worsen, then there will be tens and possibly hundreds of millions of environmental refugees. The pressures put on society by these desperate millions will create all sorts of new conflicts and worsen present communal and ethnic conflicts.

However, mixed in with this will be the kernel of a new, mass anti-capitalist workers' movement. Many millions of other workers and youth will recoil in horror at the specter of such divisive struggles. They will also be seeking



**Egyptian workers protesting skyrocketing food prices.**

alternatives to the capitalist system that has brought them to the brink of disaster.

An opening for a new mass anti-capitalist movement will appear. It is towards this opening that present-day anti-capitalists and activists within the present day environmental and workers' movements should aim. Here in the US,

we must do so free of the influence of the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, the professional non-profiters (who receive their funding directly or indirectly from the capitalist class and their supporters) and from the "progressive" wing of the union officialdom.

### **Capitalism, Socialism and Long-Range Planning**

Over 100 years ago, Frederick Engels, the great co-thinker of Karl Marx, and co-founder of "scientific socialism" wrote a short essay called "The Party Played by Labor in the Transition From Ape to Man". In it, Engels

explained that what distinguishes the human species is its ability to consciously and systematically look into the future, to act based on an understanding of the future consequences of our actions. In the last analysis, this ability developed due to the tool-making capacity of the human species which developed because humans are the only mammal that primarily walks on two legs, which freed up the hand, allowing the development of the opposable thumb. Thus arose the ability and therefore the necessity for more complex forms of procuring necessities and, therefore, more complex forms of organizing and communicating. As a result, the human species was able to reshape the natural world.

Engels adds, however: *Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory nature takes its revenge on us. Each victory, it is true, in the first place brings about the results we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel the first.*

He cites several examples of this in early societies, such as the destruction of the forests in the Italian Alps, and continues: *All hitherto existing modes of production have aimed merely at achieving the most immediately and directly useful effect of labor. The further consequences, which appear only later and become effective through gradual repetition and accumulation, were totally neglected. ... The individual capitalists, who dominate production and exchange, are able to concern themselves only with the most immediate useful effect of their actions. Indeed, even this useful effect – inasmuch as it is a question of the usefulness of the article that is produced or exchanged – retreats far into the background, and the sole incentive becomes the profit to be made on selling.*

As in all class-based societies, it is the class interests of the ruling class, the capitalist class, that determines what gets produced and how

### **Global Climate Change & US Politics**

On May 23, 2008, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the official weather agency of the US government, reported that concentrations of CO2 and methane (an even more potent greenhouse gas) had surpassed any known level of the past 400,000 years. This highlights the dangerous new era we are entering. On the next day, May 24, Republican Presidential candidate John McCain toured New Orleans, criticized the Bush administration for its handling of the Hurricane Katrina disaster, but made not a mention of the relationship between global climate change and that hurricane. Hillary Clinton, one of the two possible Democratic candidates, spent the day fundraising, while her rival, Barack Obama, spoke about the need to reform the National Labor Relations Board.

In the days that followed, none of these candidates mentioned this potentially Earth-shattering piece of news.

under capitalism. At best, we will be fighting a rearguard action if we accept capitalism.

### **Reform vs. Revolution**

In the past, capitalism was capable of reform only under the pressure of a mass workers' movement, a movement that was independent of the capitalist class and its politicians (in the United States, historically these politicians have been grouped into the Republican and Democratic Parties.) Almost inevitably there was a revolutionary wing of these workers' movements.

In recent decades, the working class in the industrialized world has not played very much of an independent role. It has been this fact that has left the vacuum into which the capitalist class stepped almost unchecked. It has been this fact that has allowed the capitalist class to go so far in despoiling the planet.

The crisis-ridden period that is opening up will inevitably shake things



### **Workers on Strike**

*Here, workers at Smithfield pork packing plant in Tar Heel, NC, struck to reverse the firing of several of their brothers and sisters. They were fired after the company claimed it discovered discrepancies in their social security numbers. All workers - white, black and Latino alike - struck. In this case, they were non-union. Had the established union leadership been in place, it would have prevented this action. In this case, though, the workers succeeded and won back their co-workers' jobs.*

*Militancy such as this, combined with direct action, is what will be required to build a workers' movement to deal with global warming.*

up and bring into existence a new mass workers' movement. Once again, a wing of that movement will have an explicitly anti-capitalist position. This wing may well come into existence in extremely difficult times. However, come into existence it will. It is our task to help prepare the way for this force to develop so that it can succeed in its historic task – help the working class overthrow the existing social and economic order and create the great leap forward to the next stage in the development of human society.

### **Some Conclusions**

The human first form of social organization of the human species was in families, including extended families. These were the first “societies”, and they were organized so that its members could provide for their daily necessities (food, clothing and shelter). As the means of providing these necessities changed – the means of production, in other words, so did the form of social organization – the societies themselves.

In other words, it has been changes – developments – in the means of production that led to social change and social revolution.

When one form of social organization could no longer provide for a further development of the means of production, then that form had to give way to a new form. This was how and why capitalism replaced feudalism on a global scale. New means of production were developed – from the steam engine to the factory. The feudal way of organizing production held back the further development of these new ways of producing. Old feudal society had to be brought down. It was brought down.

This is what Karl Marx and his co-thinker, Frederick Engels, explained. However, inherent in this explanation is the fact that all new means of production are based on the laws of nature. This is obvious when considering the first attempts at planting crops, for instance. But it is just as true for all inventions, from the water wheel and steam engine to the modern computer. They all base themselves on the laws of physics, chemistry, etc. They all utilize these laws.

What capitalism has done is enormously expand humans' ability to use these laws to their own advantage. However, it has now reached a stage where this very expansion of production is openly clashing with the laws of nature themselves. It is this very clash that now threatens to devastate human society's ability to produce its own necessities. It is this very clash which now threatens to destroy the forces of production. This cannot continue indefinitely.

All sorts of immediate steps can be taken to at least halt the increase in CO2 concentration in the atmosphere. These include:

- ❑ **A mass program to retrofit existing housing as well as to build new, environmentally friendly housing.**
- ❑ **Mass investment in renewable energy – including wind, tidal and solar.**
- ❑ **Mass investment in public transportation.**

In order to achieve these steps and make them effective, several openly political steps must be taken. These include:

- **Bring down the military industrial complex in order to free up productive capacity.**
- **Sharply reduce the work-week with no loss in pay, in order to put less time stress on workers so that they can afford longer transportation time on public transport.**

However, the very steps needed to slow down and reverse global warming are the steps needed to completely undercut the power of the capitalist class. In a previous era, the capitalist class organized and led a social revolution to overthrow the feudal class and overthrow feudalism itself. Now, the capitalist class finds itself in a situation similar to that of the old feudal class which it overthrew centuries ago; the capitalist class, itself, and the capitalist system are holding back the development of the means of production. In fact, they are actually destroying it.

A new social revolution is necessary, led and carried out by the working class, in order to resolve this impending crisis. Only socialism and workers' democracy can resolve the issue.

## ***Appendix A***

### ***Evidence of Global Warming***

#### **Global Warming Since 1900**

It has only been since 1850 that global surface temperatures have been reliably measured. In the 156 years between then and 2006, of the twelve warmest years, eleven of them were in the time period 1995-2006. Also, global temperatures have steadily increased by a little under 2 degrees centigrade in this period. This may seem like an insignificant amount, but it must be remembered that this is an average; in some areas it increased a lot more. Also, it may increase by a lot more during certain times of the year, or even times of day. For example, temperatures at the top of the permafrost layer (in the tundra) have generally increased since the 1980s in the Arctic by up to 3°C.<sup>12</sup>

Another development has been the gradual but steady increase in water vapor content in the air over land and ocean as well as in the upper atmosphere. Warm air can hold more moisture than cold air, and the amount of the increase in water content would fit with the measured amount of warming. This also has the effect of a positive feedback, since water vapor overall also operates as a greenhouse gas.

At the same time, concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere have steadily increased. Prior to the industrial era (around 1900) CO<sub>2</sub> levels in the Earth's relatively recent history averaged around 280 parts per million (ppm). Since 1900 the concentration has steadily increased reaching 315 ppm in 1960 and an estimated 380 ppm in 2005. 380 ppm is still only a tiny portion of the atmosphere overall. However, given the sensitive balance of factors that determine global climate, even a tiny change in one of these factors can lead to large overall changes. The last time the Earth's atmosphere had this level of CO<sub>2</sub> was 420,000

years ago.<sup>17</sup>

*Every year from 1998 through 2006 ranks among the top 25 warmest years on record for the United States*, an unprecedented occurrence, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). A study by a team of climatologists led by Tom Karl of the NOAA estimates that the warming rate for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was about 1 degree Centigrade per century, but since 1976 this has increased to a rate of 3 degrees C per century.<sup>14</sup> Even this may underestimate the extent of the "forcings" for global warming, as these temperatures are taken in the atmosphere, but some studies indicate that the oceans are absorbing even more of the greenhouse effect.

#### **"Greenhouse Effect"**

The overwhelming scientific consensus is that it is human activity that is causing this increase. This consensus has been reached despite the resistance of the class that rules society – the capitalist class. This human activity consists to a great extent in the burning of fossil fuels – oil and also coal mainly. Oil and coal are remnants of ancient plant life. Plants take carbon (in the form of CO<sub>2</sub>) out of the atmosphere, separate the carbon from the oxygen, return the oxygen to the atmosphere and lock up the carbon in their cells. Over millions and hundreds of millions of years, massive amounts of carbon have been locked up in the oil and coal that were formed by dead vegetation. Human activity then combines this carbon with oxygen (in other words, burns it) and some of the carbon then reenters the atmosphere as CO<sub>2</sub>.

Much of this CO<sub>2</sub> has actually been absorbed by the oceans. In fact, for some time, many scientists doubted whether burning of coal and oil would actually change the CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations in the atmosphere. They argued that the oceans would absorb it all. Oceans worldwide absorbed approximately 118 billion metric tons of carbon between 1800 and 1994 according to a report published in 2006 by scientists at the National Center for Atmospheric Research and NOAA. This is estimated to be about half of all CO<sub>2</sub> emitted during this period.

However, this has not been without result. Carbonic acid tends to form as the oceans absorb CO<sub>2</sub>, and the increased carbon absorption of the oceans has resulted in causing the waters to be more acid. This increased acidity is starting to cause serious problems in the health of the oceans, from causing the shells of microscopic shell fish to dissolve to contributing to the bleaching of the world's coral reefs. It should be remembered that the increased acidity of the oceans was a major factor in the Permian extinction described earlier. While nobody is predicting such a disaster to all life again, it would have a very severe effect on the oceans' environment, as many species of larger fish depend on these tiny shell fish for a food source. The acidification of the oceans is reason enough to be concerned over the continued release of CO<sub>2</sub> into the environment, never mind the global warming consequences.

#### **Polar Ice Caps**

Scientists are reporting that average temperatures in the Arctic region

are rising twice as fast as they are elsewhere in the world. Arctic ice is getting thinner, melting and rupturing. For example, the largest single block of ice in the Arctic, the Ward Hunt Ice Shelf, had been around for 3,000 years before it started cracking in 2000. Within two years it had split all the way through and is now breaking into pieces.<sup>18</sup>

The polar ice cap as a whole is shrinking. Images from NASA satellites show that the area of permanent ice cover is contracting at a rate of 9 percent each decade. If this trend continues, summers in the Arctic could become ice-free by the end of the century.

A similar process is underway in the Antarctic. Relatively recently, the northern section of the Larsen B ice shelf, an area of 1,250 square miles (3,250 km<sup>2</sup>), disintegrated in a period of 35 days. This was the largest collapse event of the last 30 years, bringing the total loss of ice extent from seven ice shelves to 6,760 square miles (17,500 km<sup>2</sup>) since 1974. The ice retreat is attributed to the region's strong warming trend - 4.5F (2.5C) in the last 50 years.<sup>15</sup>

These developments are threatening animal species ranging from polar bears in the Arctic to penguins (33% reduction in their population) in the Antarctic. They also directly threaten Inuit people in the North, especially those living on some of the islands around Alaska.

Winter ice in northern lakes is also diminishing. Lake Superior, the world's largest fresh water lake, now has 50% less winter ice than it did 100 years ago. Because there is less ice to reflect back the sun's rays, and because the ice melts earlier, the water is now two degrees Fahrenheit warmer than it used to be.<sup>19</sup>

### **Tropical Glaciers**

The tropics are defined as that part of the world which is 30 degrees north or south of the Equator. This region is home to 70% of the world's population. According to the climatologist Raymond Pierrehumbert, "*Throughout the Tropics, glaciers are in retreat. Well-documented examples include Quelccaya... Huascaran... Zongo and Chacaltaya... in S. America; and the Lewis, Rwenzori and Kilimanjaro (more properly, Kibo) glaciers in East...*"<sup>21</sup> Glacier formation

and glacier disappearance (called "ablation"), either through the glacier's melting into water or through its turning into water vapor, is a complex process, and this process is somewhat different at the upper levels (higher altitudes) of the glacier than the lower levels. However, the steady decrease in the size of these glaciers is shown to be unprecedented in the last 1500 or more years.<sup>22</sup>

According to Joseph Romm of the Center for Energy and Climatic Solutions, "*The planet is warming – especially the oceans. Since 1955 the oceans have absorbed roughly twenty times more heat than the atmosphere.... Even at a depth of 600 feet, the North Atlantic has warmed 0.2 degrees C thanks to human emissions.*"<sup>23</sup>

### **Sea Levels**

According to the IPCC report, global average sea level rose at an average rate of 1.8 [1.3 to 2.3] mm per year over 1961 to 2003. The rate was faster over 1993 to 2003: about 3.1 [2.4 to 3.8] mm per year.

This is caused both by both the expansion of water as it warms as well as the melting of arctic ice.

According to one researcher, ten percent of the world's population (634 million people) live on low-lying (under 30 foot elevation) coastal areas. Two thirds of the world's cities with five million or more people are at least partially in such regions, and in most parts of the world, countries' populations are increasingly shifting to such cities.<sup>24</sup> In addition, a rise in sea level will not only directly affect coastal areas; such rises could also flood areas further inland.

Rising sea levels are already having an affect on some parts of the world's human population. According to Gelbspan, some 40,000 inhabitants of the Duke of York Islands near Papua, New Guinea, began leaving in the year 2000. This was due to rising sea levels threatening the inhabitants of these low lying (12 feet above sea level) islands. Some 10,000 people in the island nation of Tuvalu are in the process of resettlement for the same reason.<sup>25</sup> Gelbspan writes: "*According to scientific estimates, a rise of one meter – which has been predicted by the IPCC – would submerge 17.5 percent of Bangladesh, 6 percent of the Netherlands, and 80 percent of Atoll Majuro of the Marshall Islands.*"<sup>26</sup> In Alaska, some villages are considering moving their entire population inland because higher water levels are slowly destroying their homes.<sup>27</sup>

This is only the very start of this process. According to Chris Rapley, the outgoing head of the British Antarctic Survey, "*The ice is moving faster both in Greenland and in the Antarctic than the glaciologists had believed would happen.... I think the realistic view is that we will be nearer a metre than the 40 cm*" in sea level rise by 2100. The UN climate panel in February, 2007 gave a likely range of 18 to 59 cm this century, for an average around 40 cm. It should be noted that the Antarctic stores enough ice to raise sea levels by 57 meters and Greenland stores enough to raise it by another 7 meters if all this ice were to melt<sup>28</sup> – a scenario that nobody is predicting at present. However, this gives some idea of

the size of the disaster that could be waiting.

## Hurricanes & Typhoons

Hurricanes and Typhoons receive their strength by the difference in temperature between the air and the surface sea water. As the temperature of this sea water increases, one would expect these storms to increase in strength. This is what is happening.

As the IPCC reports: *“Specifically, the number of category 4 and 5 hurricanes increased by about 75% since 1970. The largest increases were in the North Pacific, Indian and Southwest Pacific Oceans. However, numbers of hurricanes in the North Atlantic have also been above normal in 9 of the last 11 years, culminating in the record-breaking 2005 season.”*

The duration and strength of hurricanes have increased by about 50 percent over the last three decades, according to study author Kerry Emanuel, a professor of atmospheric science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge.<sup>29</sup>

## Drought

Residents of the South East United States are presently (fall, 2007) caught up in a record-breaking drought. Boaters are complaining that they can't take their boats out on Lake Lanier in Georgia and homeowners are complaining that they can't water their lawns or wash their cars. But these are minor inconveniences compared to what people are going through in other parts of the world.

Figen Mekik, Associate Professor of Geology at Grand Rapid University in Michigan is a native of Turkey. She recently described an aerial view of Istanbul: *“a dry, desolate, dusty city without even a hint of green anywhere.”*<sup>30</sup> Precipitation is way down in Turkey in general, and this represents a trend over several years. While precipitation rates have varied throughout history there, there has not been a multi year trend like this. The same is happening throughout the Mediterranean, which is related to the disastrous fires that swept Greece this summer (2007). The IPCC reports that *“Drying has been observed in the Sahel, the Mediterranean, southern Africa and parts of southern Asia.”*

Australia, too, has experienced a multi-year drought as rainfall has shifted further away from the equator in that region. Among other things, this has had a huge effect on Australian food production.

## Forest Fires

On Oct. 21, 2007, CBS's *60 Minutes* did a portion of their show on the increased forest fires in the Western United States. They interviewed a fire chief in charge of teams that fight such fires. According to him, ten years ago a 100,000 acre forest fire was considered huge. Today, he said, a 200,000 acre fire is “just

another day at the office”. Seven out of the ten busiest fire seasons since the 1960s (when records started being kept) are from 1999 to the present, with 2006 being the worst year in US history for forest fires.

It is true that to an extent the very success of the forest Service in fighting fires is related to this, as it has allowed an increase in undergrowth that helps fuel these fires. However, this is not the total reason. According to the Forest Service, global warming has meant that spring time comes earlier in the year and summer ends later. This has meant that the fire season has been extended by 78 days. Coupled with persistent low precipitation in many areas, this means that the forests are drier for longer than ever. They are also more vulnerable to attacks of such pests as the Pine Beetle, which leave even more dead (and dry) trees. It should be noted that the large scale, and extremely hot forest fires do immensely more damage, including destroying the soil, thus preventing these forests from growing back. As this fire chief said of those who deny the effects of human caused global warming: *“You won't find any of them among those of us on the ground fighting fires anymore.”*

This, in and of itself, is worsening the problem. According to an article in the Seattle Post Intelligencer, the Southern California wildfires of 2007 pumped 8.7 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere in the week of Oct. 19-26 alone, and wildfires in the US now add 322 million tons of the greenhouse gas into the atmosphere.<sup>31</sup>

## “Appendix B”

It should be emphasized, once again, that change in the planet's climate is an extremely complex process. It is nowhere as simple as just that increased CO<sub>2</sub> levels are radiating more sunlight back to Earth, warming everything up (although this is the core of the process). For instance, the stability of the tropical glaciers involves several factors, including humidity, cloud cover, and precipitation. All these factors can change due to a warming of the atmosphere, but it is this warming that is driving the other changes.

A prime example of the deniers' approach, as well as who they are, was seen on the British Channel 4 T.V. show shown on March 8, 2007. It was called “The Great Global Warming Swindle”. This show put forward a clear summary of the arguments against the view that (1) global warming is a serious threat; and (2) any global warming that is happening is caused by human activity (“anthropogenic”).

The “Swindle” put forward the view that meteorologists, climatologists, etc. have simply taken up the idea of human-caused global warming because there is massive funding available for this.

## The “Swindle's” Arguments

The show correctly pointed out that the Earth's climate has always changed; it has never been stable over long periods of time (tens of thousands of years). The question is whether human activity – basically the human-caused increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere – can cause such changes.

Some of their main arguments were that it is sunspot activity that causes climate change. They make two points. First, looking back tens of thousands of years, other warming trends were *followed* by increases in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the atmosphere; the increases in CO<sub>2</sub> didn't come first. What did come first was increased sunspot activity. The conclusion is that the increased sunspot activity caused both the global warming as well as the increase in CO<sub>2</sub>.

The show also pointed out that CO<sub>2</sub> makes up only a tiny portion of the atmosphere (something like .05%). How could a gas which makes up such a small proportion have such a major effect? Furthermore, they claim that since the major changes in temperature were at the Earth's surface whereas CO<sub>2</sub> levels have risen in the upper atmosphere, this proves that increased CO<sub>2</sub> does not cause global warming.

CO<sub>2</sub> levels have risen ever since the industrial revolution. However, from 1940 to 1975, a period of increased industrial activity, global temperatures actually decreased somewhat. This again supposedly proves that human activity does not cause global warming. The show repeatedly showed a graph of average temperatures during these years, with the graph leading downward.

For those with a truly open mind and unfamiliar with these arguments, these points can raise some legitimate doubts. However, there are critical gaps in what the show presented.

### ***Climate's Complexity***

All serious climatologists accept that the elements that determine the Earth's climate are very complex and dynamic. We experience climate over a few hundred years and therefore consider it to be more or less constant. When viewed historically, over thousands, hundreds of thousands and millions of years, though, it's clear that Earth's climate is anything but stable. Not only that, but climatologists still don't fully understand how all the factors that determine Earth's climate interact, nor even what all these factors are. However, in this complex, dynamic mix, they do understand that small changes in one or two factors can have big effects. As climate scientist Wallace Broecker wrote in 1995, "*The paleoclimate record shouts out to us that, far from being self-stabilizing, the Earth's climate system is an ornery beast which overreacts even to small nudges.*" This is the overwhelming view of climate scientists, backed up by tens of thousands of years of evidence. Yet the global warming deniers, in putting forward their arguments, completely ignored this view. One element, and one alone (e.g. Sunspot activity), is the cause of climate change, according to them. It would be one thing if they explained why they thought the prevailing view was wrong; it is another to pretend that this view doesn't exist.

### ***Deniers' Dishonesty***

This is the general method of the deniers – take isolated facts and arguments based on discredited ideas and put them forward while pretending that the answers do not exist.

In this complex mix of factors, and when viewed over a longer period,

just a few decades of cooling temperatures do not disprove human caused global warming. There is the effect of volcanoes, for instance. Volcanoes release huge amounts of ash into the atmosphere, and this temporarily and partially blocks the sunlight, thus causing global cooling. In 1960 there was a major volcano in Indonesia and then in 1982 El Chichon erupted in Mexico, both of which had this effect. Furthermore, there was the effect of human released aerosols (particles), which came under partial regulation later but prior to that regulation had the effect of lowering temperatures. This ash also lowered temperatures, but subsequent government regulation lowered the amount released into the atmosphere. All of these points were known but ignored.

More important, the temperature graph for those few decades was showed over and over. What was left out was a temperature graph for a longer period of time. Here is such a graph:

This graph leaves no doubt that a general warming has occurred ever since the industrial revolution.

### **CO<sub>2</sub> Levels**

Then there was the issue of CO<sub>2</sub> levels lagging behind global warming records in past periods. Scientists explain that the initial impulse for global warming can be sun spot activity or small changes in the Earth's orbit. These small changes slightly warm the planet. This warming then causes the release of CO<sub>2</sub>, which leads to further warming. They call this process a feed-back loop. CO<sub>2</sub> was not the initial cause, but once this process got started it lead to far greater warming. The difference between past periods of global warming and the present one is that in the present one increased CO<sub>2</sub> levels is the *initial* cause. In any case, the theory that sunspot activity is what has led to past warming periods was disproved decades ago, long before human caused global warming was a concern. All of this is known to the deniers but is ignored.

### **Extreme Weather Events & the Media**

The show denied the claims that extreme weather events are related to global warming as are threats from pests, malaria, etc. It also made the amazing claim that every single extreme weather event is linked to global warming in the media for sensationalist reasons. In fact, just the opposite tends to be true, at least in the US. In all the massive press coverage of Hurricane Katrina, for instance, it was near impossible to find even one mention of the link between increasingly severe hurricanes in the region and global warming.

### **Underdeveloped World**

The effects of global warming may be most devastating on the underdeveloped world, where masses of humanity live closer to nature, have less developed infrastructure, and are even more vulnerable to such extreme climate

events as droughts and storms.

This makes another claim of the “Swindle” all the more unjustifiable: Towards its end, the show put forward some claims as to the motivation of the global warming scientists. One claim was that these scientists don’t care about the underdeveloped world, in fact want to prevent its economic development, which would alleviate human suffering in those parts of the world. It is ironic to hear the deniers make this claim, considering how closely linked they are to the “free” marketeers and neo-conservatives, who have done everything in their power to see to it that social services are cut in the underdeveloped (and the industrialized) world and that multi-national corporations are allowed to loot that part of the world to their wallets’ content.

### **The Deniers of Human Caused Global Warming**

It is often difficult to immediately “prove” that any individual development, such as disappearance of a particular glacier, is caused by global warming. The deniers use this to muddy the waters. They continually point to other factors that may be involved in this, that or the other particular development. They are right that other factors may be involved. Also, sometimes it is the secondary affects of global warming – such as drought in some regions – that may be the direct cause of, for instance, a glacier’s disappearance. This doesn’t mean that global warming is not at the heart of the problem, though.

More important, the effect of the method of the deniers is to obscure the general trend. The general temperature trend is upward as CO2 concentrations in the atmosphere increase, the seas are acidifying as they absorb more CO2, coral reefs are bleaching and dying, glaciers are disappearing at an alarming rate, extreme weather events are increasing and wild fires are getting larger. There is a general pattern here. What the deniers do is obscure this general pattern by harping on details that may not be fully worked out. (Sometimes, they are even wrong on these details, which at times are fairly well understood.) For the majority of them, there is every reason to believe that they are conscious of this, and workers should not be confused by them.

### ***Who are the Global Warming Deniers?***

In general, “Swindle” was not a serious representation of the issue of human-caused global warming. The lack of seriousness and honesty is related to the connections of the “experts” cited on “Swindle”. The show failed to mention any of the economic or political interests of these propagandists. Here is who they are:

**John Christy**, Professor of Atmospheric Science at the University of Huntsville, Alabama – Christy is one of the most prominent global warming deniers. He was simply advertised on the show as a Professor, with no mention of his association with the conservative Cato Institute and the Competitive Enterprise Institute – two far right, “free enterprise” institutes.

**Phillip Stott**, Professor Emeritus, U. of London - Stott has written for such right wing think tanks as the Institute of Economic Affairs, which in turn was close to the Thatcher administration. This went unmentioned.

**Nigel Lawson**, Lord Lawson of Blaby – Lawson was Financial Secretary to the Treasury and then Secretary of Energy under Thatcher. He was a key proponent in the Thatcher administration of her privatization programs.

**Ian Clark**, professor at the University of Ottawa – Clark is associated with the Exxon funded Fraser Institute – a right wing, “free market” think tank.

**Piers Corbyn**, unorthodox meteorologist... Corbyn makes a living selling longer-term weather predictions which he bases on sunspot activity. His predictions are allegedly very vague. He refused to take bet on his prediction that climate will cool moderately in coming years. Given that Corbyn’s career is based on making weather predictions based on solar activity, he would have a vested interest (as well as a psychological inclination) in minimizing other influences on the weather.

**Richard Lindzen**, Professor, MIT – Lindzen has been a paid spokesman for the oil and coal interests as well as for Western Fuels. At one time, Lindzen offered to bet anybody that over the coming decades the climate would cool. When somebody offered to take him up on this bet, Lindzen insisted on 50-1 odds. Corbyn (cited above) also declined to take this bet.<sup>32</sup>

**Paul Driessen** – The “Swindle” described Driessen as major former environmentalist who became disillusioned with the environmentalist movement. They did not reveal that Driessen is a senior fellow with the *Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow*, *Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise*, *Frontiers of Freedom*, and *Atlas Economic Research Foundation*, and is director of the *Economic Human Rights Project*. These are all corporate-controlled, right-wing think tanks. Driessen says he has had a 25-year career that included working for the United States Senate, the Department of the Interior and an unspecified “energy trade association”. Driessen also works closely with the *Atlas Economic Research Foundation*, another pro-“free market” think tank.

**Patrick Moore** – The “Swindle” claimed that Moore was a “co-founder” of Greenpeace; he was actually the Director of Greenpeace International for a time. He then left Greenpeace to head up a salmon farming company in Canada and then worked with the timber industry to counter environmentalists. He is now co-owner of Greenspirit, a PR company that works with plastics companies, etc. to counter environmentalists’ pressure.<sup>33</sup>

**Patrick Michaels**, Professor, University of Virginia – Michaels is also a Senior Fellow at the far right wing Cato Institute. Writing in *Harpers Magazine* in 1995, author Ross Gelbspan noted that “Michaels has received more than \$115,000

over the last four years from coal and energy interests. *World Climate Review*, a quarterly he (Michaels) founded that routinely debunks climate concerns, was funded by Western Fuels.” Michaels has written papers claiming that satellite temperature data shows no global warming trend. But he got this result by cutting the data off after 1996. (Every year after 1996 the satellite measurement showed warming.)

A special mention should be made of **Carl Wunsch**, Professor of Oceanography at MIT, who also appeared in the show. This is one of the most interesting ones. Wunsch is shown on the show making some comments about the ability of the oceans to absorb CO2 and thus, by implication, saying that human-caused global warming is not an issue. In fact, when the producers of this show contacted Wunsch, they didn’t tell him the show’s slant. Wunsch is a supporter of the prevalent view of global warming (although he does take a somewhat more cautious stance than some others), and he was quoted out of context, making him appear to hold views he does not have. The out-of-context use of Wunsch’s comments, and the false portrayal of Wunsch as a skeptic about human caused global warming show the dishonest method of the deniers in general.

In none of the cases cited above did “The Swindle” mention any of the financial or political ties of these scientists and alleged scientists. Equally important, the arguments they put forward have been answered many times in the past. It is the scientific method that, when a researcher advances an idea and this idea is met with counter-arguments, the researcher will either answer those arguments or drop or modify his or her original idea. They do not continue putting forward the same idea and ignore the doubts and answers. However, the global warming deniers totally refuse to do this. They put forward discredited arguments and isolated bits and pieces of information, knowing full well that there are answers to these arguments and explanations of the facts they present – but they totally ignore these answers. They pretend these answers don’t exist.

*Their systematic dishonesty shows that they know that the advocates of human-caused global warming are correct.*

Recently, I asked an old friend of mine who is also a dedicated socialist, but who is skeptical of the theory of human caused global warming, to recommend to me the names of some reputable skeptics of human caused global warming. In addition to Richard Lindzen and Patrick Moore he mentioned the following names:

**Philip Stott** – Stott is a *professor emeritus* of biogeography at the University of London. He is not specifically trained in climate research. Since his retirement, he has devoted himself to disputing environmental concerns in general. He is an advocate of idea that technology will solve all problems, and is an uncritical supporter of bio-engineering. In general he derides environmental concerns, including rain forest destruction (calling rain forests a “social construct”).

**Roy Spencer** – Spencer is a research scientist at University of Alabama. Spencer is a member of the Heartland Institute – a conservative, pro “free

enterprise” think tank, and is also associated with the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance, which describes itself in this way: “The Interfaith Stewardship Alliance is a coalition of religious leaders, clergy, theologians, scientists, academics, and other policy experts committed to bringing a proper and balanced Biblical view of stewardship to the critical issues of environment and development.”

**Paul Reiter** – This is not his area of expertise, as he himself admits. Reiter sits on the *Scientific and Economic Advisory Council of the Annapolis Centre for Science Based Public Policy*. The Annapolis Centre is a US think tank that has received \$763,500 in funding from ExxonMobil and has been very active in playing down the human contribution to global warming. According to a January 16, 1997 *Wall Street Journal* article, the Annapolis Center was at one time largely funded by the National Association of Manufacturers, one of the largest industry associations in North America. Reiter is listed as an author for Tech Central Station daily, an organization that until recently was owned and operated by a Republican lobby firm called DCI Group.<sup>30</sup>

**Willie Soon** – Soon collaborated with Sallie Baliunas, to publish a study in 2003 that was published in an “obscure journal”<sup>31</sup> called “Climate Research”. Their paper was co-authored by the father-son Idso team, who are funded by ExxonMobil. Baliunas and Soon also put forward the now-discredited theory that past climate change has been caused by sunspot variations. Their work was also funded in part by the American Petroleum Institute. Despite all this, this study is still cited today as a reputable document that disproves the reality of human caused global warming.

**Henrik Svensmark** – advocate of the discredited cosmic rays theory of climate change.

**William “Bill” Gray** – Gray is professor emeritus (that is, a retired professor) in the atmospheric science department of Colorado State University. Here’s what Dr. Andrew Dessler from Texas A&M reported on a debate with Gray: “... He is unfamiliar with all of the peer-reviewed literature on this subject that has been published in the last five years. This makes sense. Reading the literature is a difficult and full-time job, and emeritus faculty simply don’t need to do that. ... Bill Gray has no scientific theory of his own why water vapor feedback is negative, and no data to support his non-theory. ... He looked confused. ... He has no idea what he’s talking about.”<sup>34</sup>

### **Left Skeptics of Human Caused Global Warming**

It is significant that even this long-time socialist was unable to come up with the names of any experts with more credibility than these individuals. In fact, he probably was unaware of their backgrounds.

The left skeptics of human-caused global warming – from socialists to columnist Alexander Cockburn -- claim that the reason this issue is now emerging is that it is just serving as an excuse by the employers, the capitalist class, in order to raise taxes on workers and in general further attack the working class. This argument just doesn’t hold together when the history of research into global warming is considered. It was developed at a time when concessions were being

made to the working class. It was developed more or less outside of the general view of the capitalist class. Once the theory of human-caused global warming started to imply some practical consequences, the capitalist class and their political representatives tried to suppress this theory. To this day, the strategists and propagandists for the capitalist class who are the most aggressive in pushing for attacks on the working class are the same ones who do their best to deny and obscure the issue of human-caused global warming. This is because they are the strongest opponents of governmental regulations on their freedom to use their capital in any way they like.

The political explanation of the left skeptics of AGW does not hold up when investigated.

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# Capitalism At a Turning Point?

## Introduction

*The last 25 years have been exceptional in the economic and political history of capitalism. There have been few economic downturns, and those that existed were weak and short lived. At the time this period opened up, even many of the economists and other strategists of the capitalist class were extremely gloomy about the economic perspectives for capitalism. Up until recently, just the opposite was true. Not only that, but this prolonged economic expansion has had a great affect on the consciousness of the great majority of the working class, especially in the industrialized capitalist world.*

*Now, it appears that this period may be ending, or at least the outlines of its ending can be more easily seen. The mid 1970s were just such a period, as the post war boom came to a close. In the United States, the economy went through a period of “stagflation” – a stagnating economy and rising prices. It appears that a similar period is upon us. As a stormy new period opens up, it is important to understand the nature of the economic expansion of the last 25 years and how it partially and temporarily overcame the contradictions inherent to the capitalist system.*

## 25 Year Expansionary Period

In order to get a better clearer view of what is developing, it is useful to look back at this last 25 year period and what was the basis for the economic expansion. There were a series of factors that led to this expansion:

- The first was the development of high tech. As was the development of the railroads in a pervious era, this was a real development of the forces of production, and it massively stimulated the world economy.
- The rise of high tech was one of the factors that helped make possible the famous “globalization” of the world economy. This partially and temporarily overcame the contradiction of nation state in the era of the world economy. One statistic serves to show what happened: From 1980 to 2002, real world grew at a rate 50% greater than the growth of world output.<sup>1</sup>
- A third factor was, ironically, the weakness of the world’s labor movement, especially in the industrialized countries. This was partly caused by the globalization of the world economy, which intensified the competition between workers in different countries. The fact that the labor leaders continued to cling to a nationalist outlook meant that the unions were unable to deal with this increased competition. For the capitalists, this meant increased profits and increased “labor peace”. This partially and temporarily overcame the tendency for the

rate of profit to fall, and increased their motivation to invest in the productive forces. (It is ironic that for capitalist growth, lower wages and increased suffering is often necessary.)

- Normally, a cut in workers’ income would mean a significant reduction in “effective demand.” However, along with this cut went an enormous expansion of credit – debt. This includes corporate debt, consumer debt and government debt. Just one example illustrates this: From 1980 to 2005, US consumer debt went from 69% of disposable (after tax) income to 127% of that disposable income. This partially and temporarily overcame tendency to overproduction.
- The continued expansion of the ‘80s helped along the collapse of the Soviet Union and its allied states. This, in itself, helped the expansion along as it opened up vast new markets for capitalism as well as new areas for capitalist investment.
- Also, connected with this was the financial, political and military domination of US capitalism. While US capitalism used this to its own advantage, this domination was also a factor in keeping the expansion alive. This was so when we look at the world currency system.

While each of these was a factor in its own right, they also combined and reinforced each other. For instance, the domination of US capitalism was reinforced by the collapse of the Soviet Union. This domination, in turn, allowed for the domination of the dollar internationally, which in turn allowed for the enormous expansion of debt in the United States and between the United States and other economies.

While capitalism has been based on an international economy for a long time, still the domestic currency systems can help to understand the world currency system.

## Finance Capital

The 19<sup>th</sup> century in the US saw the rise of industrial and then finance capital. This century was punctuated by regular financial crises in which credit (debt) contracted and the economy ground to a near halt. The graph below of the purchasing power of the dollar illustrates this process. In order to fully understand this graph, though, it is necessary to understand the relation between the purchasing power of the dollar, the “money supply” and credit.

## “Money Supply”

Money supply is reflects the amount of debt present. Whenever a loan is made, the borrower and the lender are both considered to have this money. Thus, the money supply reflects the amount of credit (debt) existing in society.

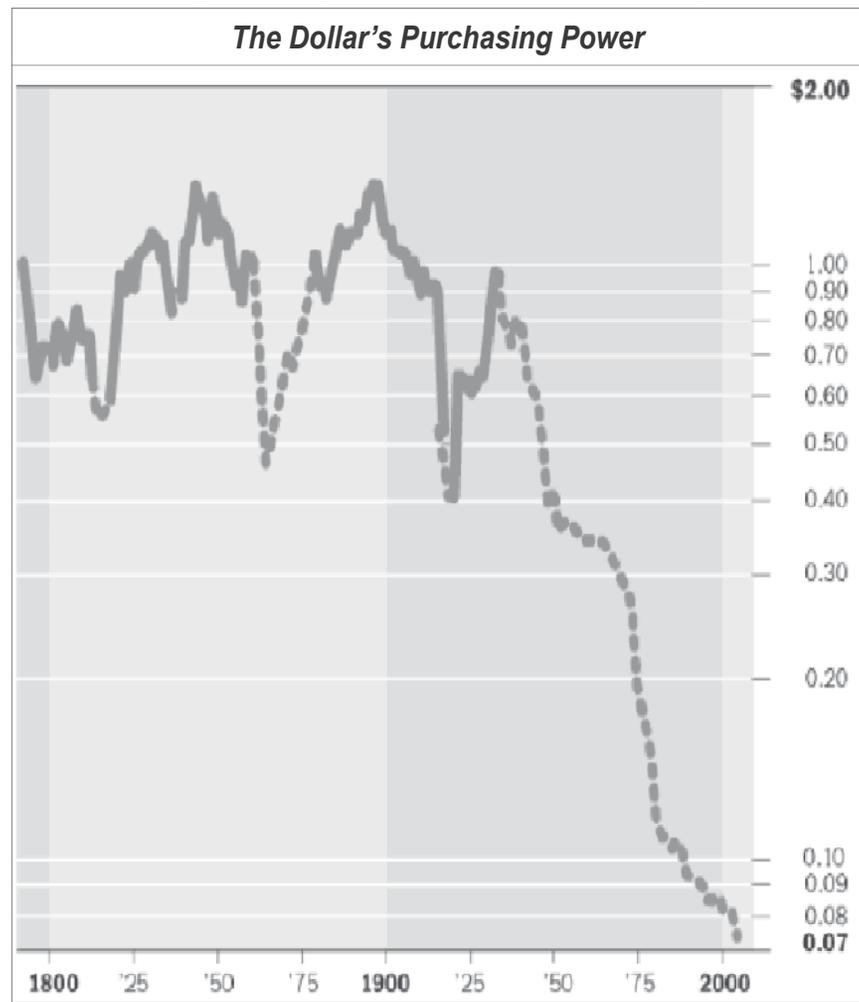
Another way of looking at this is that every loan in effect increases effective demand, or seen from the reverse point of view, when the money

supply increases more than production does, then this tends to drive up prices.

The long and the short of this is that when credit expands (thus increasing the money supply), the purchasing power of the dollar tends to decline (if there is not an equivalent increase in production), and when there is a contraction of credit, the purchasing power of the dollar tends to increase (as the money supply decreases).\*

### Currency Regulation

When we look at this graph, we can see that all throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were regular financial panics in which credit contracted (causing the money supply to decrease and, therefore the purchasing power of the dollar to increase, among other things). In 1913, however, as finance capital came



[www. goldprice.org/bob/uploaded\\_images/dollar\\_USD\\_Purchasing\\_Power-](http://www.goldprice.org/bob/uploaded_images/dollar_USD_Purchasing_Power-)

into its own, the US central bank, the Federal Reserve Bank, was brought into existence. (The history of the political struggle to create this bank is an interesting story in its own light.) It took several decades (and a new economic crisis) for the regulators of finance capital to fully understand how to use this tool, but by the early 1930s they gained this understanding. One can see that after this, there was never a severe credit contraction again; the flip side of this was that the purchasing power of the dollar never stopped falling. Another way of putting this is that a slow, steady inflation has continued ever since then.

This is not a real problem for the capitalists, just so long as this doesn't get out of control. Money is the means of measuring relative (exchange) value – the proportion in which different commodities will be exchanged with each other (including the commodity of labor power). Since capitalist production is for the market, this means that the capitalist has to be able to predict what the purchasing power of the dollar (or yuan or peso or euro) will be in the future. As long as inflation is regular, the capitalist can take this into account when he or she makes a contract for future sales or purchases.

### International Currency Systems

The rise of finance capital and rise of imperialism brought about the necessity for international currency stability. Not only did the capitalist have to be able to know what the future purchasing power of his or her own country's currency would be, he or she also had to have some idea what that would be in relation to different currencies. Obviously, if the value of the dollar drops sharply and unpredictably in relation to the euro for instance, and a German capitalist is selling goods in the US which are made in Germany, then they will have no real idea what kind of price they will be getting in euros at the end of the day, since the sale is in dollars which will then be converted into euros.

*Capitalism has to have a stable and reliable world currency system.* If it doesn't then the capitalist class cannot count on future prices and profits, which really means that they cannot produce. Or at least this will sharply limit what they can produce.

At first, most major currencies were measured in relation to the British pound. This reflected the dominance of British capitalism. By the end of WW II,

*\*- Measurement of the money supply is taken in three forms – M1, M2 and M3. M1 measures money in the most "liquid" accounts – those accounts such as checking accounts, from which money can most easily be withdrawn. M2 includes M1 and some slightly less liquid accounts. M3 includes M2 plus certain international deposits. For our purposes, it doesn't really matter which measuring stick we use, since it is the overall trend we are looking for, but with one proviso: International deposits have increased as a proportion of the total US money supply. This means that the growth of M2 actually underestimates overall money supply growth. It is interesting that the Fed recently stopped publishing the M3 figures.*

US capitalism came to replace the British. Naturally, this had to mean that the dollar would replace the pound.

### **Bretton Woods**

In 1944, at the Bretton Woods conference, this accomplished fact was recognized by the treaty of that name (Bretton Woods Accord). Under this treaty, all the major capitalist world currencies were measured in terms of the dollar; their value was set within a certain narrow band in relation to the dollar. In turn, the value of the dollar was set at \$35 to an ounce of gold. The US agreed that it would give gold at this price to any foreign central bank that wanted to cash in its dollars.

Naturally, as is befitting of any national capitalist class, the US capitalist class used this situation to gain an advantage over its allies (who were also its rivals). It started to flood the world with dollars. In effect, it forced the other capitalist countries to help finance the concessions the US capitalist class was making to its own working class. Also, it forced the other capitalist countries to help finance US imperialist adventures, including the Vietnam War.

### **“Bretton Woods II”**

By the late ‘60s, this arrangement threatened to come apart, and in 1971 US capitalism took another step: It reneged on its promise to exchange gold for dollars. As analysts put it, then-President Nixon “closed the gold window.” World capitalism was stuck holding dollars. The value of the dollar was left to “float”, meaning that the world financial markets would determine its value relative to other currencies (as well as to gold).

### **Flooding the World with Dollars**

US capitalism then took even further advantage of this and further increased the money supply of dollars. The recent period (1980 to the present) really exemplifies this process. The process was that the US imported massive amounts of goods, sending dollars out all around the world. The foreign holders of these dollars then turned around and invested these dollars in US Treasury notes (among other things), thus lending the money back to the US. They recycled the dollars into the US in the form of loans.

There is not another country in the world which could have gotten away with this. What would have happened (and what has happened) is that the currency of any other country would have been unacceptable in the world currency markets. It would have collapsed in value. Even that country’s domestic capitalists would have been converting their money into other currencies and shipping it out of the country by the shipping container load. Massive, uncontrollable, triple and even quadruple digit inflation would have occurred. (In fact, this is exactly what has happened in several Latin American countries in the past.)

### **Unique Position of the Dollar**

Why didn’t this happen with the dollar?

In the first place, each foreign capitalist who held dollars, and even more important, each central bank, was terrified of starting this process. The minute they started cashing in their dollars for yuans or euros, others would have followed suit. The value of their remaining dollar holdings would have collapsed before they could get rid of them all.

Second, and even more important, this would have completely destabilized the world currency system, leading to a financial and economic crisis.

### **Inflationary Pressures**

A side effect of this has been to increase the pressures for inflation. From 1980 to 2007, the US gross domestic product rose by 111%.<sup>3</sup> During those same years, the money supply as measured by M2 increased by 362%.<sup>4</sup> The growth in the amount of dollars was well over triple the growth of US production. This process was not confined to the US. In the EC, the GDP increased 27% between 2001 and 2007, while the money supply as measured by M3 grew by 35%. In China, from 1999 to 2005, those figures are an 87% increase in their GDP and a 142% increase in M2.<sup>6</sup> (It should be noted, however, that the figures for the Chinese economy are not considered to be completely reliable.)

The reason this did not result in major inflation within the US was the massive international competition within the US market. Every foreign producer was competing for a share in this lucrative market. However, there was one major sector of this market which was hardly subject to international competition: The US housing market. There is a limited supply of land, and housing pretty much has to be produced within the country. As a result, there was massive inflation in this sector.

### **Finance Capital, Credit & Speculation**

It should also be noted that there are two main sectors of capital – industrial and finance capital. In the modern era, finance capital has come to dominate. As Alan Woods has noted, this process has increased in this present period. In the period from 1950-60, earnings of the banking sector in the US represented something between 10-15% of total company earnings. In 2006, that figure was something between 30-40%. Not only that, but there was a tendency of an actual merger between finance capital and the state itself in some cases. In many of the oil exporting nations, the oil industry is nationalized. Other major industries are also nationalized in some of the former Stalinist states (including China). Their exports have led to massive investment funds – “sovereign investment funds” – owned and controlled by the state itself. These funds (also called “black box funds” because outsiders really don’t know where they are invested), amounted to \$2.5 trillion in 2007 – greater than the entire amount of hedge funds in the world. This figure is projected to grow to \$12 trillion by

2015.7

The hand maiden of credit and trade is speculation, and along side of increased production, there was massive speculation during this period. The inflation of the US housing market entails this, obviously. But also, as explained, this process partially and temporarily overcame the tendency towards overproduction.

### **Recognition of Accomplished Fact**

The role of the dollar was not simply agreed to through rational discussions at a conference in Bretton Woods. On the contrary, that conference simply recognized and codified what was already an accomplished fact. That fact was accomplished and then recognized through, among other things, two world wars as well as a revolution (the Russian Revolution). The various different national capitalist classes had to be convinced of the might of US capitalism through actual, concrete experiences; it had to be tested and proven on the economic, political and military battle grounds before it was accepted.

Once established, however, this role of the US as carried out in part by the role of the dollar, helped to create a certain world capitalist order in which international production, trade and finance could be carried out; it helped partially and temporarily overcome the contradiction of the nation state in the era of the world economy. (Just because this was accepted doesn't mean that there are not continued conflicts. After all, there are limits to this power, and US capitalism's rivals must continually test these limits.)

### **New World Currency Order?**

This makes all the more significant a recent article in the Financial Times (11/25/07) entitled "The Last Lap of the Dollar." According to this article, the international role of the dollar is now ending. One possible outcome that it predicts is a tripartite role for the dollar, the euro and the yuan. On the one hand, this will be a much less stable arrangement. (This, in turn, will simply reflect less stable world relations between the capitalist powers.) On the other hand, if the role of the dollar was only arrived at through wars and upheavals, then it is safe to say that any new arrangement will also involve the same process. This means an end to the relative economic (and therefore also political) stability of the recent period.

### **Factors Turning into Their Opposite**

All the factors that created this economic period are either being weakened by other factors or are turning into their opposite.

- The growth in high tech, which continues and has meant an actual increase in production, is being countered by the early effects of global warming, especially as seen in world food production, which significantly decreased in 2007, leading to something like a 1/3 reduction in world grain and corn supplies and a 52% increase in world

wheat and vegetable oil prices.

- The globalization of the economy is being weakened by the early effects of peaking oil supplies. This has led to a doubling in transport costs in 2007 alone.
- The weakening of the unions and resulting cutting of wages is now starting to weaken effective demand. For instance, the Japanese economy has seen the beginnings of a recovery in recent years. However, this recovery has been extremely limited. The main reason is that most of the hiring done has been for temporary workers, at a vastly reduced wage, thus reducing the domestic market.
- The massive expansion of credit and debt is now having the opposite effect from before, as seen in the housing crisis in the US.
- The opening of new areas for capitalist development (especially China and Russia) is now meaning the rise of new rivals, thus destabilizing world relations, meaning less secure profits. This can be seen throughout Latin America, especially in Venezuela, where Chinese capitalism is making significant inroads.

### **Housing Crisis & Speculative Bubbles**

The ongoing crisis in the US housing market is but the latest collapse of a speculative bubble in this economic period. Previously, there were the collapses of the dot com boom and of stock market booms. What makes this collapse more severe is that in each previous collapse, the Federal Reserve Bank pumped massive dollars into the economy and also lowered interest rates. Both of these actions put downwards pressure on the dollar. At some point, it was inevitable that they could only go so far without risking an outright collapse of the dollar. It seems that that point may have been reached now.

### **New Period Opening Up?**

It is too early to be certain, but it seems that we are seeing the end of an entire economic (and therefore also political) period. In the short term, a recession seems increasingly possible in the US (and possibly globally). In December of 2007, unemployment reached 5% in the US. (Such a recession, if it happens this year, would probably seal the fate of the Republicans in the coming elections.) As pointed out, in previous similar situations, the Federal Reserve had more room to maneuver by cutting interest rates and pumping more dollars into the economy. These steps tend to lower the value of the dollar, though. This is now a serious concern for them. It is why the Fed was so reluctant to cut interest rates when the housing bubble first broke in 2007.

Given the massive debt that has arisen, a recession could have very serious consequences for the US and the world economy. Militarily, US capitalism is obviously overextended. This is also true financially, as far as the the dollar is concerned. Previously, this extension of power lent a certain order to the world; now its overextension is having the opposite effect.

It is important to avoid the mistake of seeing every problem in the

economy as meaning the end of the expansionary cycle. However, it is also important to be able to see the handwriting on the wall when this cycle comes to an end. There is increasing evidence that this is what is happening now. Not only that, but the means of lessening the severity of the problems have been weakened.

### **Increased Friction and Fragmentation**

In the longer term, we can see more clearly the meaning of the rise of the rivals to US capitalism. Included in this would be the further increase in frictions and a tendency towards military conflicts and wars. In the absence of a mass, anti-capitalist movement of the working class, it will also mean increased fragmentation within societies. This will mean increased ethnic and communal struggles (mainly in the underdeveloped world). We see this, for instance, in an increased separatist movement within the Sind province of Pakistan (partly as a reaction to the assassination of Bhutto). In the industrialized world, a similar development will be seen in increased attacks on immigrant workers.

### **Global Warming**

Especially in the underdeveloped world, global warming will exacerbate this tendency. Reduction in food production will exacerbate these ethnic rivalries. Also, if the seas rise significantly, it will tend to make low lying lands unlivable (for example in Bangladesh). If this happens, it will tend to cause huge migrations and increased frictions.

Also part of this process will be increased blunders by the capitalist class. Falling victim to its own propaganda, it marched into Iraq with a relatively small number of troops, believing it could easily pacify and dominate the country. Even its own representatives now recognize that this was a blunder. In the economic arena, it is liable to make similar blunders. It actually believes that the “free market” can resolve all problems. Following the collapse of the stock market in 1929, it held a similar belief and had to learn from experience that some form of state intervention was necessary. However, the US capitalist class has forgotten that lesson and again believes that the housing crisis and resulting financial turmoil can be corrected by just letting nature (the “free market”) run its course. (See the quotes in the appendix from Andrew Mellon and Alan Greenspan, for instance.) Similar blunders can be expected in the future. This will also be true as far as its attacks on the working class.

### **Period of 1970s**

While there are important differences, there could be some similarities with the period of the ‘70s and early ‘80s. That was when the post WW II boom came to an end and class struggle increased. However, mainly due to the role of its leadership, the world’s working class was unable to overthrow capitalism, and capitalism was able to stabilize itself and a new period of capitalist growth followed.

### **New Arenas for Growth?**

Can there be such an outcome again? Are there potential new arenas for capitalist growth?

On the one hand, there is the potential for a significant rise in “green” technology. In the United States, for instance, solar electric production increased by 30% in 2004-5 alone. The rise of the stock price of First Solar, Inc. shows the potential for profits in this sector. In 2006, First Solar went public and its stocks sold for \$20 per share. By the end of 2007, its stock was selling for \$215 per share. (Whether the rise of this sector will mean that serious effects from global warming won’t be felt is another question.)

In addition, there is Africa. This is the continent that has hardly experienced the development of the economy of this period. Presently, there are the beginnings of investment into Africa, especially from China. If this process continues, it could mean a new arena for capitalist investment and for the capitalist market.

In both these cases, of course, the effects will very possibly be limited by the effects of global warming as well as of peak oil. More important, however, such a future capitalist development can only be achieved at the cost of massive repression and suffering. It is up to the workers’ movement, along with its most conscious element – Marxism – to create the conditions to transform society. Only on this basis can the suffering from environmental pollution be limited and future disasters prevented. Only on this basis can the looming problems be resolved.

### **Footnotes**

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- 2 - . [www.monthlyreview.org/docs/0506tb11.pdf](http://www.monthlyreview.org/docs/0506tb11.pdf)
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## **What is Socialism?**

***Over 150 years ago, a small pamphlet was published that opened “a ghost is haunting Europe, the ghost of communism”. (This was before the rise of the Soviet Union and its bureaucracy. At that time, “communism” had a wholly different meaning; it meant a workers’ revolution and a worker-run society.) It was true; within months the whole continent was ablaze with revolution.***

Since that time, capitalism has expanded to dominate the entire planet. Presently, capitalism and its overseers do not feel haunted by the ghost of workers’ revolution, however. On the contrary, the rich seem to be more powerful than ever. But in every country, those who don’t live off company profits and speculation, but have to work for their living, are having to work harder and harder to make ends meet. They are facing cuts in their earnings, their welfare, their rights and their very jobs. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the billionaires have been crowing that their system is the only one that works. And yet today too society is haunted. It is plagued by wars, racism, ethnic cleansing, and terrorism; by violence on an individual and a mass scale, by explosions that are ripping whole societies apart. Beyond that looms the threat of environmental disaster caused by global warming and the decline in energy resources.

In short, what we see is the threat of complete chaos in society – the society the capitalist class has organized and lead and has ruled over for centuries.

Capitalist wealth expands by leaps and bounds. Last year (2003) the total profits in the United States exceeded one trillion dollars for the first time ever. Yet every worker will tell you that alongside of this, everybody else is getting poorer. In the same pamphlet that talked about the ghost haunting Europe, Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels explained the process of the working class getting poorer. They wrote:

*“The modern laborer... instead of rising with the progress of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. He becomes a pauper (i.e. beggar), and pauperism develops more rapidly than population and wealth.... (The bourgeoisie) is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery (as a slave to his/her job – a wage slave), because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state, that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him. Society can no longer live under this bourgeoisie; in other words, its existence is no longer compatible with society.”*

What could be more true today? Even in the wealthiest nation on earth, working class people are chained by economic ties to their job and their paycheck. They are nothing but wage slaves, even the best paid of workers. Meanwhile, tens of millions are forced to depend on some sort of government program or private charity to feed their children, pay the rent, obtain health care. They depend on welfare, AFDC, Section 8 housing, as well as private food banks, etc. Their wages (if they have a job and receive wages) are insufficient to live on. In other words, society has to care for increasing numbers of workers, just as Marx and Engels described above.

### “Walmartization”

The millions of jobs being sent to India, Honduras, or other low wage areas are linked to this. The starvation of workers in those countries is used as a club to drive down wages here. Where industries do not directly compete internationally (such as in retail), low wage non-union domestic companies are used to lower the wages of all. Increasing numbers of workers are forced to work at Wal Mart like jobs, with no health benefits and with poverty level wages. It is not an accident that the term “Walmartization” is becoming a popular term.

Today, capitalism has built such huge factories that they cannot produce goods for just one country, or even for a group of countries; they have to produce for the entire world or else they cannot run efficiently. Every capitalist country must have a steel industry, an auto industry, etc. if it is to be a world player. Yet the markets for these goods are divided up by the national borders and, anyway, not enough people can buy the finished goods at a price that would bring profit to the capitalists. In other words, we see global production and distribution clashing daily with the existence of the nation states. Trade accords like NAFTA and organizations like the World Trade Organization are an attempt to get around this contradiction, but they can only partially and temporarily do so.

At the same time, capitalism has developed massive

**NUMBER OF CHILDREN WHO DIE EACH DAY OF HUNGER: 35,615** (*UN Food and Agriculture Organization estimate; based on a posting at <http://www.ainfos.ca>*)  
Minutes of silence: NONE  
Plans for international response: NONE  
Plans for saturation media network coverage: NONE  
Effect on Stock exchanges: NONE  
Alarm level: LOW  
Primetime news reports on possible perpetrators of the crime: NONE

productive powers, that is, the ability to produce massive amounts. However, it cannot produce these amounts, not because they are not needed, but because it cannot find enough people to buy back all its products at a price that is profitable to them. It is true that it is developing new markets, especially in China. But at the same time, it is shifting production to this extremely low wage nation, thereby eliminating higher wage jobs in the already-industrialized world. This cuts cutting into existing markets. In other words, capitalism cannot utilize the productive powers, the ability to produce, that it itself has created. It cannot solve this problem because the profits come exactly from this – the difference between what they pay workers and the value that these workers produce. In fact this problem (overproduction) is made worse by the wage cutting, the “Walmartization” of America.

This “Walmartization”, this drive to cut wages and eliminate health care and make workers work harder for less, is coupled with a drive to eliminate any controls on the corporations. They are insisting on the right to pollute, destroy animal and plant species, to go wherever and do whatever they like. In short, capitalism is on the move – it is attacking; it is on the offensive.

Clearly, workers must fight to reverse this offensive of capitalism. They must fight to maintain and improve their living and working conditions under capitalism. If they do not, then they will be forced into a situation of total poverty. The fighting spirit will be all but crushed. This is not going to happen without some huge battles, though. In the course of this fight, a vision must be developed and fought for of an alternative to capitalism. We believe that vision is that of revolutionary socialism. In discussing that vision, we must consider how capitalism came into being and overthrew feudalism (the system of peasants, kings and queens) in the first place.

### Early Rise of Capitalism

New discoveries brought into being the development of new means of production – machinery, factories, etc. arose. These new means of production revolutionized all social relations. By this we mean the relations that people enter into in their daily lives as workers. When people think about social relations, most people think about how they relate to their family and friends, about how their co-workers greet them in the morning, and what sorts of things they discuss at lunch time or whether they socialize after work. Under capitalism, however, “social relations” has a totally different meaning. In most worker’s more sober moments, they accept that they are nothing but little dollar signs to the boss. The boss may make small talk and ask after a worker’s family, but let a situation arise where this boss becomes convinced that the worker can no longer make a steady profit for him or her and they are gone.

What connects the worker to the capitalist is the “cash nexus” – the cash connection. The relationship is one where the capitalist owns the factory and machinery or the office and office equipment, plus the cash reserve, and hires the worker to work these “means of production” and produce a product for sale in the market.

These relationships changed in basic ways from feudalism to capitalism. For instance, under feudalism, the peasant (“serf”) was tied to the land; he or she was forbidden to leave the land they worked. This was possible (and necessary) because they were not in the main producing goods to be sold on an ever changing market. In the main, what they produced was for the consumption of themselves or their lord. In the capitalist system, this would never work. Workers produce for an ever changing market. The capitalist must be free to hire – and fire – workers when it suits them. This means a different relationship.

Also, relations between the workers themselves changed. Under feudalism, the workers – the serfs – in the main worked individually. Under capitalism, workers work together to produce their products.



**A feudal “manor” or little town.** Peasants were not allowed to move away and had little experience in life outside their manor.

It is the sum total of these relations that defines society as a whole. And the old relationships – the old society, feudalism – was holding back the development of these new forces of production. For instance, the peasants were forbidden to leave their land. But where would the capitalists get workers for the new factories, if not by getting peasants off the land? Another problem: The nation-states (France, Britain, Germany) hardly existed in reality. Instead,

the land – and therefore the markets - were divided up into this little valley or that mountain-side, owned and controlled by each small lord. This made it difficult, if not impossible, to transport and sell goods from region to region. Yet for the capitalists to fully take advantage of their factories, they had to sell on a national scale at least; they needed national markets. These (feudal) relations had to be changed; feudal society had to be overthrown. It was overthrown – in revolutions led by the capitalist class. This was why capitalism came to replace feudalism.

## Capitalist Ideology

In the course of leading and organizing the struggle to overthrow feudalism, the capitalist class had to develop a set of ideas, an ideology, to replace that of the feudal knights, lords, kings and queens. They had to develop ideas that could appeal to workers to fight on their (the capitalists’) behalf. The feudal lords, in alliance with the Church, claimed that they held the right to rule from god – “divine right” they called it. In place of this, the newly developing capitalist class put forward the ideas of universal liberty, freedom, equality. In the place of religious superstition, they put forward the idea of pure reason.

In other words, they developed a set of general ideas and slogans that were not drawn from any concrete situation. They were general ideas around which society was supposed to be organized. Idealism, in other words.

It is no accident therefore that the first socialists were “utopian socialists”. They believed in the idea of a “utopia” – a perfect society, whose basis was to be these abstract ideas of “justice” and “logic”. They believed that all that was required was for some genius to develop a general plan for such a society and the rest of humanity – regardless of their class – would be convinced and would flock to their side. Class interests and class struggle had nothing to do with the matter, in their view. Capitalists would join with workers in building this new, pure society.

Yes, and the lion will lie down with the lamb (which may happen, after the lamb is safely inside the lion’s stomach).

In other words, their views did not spring from existing social relations but from some sort of ideal, cooked up in their heads. They failed to take into account what was actually happening on the ground.

## “Scientific Socialism”

Karl Marx and with him Frederick Engels stood matters on their head. They developed the ideas of scientific socialism (vs. utopian socialism) based on the real, existing social conditions. Their ideas were based partly upon those of the utopian socialists and partly from observing and participating in the rising class struggle. They explained that the rise of capitalist production brought with it a huge step forward for humanity. It *socialized* production. In other words, goods were now produced not just by and for one or two individuals. It was no longer the case of a peasant (“serf”) working in the field for himself, his family and some for his lord. Now, a huge mass of workers gathered together to collectively produce goods that would then be distributed in society as a whole, rather than for personal consumption. This was a huge step forward, as it vastly increased what could be produced in a shorter amount of time. However, the means of production – the big offices, factories, banks – remained in private, in individual hands. They were owned and run by and for private profit. Thus

we have socialized production conflicting with private ownership.

What socialism aims to do is to resolve this contradiction by socializing the ownership, that is, by taking over the means of production. In other words, by putting these in the possession of society as a whole. This does not mean every single little business, but the commanding heights of the economy.



**Karl Marx & Frederick Engels** - the founders of scientific socialism.

### **Commanding Heights of the Economy**

A few statistics on the US economy show what this means. According to the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (published by the US Department of Commerce), in 2000 there were some 19,622 corporations which had assets of \$50 million or over. A breakdown of

these figures shows that in the health care industry, for instance, the corporations of this size were a mere .02% of all health care corporations. Yet they did 14% of the business. In finance and insurance they were 20% of all such companies but did 31% of the business. And in manufacturing, they were .5% of all such businesses but did 40% of all business.

### **Dictatorship Over Society**

These giant corporations, and the ones just below them, the ones with \$10 million and \$25 million in assets, constitute a dictatorship over society. They determine whether you will have a job or not, whether you will be able to pay the rent, buy groceries and send your kids to school. They determine what entertainment and “news” you see on TV. They determine what will be in the food you eat and the air you breathe and the water you drink. They all but determine who will be the next president and then determine what his or her policies will be.

They claim that their continued existence flourishes based on free competition and the free market. Yet let one of them get into trouble and immediately they run to the taxpayers for a bailout. *In reality, this “free” market is only really free – of any sort of regularity, of any sort of rationality, of anything that takes into account the needs of society.*

Revolutionary socialists argue that these giant corporations, the commanding heights of the economy, must be taken out of the hands of the capitalist owners and placed in the hands of society as a whole. In the

place of the anarchy of the market would be a rational plan of production and distribution of goods, based on the needs of society.

### **Role of Working Class**

In considering this, socialists recognize that it would not be possible to eliminate class differences in one fell swoop, to eliminate them immediately. However, we recognize that in any class society, that one class or another will rule society. In capitalist society it is the capitalists – the “rich and powerful” – who rule. In a socialist society, it would be the modern working class – the “proletariat” – that would rule.

This would mean a radical break from all of previous history. Ever since class societies developed (first the ancient slave societies, then feudal societies, then capitalism) it was a privileged elite minority who ruled (the slave owners, the feudal lords, the capitalist class). That class that actually did the work – whether they be slaves or modern workers/proletarians –

did not run society. Society was run by and in the interests of this minority ruling class.

Undersocialism, for the first time it would be that class that actually did the work, the overwhelming majority, who run society. This class would also have in its own self interest the lessening and ultimate elimination of class differences, rather than in maintaining these differences.



The basic reason why this is possible for the first time is that for the first time society is capable of producing enough to go around; general want only exists because of the role of the capitalist class itself, not because of what can and cannot be produced. Scientific socialists have always maintained that this is the necessary foundation for socialism since there would be no conflict over necessities.

### **Workers' Councils**

Through what means would the modern day working class, the

run society?

Some argue that the government, the state, must be eliminated immediately. However, socialists believe that this is not realistic, that as long as class differences exist some form of state will necessarily also exist. The issue is which class controls this state power? Socialists argue that it must be the working class. However, it will not be possible to do so by merely taking over the existing state apparatus – the elected representatives, the military tops, the court systems and police and various government bureaucracies. The working class will have to tear all of this down and begin anew by building workers' councils based in the working class communities, the work places, the schools and even amongst the rank and file of the military.

This is not some idea that has just been cooked up by idle speculation, but rather it is based on real events of past struggles of workers. During the 1919 general strike in Seattle, WA, for instance, the strikers formed a general strike committee to coordinate the strike. However, in the course of doing so, this committee's tasks also flowed over into other tasks. Workers realized that the population must eat and receive emergency medical care. Therefore, any business that wanted to continue to operate came before this general strike committee to receive permission to operate. If the members of the committee accepted that it was necessary or an emergency, then this business was allowed to operate. In other words, in the course of organizing the general strike, the workers' representatives also tended to move on to the task of running society as a whole. Of course, this was just in a very limited way and for a very short time, but it provides a picture of what has happened in the past.

This tendency is not limited to this one example. The world over, workers have moved to form such workers' councils whenever the class struggle reached a fever pitch. The foremost example, of course, was that of the Russian workers during the Russian Revolution of 1917. There, these workers' councils started to take on full scope and challenged the existence and power of the existing capitalist state. A situation of "dual power" developed. This could not continue indefinitely; either one state form or another, either one class or the other, would dominate. In the instance, it was the working class, through their workers councils, who ended up on the winning end.

(Why and how that entire revolution ended up betrayed and collapsed is another issue that is fundamental but not within the scope of this pamphlet.)

Socialists argue that there are several requirements for such a workers' state to run democratically and non bureaucratically. The first is that all representatives be elected and be subject to immediate recall. That is, if the workers are not satisfied with the job their representative is doing, that representative can be recalled immediately. (This is not

something that would be done lightly, and of course certain procedures would have to be established so that it isn't just done by some small, discontented minority. The important thing is that workers would be able to remove their representatives if they became convinced that it is necessary.) The second is that these workers' representatives be paid a wage equal to the average of the workers they represent. This is to eliminate the motivation of greed or self interest in being a representative; the sole motive would be believing in the cause.



**Workers' Council meeting after Russian Revolution** - This council was the new form of government

In addition, we believe that there should be a steady rotation of the representatives. This is to prevent an entrenched bureaucracy from developing. As was once said, if everybody is a bureaucrat, nobody is a bureaucrat.

In addition, under normal conditions, there would not be a standing army. Instead, as long as there is any sort of threat or challenge from within or without, the working class as a whole would be armed and would receive training in the use of these arms. This would help make difficult the existence of a power separate and apart from the working class, standing over the working class. Of course, during a time of war, a regular, standing army might be necessary, but this is a different story.

In a democratically run socialist society, these workers councils, made up of workers' delegates, would be the new state apparatus. Through them, a *plan for production and distribution* would be developed. Where necessary, these workers' councils would consult with the experts – the engineers, chemists, physicists and health care experts. A general overall economic plan for the coming years would be developed.

Such a plan would not be simply signed, sealed and delivered by the workers' councils. A key difference between how a democratic socialist society would plan the economy and how it was done in the old Soviet Union would be this: Such a general plan would be

developed and then taken back into every work place and every working class community. It would be discussed and debated by the workers. It would be clarified what would be expected of them – what sort of hours would have to be worked and how much produced – if the plan is adopted. Through this process, the plan would (inevitably) be modified and then voted on.

This would have the centrally important role of being able to take advantage of the collective knowledge of the working class. In every work place, most workers know that there are many things which, if done differently, would be more efficient. Such a process would also tremendously stimulate workers to think about and “take ownership” over the process of production.

(In a nutshell, this exactly what went wrong in old Soviet Union – lack of workers control, of workers’ democracy. Therefore society was unable to plan and carry out the plan efficiently.)

### **Society based on cooperation vs. competition**

Clearly, a socialist society would be based on cooperation and solidarity, rather than competition and greed. The defenders of capitalism claim that this would never work, that people are naturally greedy and violent to boot. Whenever we look at the news, this appears to have an element of truth to it. At the time of the writing of this pamphlet, here in Oakland CA the two events dominating the news have been: (1) the killing of a 13 year-old boy in gang violence; (2) the police chase of a man who stopped on the street, dumped the three year old daughter of his girlfriend out of the car while the car was moving, and sped away. He dumped the little girl to make the cops stop and pick her up. (The girl ended up unharmed.) Why is it that the news ignores the millions of acts of kindness and of class solidarity that happen every day among and between working class people?

It would be foolish to pretend that there is not a lot of violence, greed and selfishness in US society today. But despite what the geneticists say, people are essentially products of society and their environment. If we were incapable of anything else, then the unions would never have been built. Workers who built the unions knew they would not live to experience the benefits of those unions, compared with the sacrifices they were making; they made those sacrifices for the wider good of their class in general. The same was true for the Civil Rights movement in the South of the 1960s.

The fact is that the human species is the species which is the most free from instinct. It is the species for which the greatest variety of different modes of behavior is possible – the most flexible of all species. It is the most adaptable species of all. If in a given situation individualism and violence are the best modes to assure the survival of the species, this is what will be expressed. If solidarity and cooperation is the best mode, then this is what will come out. Our amazing flexibility is exactly why our

species has been able to flourish in the most diverse conditions.

What the defenders of capitalism are really saying is that competition is more efficient than cooperation; that private profit is the most efficient way to develop the economy. Any worker living in today’s world can see the crisis that the profit motive has led to.

One additional point should be considered: When the capitalists consider private profit, they always are considering the short term profits, the next fiscal quarter, or the next year at best. They are not considering



***Seminole Indians carrying crops for barter***

The great majority of human societies were pre class, tribal societies like the Native Americans. Their economies were based on cooperation, not greed and profit. This shows that there is nothing inherent in human nature about economies based on greed and selfishness.

the long term costs and benefits. So, for instance, when they consider the efficiencies of nuclear power, they do not consider the enormous costs and dangers of storing deadly material (nuclear waste) for hundreds of thousands of years. When they consider the most efficient way to produce food, they do not consider the long term damage to the earth, or the long term damage to people’s health. Even on purely economic terms, though, these are costs just as much as the cost of wages or machinery. But the capitalist figures that he or she will be able to unload them on society as a whole, that is, onto the working class taxpayers of years to come. The capitalist class runs society based on the general rule: Privatize the profits and socialize (unload onto society as a whole) the costs and losses.

The depletion of oil supplies? The warming of the earth's atmosphere, leading to environmental crisis? These are not things that show up on the quarterly balance sheet, so we will let others worry about it.

The capitalists claim that invention and development of new means of production would stop under socialism, once the profit incentive is removed. However, when one looks at the great majority of the great inventions – from the automobile to the modern computer – it is clear that most were developed by great tinkerers (like the Wright Brothers or the inventors of the internet) who were simply fascinated with the science and technology involved. On top of this, many were seriously interested in contributing something to society.

Within the work place itself, the great majority of workers are already motivated by a desire to work with their co-workers and to make sure that they carry their end of the stick. Under capitalism, this motivation is often seized upon by the boss to increase the work pace and find ways to lay off a sector of the work force. Many workers realize this, and therefore are reluctant to work harder, faster or more efficiently than is necessary. Once it became clear that producing more in less time would benefit workers and society as a whole, including reducing the work week, this motivation would develop even further.

Contrary to what they claim, it is often the profit incentive that holds development back. Entire industries seize on and prevent the development of new technologies whenever that new technology threatens their profits. Just look at what the record industry is doing with the issue of online music downloads. The refusal of capitalism to seriously develop energy sources other than oil (and nuclear) provides a more alarming example. This lust for profit threatens the continued existence of at least a large section of the human species.

As Marx and Engels explain, the capitalists complain *“Upon abolition of private property all work will cease and universal laziness will set in. According to this, bourgeois society ought long ago to have gone to the dogs through sheer idleness; for those of its members who work acquire nothing (other than their own necessities at best), and those who acquire anything do not work.”*

### **“Stealing”**

Then the defenders of capitalism attack socialism for wanting to take away, to nationalize, the means of production. “This is stealing,” they say. “It’s wrong.” First of all, we should be clear on what we are advocating here. We are not talking about taking away people’s clothes, their homes or means of transport. Nor are the capitalists opposed in principle to doing that; in fact, they are doing it every day, as they lay off workers, repossess their homes and cars, deny them access to education. There is nothing wrong with this in their view

– as

long as it’s done under cover of their laws.

No, the horrible thing that socialists advocate is to take away the capitalist’s capital. Let us consider what this means: We are talking



*They got their billions by killing off the Native Americans, kidnapping millions of people from Africa and brutally exploiting all workers. Then they call it “stealing” when we want to take their wealth and use it to benefit society as a whole.*

about the money, machinery, offices, etc. used by the capitalist to produce goods and services. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels explained what this capital is: *“Capital is a collective product, and only by the united action of many members, nay in the last resort only by the united action of all members of society, can it be set in motion. Capital is, therefore, not a personal, it is a social power.”*

Consider the meaning of this. Capital is not like a worker’s automobile or kitchen stove, which is used by one or two people to satisfy their own personal needs. It is put to work, first of all by the workers employed by that particular capitalist. More than

that, though, it can only be really utilized in conjunction with the roads and means of communication, with the capital of other capitalists, etc. In other words, capital taken as a whole is “set in motion” by all of society. And the products of this process are produced for sale on the market, as commodities. As such, capital is fundamentally different from personal wealth. Also, since all of society revolves around its use, it is the ultimate power in society. It is, thus, a “social power.”

When one considers, for instance, all the wealth that George Bush, John Kerry (and his wife Teresa Heinz of the Heinz Ketchup family fortune) were born with – the money, banks, factories, oil wells – this wealth was produced by the collective action of millions of workers. Through definite social relations – the ways in which people relate to each other in the production and distribution of goods – this capital is used to reproduce itself and to expand itself.

And, yes, we say that it is exactly this that we propose to take away.

This capital is really nothing but the wealth produced by workers of the past (whether it be of yesterday or 20 years ago). It is nothing but “dead labor”, the product of expanded, accumulated labor of the past. And yet this dead labor dominates the living labor; the past

dominates the present. Under socialism, the present will dominate and utilize the past; the living worker will control the product of his or her past labor by owning and controlling the capital.

### **Socialism and the Union leadership**

Among the foremost defenders of capitalism and the rights of the corporate heads - the capitalist class - are the union leaders. It is one of the greatest contradictions in the world today and helps explain not only the grip that capitalism has in society but also the failure of the unions to really fight for workers' interests.

In order to initiate any sort of broader struggle to change society as a whole, workers will inevitably start by struggling to defend their interests as workers in the here and now – under capitalism that is. In the United States, the working class has built up mass trade unions as the first bulwark in the interests of furthering their interests. These unions are the traditional, mass organizations of the working class.

Yet today, the great majority of union members are completely disgusted with what is happening with their unions and with the leadership who control their unions. "Sleeping with the enemy" was how one workers described his leadership. A great many union members simply chalk this up to corruption or cowardice. This is not the core of the problem, though; the core of the problem is that the entire union leadership accepts capitalism, no questions asked.

Today, a group of union Presidents have gotten together to reform the AFL-CIO. They are calling their little club the "New Unity Partnership." The reforms they propose have already been put in place by the President of the Carpenters Union, within his own union. It is instructive, therefore, to look at what McCarron says, how he sees the employers and the workers.

*"You (the contractor) need the freedom to assign the work based on what makes sense, what makes us all competitive on the job.... You need the freedom to assign the work based on what makes sense, what makes all of us competitive on the job. If there's a dispute, let the owner settle it. It's his money and his job. Surely, we've learned that much. We're serious about reorganizing the industry. **We're serious about customer service.**"* Doug McCarron speaking to the 2000 conference of the National Erectors' Association

*In today's business environment, employers are essential; unions are not....*

*Can you complete a project without a contractor and owner? Forget it. Someone has to make work happen, shoulder risk and write checks. That's why employers are the only player who are absolutely essential to the process..."* An article in the McCarron controlled "Carpenter" magazine, July/August, 2003.

*We are marketing "a strong product".* McCarron as quoted by the LA times, 3/10/02

In putting into words what all the top union officials really think, Doug McCarron is expressing the idea that workers are noting but a commodity and are totally dependent on the capitalists. The basis of this view, as expressed by McCarron, is that there is no alternative mode of production to that in which the capitalist "makes work happen." Any drive to transform the unions will have to take on this world view.



*Capitalism is destroying the health of human beings and of the planet as a whole. Reversing these disastrous effects would be one of the major tasks under socialism.*

### **Life Under Socialism**

It is not possible to fully predict what life in a socialist America would be like – no more than what capitalist America would be like before its development. However, we should consider some of the major issues confronting US workers.

**Jobs** – Over the previous two years, (2002, 2003) US workers increased the amount they produced per hour by almost 9% (source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics). However, the benefit of this has gone to the capitalists, who use this to cut the work force. Then, they use

the unemployed to put pressure on the employed in order to hold down wages.

In a socialist society, increased productivity (output per hour) would be used to cut the work week. In addition, there would be huge savings through eliminating almost all of the military spending, spending for repression (police, a massive prison system, etc.), and the huge waste of advertising and commercialism. The workers in these fields could be put to work performing genuinely productive tasks – building needed homes, schools, recreation centers, etc., producing other goods needed by people. This would mean massive reductions in the work week, a huge increase in the free time available. Coupled with affordable child care and the availability of a more collective form of living, this would mean the availability of all sorts of further education, travel, artistic expression available to working class people.

**Health Care** –In 2002, health care costs increased at over 11% and the annual cost of health care now stands at \$1.6 *trillion*. These massive costs result in some 44 million people in the US going without health insurance in 2004 and some 18,000 dying as a result. Nothing could serve as a stronger condemnation of the capitalist, profit driven “free” market system than this profit-based health care system here.

However, it is not only the lack of affordable health care that makes this system so disastrous; it is also the direct influence of different industries on how health care is developed and delivered (to those who can afford it). The Oct., 1999 issue of “Sierra” magazine, for instance, reported on the influence of the chemical and oil industries on cancer research. They reported, among other things, on the Director of the American Cancer Society who is also the vice president of a major herbicide manufacturer. “High ranking officials in the National Cancer Institute routinely accept lucrative posts in the cancer-drug industry,” they wrote.

The American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute are responsible for the disbursement of the overwhelming majority of money going to cancer “research”. These two groups are notorious for their hostility towards anyone making the link between cancer and the environment.

The pharmaceuticals exercise a major influence over how human health is conceived and treated at all levels, from the research labs to the doctors’ offices. Many health workers report on the prevalence of drug pushers, masquerading as “sales people” who visit doctors’ offices, taking the doctors to lunch, dispensing free samples, and pushing the health industry in the direction of providing a drug for anything that ails us, even including “shyness”!

There is also the direct link with US militarism, including the

massive use of Depleted Uranium (DU) shells in Iraq. These shells create microscopic fragments that are low grade radioactive and their half life is measured in the billions of years. Already it has been reported that some 16% of soldiers who have left active duty and were previously in Iraq are reporting health symptoms that appear to be related to radiation illness. At the same time, the UN’s World Health Organization (WHO) is predicting a 50% increase in cancer rates by the year 2020.

A socialist society would, of course, direct itself first to providing health care to all, regardless of income or social status. By removing the profit incentive, all aspects of human health would be considered and researched, and all methods of cure would be available. This would lead to a more “holistic” view of human health – a view that includes use of acupuncture, chiropractic, massage therapy, etc.

**Housing** – It is estimated that “affordable housing” must cost no more than 30% of a household’s income. This means that for a family to be able to afford a two bedroom home in Santa Clara, CA (the highest cost area of the country) they must earn \$35.02 per hour. The lowest cost area of the United States is Puerto Rico, where the earnings must be \$5.94 per hour. However, this paltry amount is higher than the median wage in Puerto Rico (according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics).

Housing is not simply a matter of affordability; it has a major impact on workers’ entire lifestyle. In the United States the choice is either to own one’s own home (reality a shared ownership with the money lenders) or be subject to the whims of the landlords. In addition, renting means sinking hundreds of thousands of dollars (over the course of a lifetime) into someone else’s property. In either case, there is no option for a more collective living situation – one where meals, childcare, and other aspects of family life are shared. In a capitalist society, where distrust and division are so encouraged, and where crime is a real threat for most workers, it is understandable why semi isolation in one’s living situation is preferred. However, in a society built on cooperation and solidarity, it is most likely that many people would want another alternative. We are, after all, the most social of all animals.

People would have many different options, and they would be genuine options, based on what they prefer, rather than what they can afford. These would include some sort of communal food preparation, eating, child care, etc. It should be emphasized that a more collective approach to living is what would be available, not what would be imposed in any way. It would be up to the workers, themselves, to

decide what they want to take advantage of.

**Education** – Under capitalism, workers are educated to fit the roles for which they were born. Independent thinking, creativity and an interest in the world around us are discouraged. Every effort to destroy and rebelliousness is made.

Under socialism, work, education and recreation would be all linked. Mathematics would be taught in the context of building, for instance. A central part of educating our youth would be travel to experience and learn from different cultures.

**Racism & Sexism** – Capitalist society encourages racism and sexism. It forces workers to compete for education, jobs and housing. They are encouraged to see other racial, national and ethnic groups – as well as the opposite sex – as their competitors, rather than as their brothers and sisters in the struggle. The entertainment industry plays into this by encouraging negative stereotypes of black people, Latinos, etc. At the same time, it regularly associates sex with human exploitation and violence, encouraging this association in young people's minds. It also encourages a general fear of others

(as brilliantly shown in the documentary by Michael Moore, "Bowling for Columbine"). All of this leads to a general level of racism and sexism in society similar to running a constant low grade fever. Sometimes, this racism breaks out into the open in a most vicious and violent way, such as in racist murders, spousal abuse and serial and gang rapes, etc.

On top of this, there is the clear racist and sexist discrimination and oppression by the capitalist class. Black

and Latino people are regularly denied housing and jobs based purely on their race. They are regularly beaten and abused by the police and discriminated against in the courts. Women are routinely denied jobs and, if "given" a job, are routinely expected to work for less wages than their male counterparts.

Under socialism, racist and sexist discrimination would not be tolerated in any way. Also, by eliminating the competition for education, jobs and housing a major impetus for racism, sexism and division would be eliminated. This does not mean that all of the scars of racism and sexism would be eliminated overnight. However, simply having come through a massive class struggle (a revolution) would

be a huge step in this direction. Education and a society which truly encouraged all its members to explore and understand the world - coupled with the elimination of the economic base of racism and sexism as well as eliminating the power of the capitalist class, which encourages this – all of this would mean the ultimate disappearance of these crippling forms of thought and the brutality that has been associated with it.

**Environment** – It is not necessary here to document the environmental crisis which is coming. What is the reaction of the capitalist class here to this coming crisis? Bush, as their foremost representative, basically denies that it is a problem. Although every reputable scientific group today concedes the fact of global warming, the Bush administration claims that it is not yet proven and that more study is necessary. It is nearly certain that this global warming will result in the flooding of entire islands, elimination of vast areas where basic crops are produced, and lead to increased weather extremes (including storms, tornadoes, and drought). Some scientists also predict that it can cause massive tsunamis (tidal waves) as huge chunks of ice from the glaciers break off and fall into the ocean.

On top of this, there is the steady elimination of different species of plants and animals. This will alter the balance of nature, having affects that cannot be predicted. Then, on top of this, there is the steady creation of bio-engineered plants. Nobody really knows the long term affects of these, but they are profitable in the short term. Finally, there is the introduction of thousands of new chemicals annually. Few of these are tested thoroughly for their affects on causing birth defects and their affect in causing cancer is not adequately tested.

A socialist society would have to put major resources into healing the environment, including reversing the affects of global warming.

**Life in General** – Leon Trotsky, one of the leaders of the Russian Revolution (1917) and the leader of the struggle against Stalinism, called socialism the "leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom." Under capitalism, the overwhelming majority of decisions made by workers are based on economics – "necessity" in other words. Where one chooses to live, the education available to one's children – from cradle to the grave necessity dictates. In a socialist society, where basic necessities are guaranteed for all, workers would be free to choose what suits them best.

At present, we see millions of workers who devote their free time to watching the entertainment that capitalism makes available.



Capitalism has developed based on exploitation of child labor, racism, sexism and poverty.

Curiosity and creativity are discouraged and therefore in many people such qualities are buried. However, a socialist revolution would not only revolutionize social and economic relations; it would revolutionize personal relations and the personal qualities expressed by hundreds of millions of people. Artistic abilities that people did not even know they possessed would come out. Interest in the sciences, in history, in travel and meeting people (other workers) on different continents would flower. Just the massive effort to overthrow capitalist relations, in and of itself, would lend a huge impulse in this direction, and then a truly socialist society would build upon this.

The building of a socialist society does not mean that debate and political struggle would be eliminated. Just the opposite. There would likely be huge debates, possibly even different political parties formed, around issues such as where to place economic resources, how to heal the environmental wounds, education, etc. This differs from political “debate” in capitalist society, where all the most important questions are never asked. Also, under socialism, the debated would be truly around what is the best way to move society as a whole forward. As opposed to this, under capitalism what really is hidden behind all the main political debates is the question: What is the best way to assure the power and profits of the capitalist class?

### **“End of History”**

In conclusion, we should recall the prediction of one of the strategists of US capitalism, Francis Fukayuma. When the Soviet Union collapsed, he claimed that this meant the “end of history.” He meant that now capitalism was here as the only system, now and forever. On top of this, of course, US capitalism was going to dominate the world without any challenge.

Look what’s happened since that prediction: We have had 9/11, the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the growing crisis in Russia over its domination of Chechnya, the disaster to the people of Southern Sudan (Darfur).

On top of this there is the issue of global warming, whose consequences appear to mean an almost certain disaster for millions. Plus the peaking of world oil supplies.

Given all of this, when one stands on the shore of the ocean and looks at the waves rolling up onto the shore, it does not seem so very far-fetched to imagine this scene – but devoid of all life on Earth, continuing throughout all time, but without life. Just this natural wonder

alone with nobody to appreciate it forever. This vision can give a wholly different meaning to Fukayuma’s phrase “the end of history”, and this is where capitalism is taking us, if the working class does not overcome all obstacles and revolutionize society.

Some 75 years ago, Trotsky said: *“History says to the working class ‘you must know that unless you cast down the bourgeoisie (the capitalist class), you will perish beneath the ruins of the capitalist civilization. Try, solve this task!’”*

In honor of those who came before and sacrificed and died for us, and bearing in mind the responsibility we bear to those who are still to come – the future generations, our children - we have no choice but struggle to do this.