

# Unnatural Disasters

*A chronicle of the struggle over climate change,  
from Kyoto to Hurricane Sandy*

**From the pages of Workers World newspaper, 2001-2012**

## Introduction

The disaster known as Hurricane Sandy that hit the Caribbean, the United States and Canada at the end of October 2012 should have come as no surprise. Every possible warning sign had preceded it. For years, international conferences had been held at which scientists laid out the effects of global warming on the climate. What were once considered freakish weather events — torrential rains, severe droughts, more frequent and intense tornadoes and hurricanes — had become the new norm.

Yet, five days after the hurricane's first blast, as this booklet is being compiled, millions are still without power. Besides those killed during Sandy's initial blast and the huge surge of ocean water it drove onshore, more continue to die for lack of heat, access to medications, medical care and transportation, and other causes related to a nonfunctioning infrastructure.

How did we get to this perilous position?

The articles assembled here, which appeared in Workers World newspaper between 2001 and the present, tell the story. From the repudiation of the Kyoto Accords by President George W. Bush in 2001 to the U.N. Summit on Sustainable Development in Rio in June 2012, we cover what happened to undermine and make ineffectual the many attempts by world climate scientists to get international agreement on plans to cut back carbon dioxide emissions.

We have also reported on many disasters related to global warming that have wreaked havoc in this period, from Hurricane Katrina to floods and drought in Africa and the Midwest to tornadoes in the South and sizzling temperatures in Detroit's auto plants.

These articles describe how government policy, particularly in the U.S., has been dictated by the highly profitable and powerful energy companies, whose clout is linked to the big banks and the Pentagon.

Like a red thread running through all this is our critique of capitalism as the ultimate cause of the planetary disaster known as global warming. It is not technology but the class interests that technology serves that determine whether our impact on the planet will be sustainable or not. With capitalism's evolution into global imperialism, the problems it creates impact most severely on the pillaged nations of the global South.

Frederick Engels, Karl Marx's closest collaborator, wrote in 1876: "Let us not ... flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory it takes its revenge on us. Each of them, it is true, has in the first place the consequences on which we counted, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel the first."

Engels wrote this during the early, tempestuous growth of industrial capital in Europe and the U.S., when huge fortunes were made exploiting labor in the mines, the steel mills and the newly electrified factories.

Today Marxism is an indispensable tool to understanding why capitalism is headed toward a train wreck and what must replace it. As protesters at the 2011 conference on climate change in Durban, South Africa, demanded: "Climate change? Social change!"

Deirdre Griswold  
Editor  
Workers World

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## **Bowing to Big Oil, Bush axes Kyoto environmental accords**

*Deirdre Griswold, March 29, 2001*

George W. Bush is on a collision course with the environmental movement around the world. The president's announcements that he will oppose regulating greenhouse gas emissions and that he will support oil drilling in the fragile wildlife preserves of arctic Alaska have elicited condemnation from all and cries of betrayal from those who had taken his campaign promises for good coin.

Bush's long relationship with the giant oil conglomerates preordained these moves. As former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich said in an op-ed column in the New York Times of March 18, "It's payback time, and every industry and trade association is busily cashing in." The oil giants own many of the coal companies and utilities that burn coal to produce power, emitting vast amounts of carbon dioxide gas in the process.

This move means that "the polluters are in control of the White House," said Anna Aurilio, legislative director for the U.S. Public Interest Research Group.

Of course, Bush didn't say anything about paying back the corporate sponsors who had donated heavily to his campaign. A letter to four Congress members that laid out his stance instead blamed the switch on "high energy prices" and claimed there was an "incomplete state of scientific knowledge of the causes of, and solutions to, global climate change."

Bush is being less than honest. He and the corporate groups leaning on him--like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the deceptively named Global

Climate Coalition--must know that a team of British scientists has found absolute proof of the greenhouse gas theory.

### **New satellite proof of greenhouse effect**

Up until now, projections of global warming caused by a human-produced layer of carbon dioxide blanketing the Earth have been based on computer simulations. Now a comparison of satellite observations taken 27 years apart has proven the existence of increased CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere.

Calling their work "the first experimental observation of changes in the Earth's outgoing long-wave radiation spectrum, and therefore the greenhouse effect," team leader John Harries said, "We're absolutely sure, there's no ambiguity. What we are seeing can only be due to the increase in the gases." Harries was president of Britain's Royal Meteorological Society from 1996 to 1997.

This study, reported in the science journal *Nature*, merely proves again what scientists have agreed on for some time now. Changes in climate have become so unmistakable that the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has predicted a dramatic rise in the Earth's temperature by the end of this century.

The evidence was already so strong in 1997 that the U.S. government signed the Kyoto Accord, which agreed that global warming was a grave problem. The accord committed its signers, particularly the industrialized countries, to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to the 1990 level by the year 2007.

Given the threat, this is a modest goal. But Bush's announcement was a death knell for Kyoto. The U.S., with 4 percent of the world's population, creates 25 percent of the greenhouse gases. There can

be no meaningful international agreement without U.S. participation.

Bush's turnabout from his campaign promises was so abrupt that it caught the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, Christine Todd Whitman, by surprise. She had just been in Europe assuring the environment ministers of the G-7 countries that the new U.S. administration supported a limit on greenhouse gases.

True to her own conservative, big business-friendly political history, however, Whitman quickly adapted to the new administration line.

### **Climatologists predict floods, drought for U.S.**

While this little political charade was being acted out, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration was predicting damaging floods and drought in vast sections of the U.S. this spring. Deep snow pack and heavy rains are likely to cause flooding in sections of the Northeast and Central states, while water shortages are expected to continue in the Northwest and Florida.

The drought in the Northwest has contributed to California's power crisis, although the power companies have exaggerated the crisis to push up prices. Bush then uses the excuse of these high-energy prices to ax the Kyoto Accord. But global warming will only increase the freaky weather conditions that are leading to drought and floods.

A report by the group Redefining Progress has found that the communities most affected by climate change will be low-income, especially with people of color. Ansjie Miller, the group's manager for environmental justice, said Bush's decision "will have serious detrimental effects on the lives of millions of people in this country."

It is already a life-and-death issue for low-lying countries around the world like Bangladesh, Mozambique and island nations in the Caribbean and South Pacific.

### **Germany has hydrogen-fueled car**

Meanwhile, breakthroughs in technology already offer ways to avert global warming. The German auto manufacturer BMW has produced a car that runs on hydrogen instead of gasoline and produces no air pollution of any kind--no particles and no carbon dioxide.

This prototype can cruise over 200 miles at speeds above 100 miles an hour on a tank of hydrogen and can be refueled in four minutes. Engineers say it is as safe as a gasoline engine. The technology could also be adapted for power generation. European Ford, based in Germany, has also unveiled a hydrogen-fueled car.

Why were these German companies the ones to make this breakthrough, and not Ford or General Motors in the U.S.?

Germany has no oil.

U.S. capitalists, on the other hand, have a lock on most of the world's oil production and profits. The entire architecture of U.S. policy in the Middle East, including more than five decades of building up Israel as a regional military power at the expense of the Palestinians and other Arab people, rests on the central role of oil to U.S. big business. George Bush senior and the Pentagon showed their commitment to the oil companies when they launched the Gulf War against Iraq.

But the Democrats, too, do the bidding of big business even if they speak in somewhat more popular language. While Bill Clinton signed the Kyoto Accord, his administration did nothing to implement it.

And his policy toward Iraq and Israel varied little from that of the Republicans.

This is what has to be grasped by those environmentalists who have spent years trying to reason with the U.S. capitalist class, demonstrating to them the great dangers of global warming, and now are aghast at what is happening under the Bush administration. The problem is not that this president is a dodo. It is that the whole political machinery that produced Bush is tied irrevocably to the billionaire ruling class. And they are not in the mood to agree to a gigantic retooling of industry--especially not when a worldwide capitalist recession is looming.

Their concern is with undercutting imperialist rivals--like Germany--by taking advantage of their weaknesses. They will play their oil card as long as it is trump.

The degradation of the planet is yet one more urgent reason--in addition to all the miseries inflicted on the workers and the oppressed nations--why everyone has a stake in building a fighting movement to liberate society from capitalist ownership and control.

## Reaping the whirlwind: U.S. stance on climate control enrages world

*Deirdre Griswold, July 26, 2001*

A world summit on climate control opened in Bonn on July 16 on a somber note. Without an agreement on curbing greenhouse gases, said the opening speakers, the world faces more severe climate change and weather disasters.

In 1998, an international agreement was worked out in Kyoto, Japan. While far from perfect, it did set limits on emissions, especially by the developed industrialized countries. Ratifying the Kyoto Protocol would roll back the release of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to the levels of 1990.

But it appears dead in the water. And it's the United States government that killed it.

The Bush administration says it won't sign the agreement, and that it also is against a new proposal that would provide subsidies to poorer countries in order to help them develop clean energy in place of fossil fuels.

George W. Bush says the Kyoto Protocol is "fatally flawed" because it doesn't place the same restrictions on developing countries as on highly industrialized ones like the U.S., which, with only 4 percent of the world's people, is responsible for almost a quarter of the greenhouse gas emissions. Bush has singled out China, especially, saying it is a potential "threat" because of its large population.

This is a false argument that Bush, using his bully pulpit, is using to cloud the issue. The People's Republic of China, per capita, emits greenhouse gases at one-sixth the U.S. rate, according to the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency. Furthermore, China, despite not being required to do so under the Kyoto accords, has already moved ahead on its own to dramatically reduce emissions.

### **China has made dramatic progress**

An article in the June 15 New York Times reported that "treaty obligation or not, China has already achieved a dramatic slowing in its emissions of carbon dioxide in the last decade, Chinese and Western energy experts say."

The article added, "In the most surprising development, China's annual output of carbon dioxide in the last four years of rapid economic growth has actually declined, according to data compiled by the United States Department of Energy."

An April report from researchers at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in California said that "China's emissions of carbon dioxide have shrunk by 17 percent since the mid-1990s. Remarkably, over the same period, GDP grew by 36 percent."

The gross domestic product is the total of goods and services produced in a country.

Despite having turned to market mechanisms to boost its development, the Chinese government still has a great deal of central control over its economy. The government that exercises this control was created by a great social revolution that developed over decades and has not been negated, even though the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe painfully set back its socialist agenda.

The ability of China to plan its development in such a way as to reduce the long-term negative effects of industrialization

demonstrates that the state has retained control over planning. Another evidence of this came when the Chinese government, after experiencing very severe flooding of the Yangtze River in 1998, stopped all lumbering in the upstream watershed area and coupled that with a massive reforestation effort.

Can any capitalist government in the developing world--that is, the countries so plundered and impoverished by colonialism that they must do the bidding of the global imperialist banks and corporations just to survive--devise and stick to such an economic plan?

A capitalist government is beholden to giant corporations that have spent billions of dollars on getting the politicians they want in office. What would it take to get Weyerhaeuser, for instance, to agree to stop lumbering in a vast area of this country? Or to get Mobil Oil to stop its drilling in an ecologically sensitive area?

In the U.S. it takes years of intense protests by committed movements, sometimes risking life and limb, to get legislation passed that curbs polluting corporations. Their response is often to move their operations to poor countries where people are so vulnerable to dying of starvation or easily preventable contagious diseases that cancer or other pollution-caused illnesses seem a much lesser evil.

While greenhouse gases come overwhelmingly from industrialized countries, they most affect people in oppressed nations with poor infrastructure and few reserves, reported the June 29 Guardian of Britain.

### **Report says weather disasters have doubled**

In its annual World Disasters Report, released on June 28, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies say that floods,

storms, landslides and droughts, which numbered about 200 per year before 1996, rose sharply and steadily to 392 in 2000.

"Recurrent disasters, from floods in Asia to drought in the Horn of Africa, to windstorms in Latin America, are sweeping away development gains and calling into question the possibility of recovery," said the report.

The hardest-hit places in the world are low-lying islands. Between 1991 and 2000, 41 percent of the 380,000 people of the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific were killed or otherwise affected by tropical storms.

The anti-Bush struggle, which is growing stronger all over the world, encompasses many issues. Global warming is but one of them. This question, however, enlightens thoughtful people of many different social backgrounds to the role of monopoly capitalism and how far it will go in its mad pursuit of profits.

Bush is known as a creature of Big Oil and the richest corporations and banks. While the polls show that the great majority of people in the United States are aware of global warming and support taking measures to curb it, he is flaunting his disregard for them and the rest of the world. His cavalier treatment of all but his cronies in the ruling class ensures that the movement against U.S. imperialism will grow stronger and broader in the months and years to come.

Bush is sowing the wind and will reap the whirlwind--both literally and figuratively.

## **A testament to socialist planning: Cuba leads world in managing disasters**

*Fred Goldstein, January 2, 2005*

The utter failure of the imperialists and the region's capitalist governments to warn the people of the Indian Ocean about the tsunami and to mitigate the chaos that reigned both during and after the devastation brings into bold relief the monumental accomplishments of socialist Cuba in the sphere of disaster management.

The capitalist propaganda machine has focused on the suffering of the people victimized by this disaster and has opened up a false debate over whether the tsunami was an act of god or an act of nature. The message is that, either way, this is fate and nothing could really be done to change things. Missing from the debate is the crucial question of how the catastrophic effects of this disaster could have been avoided.

The record of the Cuban government in preparing its population for hurricanes and other natural disasters so as to minimize the loss of human life gives the lie to religious mysticism and fatalistic thinking. It also stands as a practical example of how to reduce the needless loss of life.

Cuba has been cited by the United Nations, the International Federation of the Red Cross, the Red Crescent Society and other agencies and authorities who deal with the effects of natural disasters as the world model in disaster management, not only for underdeveloped countries but for all countries. Massive, humane evacuations of hundreds of thousands of people have been carried out within hours during hurricanes that reached high levels.

In 2001, when Hurricane Michelle, a level-4 storm, hit with sustained 125-mile-per-hour winds and widespread floods, more than 700,000 people were evacuated. Only five Cubans lost their lives in the storm, which killed 20 people in Central America.

### **More dead in California than Cuba**

It is noteworthy that prolonged rains in California have already killed almost twice as many people in a two-week period as the 16 who died in six major hurricanes in Cuba between 1996 and 2002. The Cuban method of education, preparation, warning and organized mass intervention during natural disasters is sorely missed right now in California.

In California, many people were killed by a mud slide in La Conchita after two weeks of rain. The same spot had suffered a similar mud slide 10 years ago. If the Cuban method had been applied in California, there would have been no loss of life.

An analysis of the Cuban method by Oxfam, a prestigious bourgeois British humanitarian organization that works in a variety of areas, led to the publication of a 68-page study in 2004 entitled, "Weathering the Storm: Lessons in Risk Reduction from Cuba."([oxfamamerica.org](http://oxfamamerica.org)) This study praised the effectiveness of the Cuban system of centralized, planned organization based on mass participation that has saved many lives during natural disasters.

"Cuba is unusual in that its socio-economic development model and its disaster response policies combine to substantially reduce its population's vulnerability to hazards. Over the past 40 years, Cuba's socialist government has emphasized social and economic development, prioritizing an equitable distribution of resources,

universal access to social services, and a narrower urban-rural development gap," says the report.

"Cubans are highly educated, with a strongly developed sense of solidarity and social cohesion, extensive experience in mobilization and highly organized through mass organizations, professional groups and political structures."

Cuba has a comprehensive National Civil Defense system which, the report says, "is as much a concept of organization as it is a system of measures and procedures." Its work is based on a national plan, formulated both from above and at the grass roots level, which relies on mass organizations such as the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), the Cuban Women's Federation, student groups, trade unions and the Association of Small Producers.

"In addition to specific assets for work on disasters," continues the report, "there is a political commitment at all levels of government to allocate all resources at hand for the preservation of life in emergencies. This allows the Cubans to make use of any and all available resources, such as using local schools as evacuation shelters, securing boats and buses for evacuation purposes, or tapping the ham radio association as a communications network." All other aspects of preparation are "secondary to the basic commitment of saving lives."

### **Detailed planning at all levels**

The national plan for disaster preparedness is refined and worked on every year, from the highest levels to the neighborhoods and block associations. The report carried the results of numerous

interviews which revealed the results of detailed planning, organization and education.

"Regardless of their role, everyone was clearly aware of what measures and what procedures they needed to follow in case of a hurricane. They knew the stages of emergency warning, where to get information, how to secure their house, and where they would go for shelter if they needed to evacuate. A belief that the government would prioritize people's safety prevailed. The Cuban population clearly has developed a 'culture of safety.'"

Jose Castro, secretary of the Commission of Evacuation and Students in the Civil Defense of Cienfuegos, told Oxfam that "Any child in school can give you an explanation: how you prepare, what you do. Students, they know what you do ... how to gather things in the house and put them away ... shut off the water and electricity. All students, workers, campesinos get this training."

Basic to preparedness is what is called "community risk mapping." In fact, according to Oxfam, "it is the meticulous, ongoing risk mapping at the community level by community members that functions as the mortar in Cuba's wall of risk reduction."

A discussion with a representative of the Cuban Women's Federation in the district of Havana illustrated this point: "I am responsible for this part of the neighborhood. ... If a hurricane hits, I know that inside one multi-family unit is an old woman in a wheelchair, who is going to need help to leave. I have 11 single mothers on second and third floors of apartment buildings with children under two who will need more support to evacuate and special needs in the shelters. I have two pregnant women, one on that block and one on this one, who will need special attention."

Each year the plan is updated to include new information and an evaluation of past experience. "Beginning at the CDR level," said Jose Castro, "authorities update the plan in their neighborhood. The CDR members write down the houses that may be vulnerable in their census, including the name of the family and number of children. They note who goes where during an evacuation, who will need extra help, etc." The neighborhood plan then goes up to the municipal, provincial and national level to be integrated into the national plan.

### **All public officials responsible for safety**

Unlike in the United States, all public officials are charged with dealing with emergencies. "By law," says the report, "all heads of provincial and municipal governments are the provincial and municipal Civil Defense directors in charge of organizing, coordinating and monitoring all the work related to prevention, mitigation, emergency response and reconstruction in their area. ... This creates both a centralized decision-making process, which is key for emergency situations, alongside a decentralized implementation process, providing agility and adaptation equally necessary for effective emergency preparedness and response.

"In practice, the head of the Civil Defense in any given province or municipality is someone closely familiar with how government works in that province. It also means that the local groups are taking orders from someone familiar to them, not a stranger brought for the duration of the emergency. In the event of an emergency all heads of work places, hospitals, schools or businesses assume their responsibilities to direct their staff in carrying out civil defense measures."

All the organizational structures are mobilized to alert the population as a hurricane approaches. Meetings are called, plans reviewed, command centers are organized. "At the community level, the CDRs, mass organizations, family doctors, school directors, and heads of institutions" review emergency plans and check evacuation procedures, destinations and supplies.

In the evacuation phase: "If a person's house has a roof of tile, fiber-cement or thatch, they must move to a house of poured concrete. If those options have already been assigned in the neighborhood, the family is assigned to a group shelter and transport provided. Every thing from cars to trucks to horse carts is mobilized for transport by the heads of the civil defense ... In order to evacuate people in high-risk areas, all necessary means of transport, such as helicopters and boats, are put at the service of Civil Defense rescue teams for this purpose.

"In Cuba," continues the report, "structures that run everyday life are the structures also used for implementing civil defense measures."

In other words, the revolutionary organization of the mass of workers and peasants in a socialist society puts the interests of the people first in all spheres of life; it naturally becomes the general framework within which it is possible to prepare effectively for natural disasters and minimize the loss of life.

### **All despite U.S. blockade**

Cuba is a relatively poor country, underdeveloped by centuries of Spanish colonialism, 60 years of U.S. imperialist control, and decades of a vicious economic blockade. Yet, it has surpassed the

richest and most developed country in the world in the sphere of natural disaster management.

Had India, Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and other countries in the Indian Ocean region had socialist regimes that put the interests of the people at the forefront, day-in, day-out, as in socialist Cuba, they would have seized upon the scientific and technological technology to detect tsunamis that is already deployed in the Pacific Ocean and collectively either purchased or developed it themselves.

The greatest loss of life during the tsunami was in Banda Aceh in northern Sumatra, nearest the site of the undersea earthquake that triggered the waves. Capitalist television networks have recently carried footage of amateur video showing the tsunami hitting Banda Aceh. But first you saw people cleaning up from the earthquake, slowly and methodically for 25 minutes, completely oblivious of what was to follow--despite definite danger signs, like the sea receding.

An organized, educated, prepared population with the government fully behind it could have evacuated thousands of people, even at the site closest to the epicenter of the tsunami. Evacuation to safety in most areas involved moving people only a relatively short distance from the coast. This holds in even greater measure for the high-casualty areas further from the quake, such as Thailand, Sri Lanka, India and of course West Africa.

Tsunamis are not at all unknown in the Indian Ocean region. There have been three in Indonesia alone in the last 12 years.

A socialist government such as exists in Cuba would have been alert to all the warnings coming from the scientific community about the vulnerability of the region to tsunamis. And of course the

population would have been thoroughly trained and organized to deal with typhoons and other natural disasters, so it would have had the means in place to deal with a tsunami.

Cuba, poor as it is, has worked virtual miracles of public safety despite all the obstacles put in its way by the blockade and the undying hostility of U.S. administrations for over four decades. Its struggle to overcome the effects of hurricanes and natural disasters by integrating its disaster mitigation work within the general framework of socialist planning and organization, despite its extreme material limitations, shows that in the natural world humanity can take increasing control over its destiny. But Cuba laid the groundwork by first expelling imperialism, overturning capitalism and taking control over the means of production and the resources of society so it could organize them to serve human need and not profit—that is, by carrying out the socialist revolution.

## **Hurricane Katrina: Racism and poverty in the Delta**

*Larry Hales, September 10, 2005*

What is painfully obvious about Hurricane Katrina is not that the hurricane itself had any out-of-the-ordinary tendencies, but that regardless of the storm's category, the massive loss of life could have been averted.

Until it was far too late, the city, state and federal governments provided no means, didn't marshal the National Guard, didn't use the many boats and city buses—some now under water—to move people out of the city. No planes were used to fly people out of danger before Louis Armstrong Airport was closed down on Aug. 27, two days before the hurricane hit the city.

It is not that the hurricane did not consume many other parts of the Gulf Coast. Some towns in Mississippi are virtually gone. However, what happened in New Orleans uncovers the verity of life under capitalism: that regardless of the great wealth of U.S. society and the fact that workers and the poor create that wealth, most are left to fend for themselves in times of need and crisis.

Many articles have been written saying that the city could not withstand any storm above a category 3. Yet efforts to reestablish the coastal marsh were spurned and woefully underfunded by billions of dollars; only \$375 million of a needed \$14 billion came through. The weakened levees were not strengthened. Forty-four percent of the budget for the New Orleans Corps of Engineers was slashed and \$30 million was cut from flood control.

Coupled with the National Guard being depleted due to the war in Iraq, and members of the Army Corps of Engineers—needed to

work on the levees—also being sent to Iraq, the real aims of the capitalist class and the Bush administration become startlingly clear. It is more important to them to shore up their occupation of Iraq, to steal the Iraqi people's oil reserves, than it is to protect the people of New Orleans and the delta from a storm that years earlier had been predicted would level this region.

Without transportation, people were forced to line up at the Superdome, where they were searched and told they would need their own food and water. Many thousands were turned away and sent to schools or back to their homes.

Hurricane Katrina exposed the anarchy of the capitalist system, especially during times of great crisis, and the racism and callousness of the Bush administration. No one will soon forget that Bush remained on vacation while the category 5 storm churned in the Gulf. Neither will it be forgotten how the victims of the storm were blamed by high-ranking officials like FEMA head Michael Brown.

### **Race and class underlying factors**

The Gulf Coast is predominantly Black. Therefore, much of the area hit by the hurricane was predominantly Black, along with poor white. Mississippi's average per capita income, at \$24,650, is the lowest of any state. Louisiana is ranked number 42 with \$27,581 and Alabama number 40 with \$27,795, compared to \$32,937 nationally. All three states have poverty rates higher than the national average.

Racism is inherent under capitalism and the legacy of racism in New Orleans has led to a predominantly Black city being ill prepared. Many of its residents are desperately poor; disproportionately

jobless, underemployed and imprisoned; homeless and with a sub-par public education system. The jobs available are mainly low-paying, in the service industry.

Over 27 percent of the New Orleans population lives below the poverty line. Sixty-seven percent of the city is Black, and this population makes up the great majority of the poor—the ones left behind in every area of life. The homes that African Americans live in are mostly old or rundown tenements in the lower-lying areas of the city.

Another startling fact is that more than a third of the Black population lack automobiles. Both Gov. Kathleen Blanco and Mayor Ray Nagin decreed that those with the means to do so should evacuate the city before Katrina hit. Poor Black people did not have the means to leave on their own; they couldn't afford to own a car because of poverty or infirmity.

In the aftermath of the hurricane, Black people across the country have become incensed over the gross criminal negligence of all levels of government. The images of the poor, mostly Black, the elderly and children being ignored, dying slowly from hunger and dehydration, have been burned in people's minds. This may lead many to wonder or have doubts about the government's intent, but the statistics don't lie.

For decades, the local ruling class of New Orleans has resegregated the city, destroying low-income housing to make way for expensive homes, townhouses and super retail stores in an area above sea-level.

The conspiracy is of the capitalists' making and is happening across the country. But in New Orleans it has been tragically revealed by

Hurricane Katrina, for all the world to see. And with the destruction and the gruesome task of recovering thousands of dead bodies comes news that the unemployment rate for the hurricane-ravaged areas is to climb to 25 percent. Can the situation become devastatingly worse?

That is why the call to bring the troops home must be amplified—to stop the suffering and murder of the Iraqi people, to stop the loss of life of the many poor and oppressed sucked into the war machine by the poverty draft, and now so that the funds being consumed by the imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan can go instead to rebuilding the Gulf Coast and New Orleans.

The 25 percent unemployment rate does not have to be. It won't be if no expense is spared and the people of the Gulf Coast are allowed to rebuild on their own terms and in their own interests.

## **Global warming: The world as a war zone**

*Deirdre Griswold, March 18, 2006*

War is associated with not only large loss of life but also the breakdown of all normal daily activities. When war comes to a region, large populations often must be on the move, trying to escape devastation that has made it impossible to find shelter, go to work or school, or even get food and water. Transportation and power systems break down, as does public health. The civilian casualties caused by disease, starvation and exposure can exceed those of actual combat.

Available resources are commandeered by the military, which has its own parallel mechanisms to ensure that even when civilian life is in chaos, the troops are fed and sheltered and can move freely.

Human misery is compounded by profiteering. In a capitalist society, everything is for sale and the hardships of war just drive up prices. They also shine a blinding light on the great social rifts that lead the rich to get even richer while the majority are going through sheer hell.

As we move into an era of more and more natural disasters caused by the unnatural phenomenon of global warming, the areas affected are coming to look more and more like war zones.

There has been no war on U.S. soil since the 1860s. But the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, followed by the collapse of the levees in New Orleans, exposed the weaknesses and contradictions of 21st century capitalism on a grand scale. Where Black people were once sold on the auction block to slave owners who needed field laborers, their descendants found out in the cruelest way that they had become expendable in this market-

driven system. Local police and then National Guard rode shotgun, tasked with protecting stores and buildings that were being inundated anyway, while the rising floodwaters claimed the most vulnerable people.

The world experienced the warmest year on record in 2005. After a balmy period this month, cold air came roaring back into the Midwest with baseball-sized hailstones and twisters whose winds reached 206 miles an hour. Even the lovely islands of Hawaii, which enjoy a temperate climate year round, have had record-breaking rains that just caused a dam in Kauai to burst and wash away several houses and their sleeping people.

The ice is rapidly melting at both poles. Fresh water flowing into the north Atlantic has pushed the Gulf Stream farther away from the British Isles. This, paradoxically, may mean colder winters for Western Europe, which has already seen unusually severe storms for several decades.

Central America, the Caribbean and parts of South America are being repeatedly battered by powerful hurricanes generated in the warmer ocean off West Africa. High winds, flooding and landslides have done immense damage and caused extensive loss of life. In the Caribbean, only socialist Cuba has been able to keep deaths at a minimum with its comprehensive evacuation system that uses all available resources.

The question is no longer if or when global warming will seriously affect life on the planet. It is an established fact, and each new study shows more rapid change. It is not just future generations but today's generation that will see rising sea levels that can inundate low-lying countries. Some predictions are apocalyptic.

The question is, what must be done?

There is no individual way to overcome this growing disaster. Riding a bike instead of driving or turning down the heat in your home may be good for you, but it's a drop in the bucket. This is a vast problem caused by the effect of human activity on the environment, and it can only be meaningfully addressed through profound social change.

Everyone knows that the U.S. government was the world's worst when it came to denying climate change. Even a cautious public figure like James Hansen, head of NASA's Goddard Institute, recently charged the Bush administration with trying to censor him for speaking out on global warming. For years, the U.S. has refused to join international pacts like the Kyoto Accords, meant to slow down climate change.

This has nothing to do with ignorance. This country has a massive scientific-technological establishment. This intransigence flows rather from the powerful political position of monopoly capitalism in the U.S., which refuses to allow anything to slow down its pursuit of superprofits on a world scale. Its determination to use the most ruthless methods to build an empire based on control of the world's oil shows how short-sighted this ruling group is.

Capitalist corporations are driven by the bottom line: profits. Long-term planning that would interfere with immediate profits falls by the wayside. When large social projects like dams, roads and railroads have been absolutely indispensable for the expansion of capitalist production but couldn't turn an immediate profit, they have been built with public funds.

Today, however, the publicly financed infrastructure is in terrible shape as the cost of empire balloons with each new military adventure. The Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz estimates that the true cost of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars will be \$2 trillion.

With government debt rising sharply, what will be left for the kind of total reorganization of society needed to deal with global warming?

The mainstream environmental organizations in this country are in crisis. They have been focusing on how to persuade the corporations and capitalist politicians to think “green.” It is a hopeless task.

For a century and a half, militant movements based in the working class and, more recently, in countries oppressed by colonialism and imperialism, have been trying to break the grip of capital and establish socialist economies. Some have succeeded—often in the aftermath of devastating capitalist wars for markets. Now we are facing a new kind of war, which can strike anywhere as natural systems break down under global warming.

Only socialist planning on a global scale offers a way out. The struggle to take control of our economic life and create a sustainable environment is an integral part of the struggle of the workers and the oppressed peoples to end capitalism and build a socialist world.

## **‘An Inconvenient Truth’: Educates but doesn’t challenge system**

*G. Dunkel, July 9, 2006*

Even though the air conditioner was broken on an early summer night in New York City, no one left the packed movie theater showing Al Gore’s “An Inconvenient Truth.” A number of customers thought the heat was deliberate, since the movie examines the climate crisis caused by global warming—and the way the United States uses energy is a major factor in producing global warming.

The movie has been a sleeper. None of the critics or Hollywood moguls thought a documentary presenting scientific evidence on a subject where there is some popular controversy would draw an audience. But “An Inconvenient Truth” has had the best per-screen draw of any current release. Now it is spreading beyond the art house, independent film market to a much broader distribution.

Gore and his director, Davis Guggenheim, do a good job presenting the facts in a visually compelling way and getting in data that just appeared in 2005. Guggenheim even manages to present Gore as a human being with feeling and a long interest in climate change, which is surprising given Gore’s long history as a political wonk.

Most of the scientists interviewed in the media about the film have said it presents the evidence carefully and clearly, even if some of Gore’s projections of future events are a bit stretched and some of his conclusions about ice cores a bit overdrawn. Some of the business-oriented media like the Houston Chronicle and Wall Street Journal have tried attacking Gore’s conclusions, but most of the press that reviewed the film accepted his conclusions.

Gore makes one telling point. In a review of some 900 articles on climate change appearing in peer-reviewed, scientific journals, not one denied that global warming is happening. But in a survey of 600 or so articles in the corporate-owned mass media on climate change, 53 percent challenged global warming.

Where Gore and the movie fall down is in presenting the struggle to reverse global warming as a moral one, a struggle to change personal and national moral choices. The role of the oil, coal, energy and transportation industries, and of the big capitalists who control and profit so grossly from them, passes unmentioned. Could the Gore family history with Occidental Petroleum have something to do with it?

Making all the green moral choices you can afford, and even agitating for more greenness in the larger society, at best is only going to moderate global warming—not reverse it.

“An Inconvenient Truth” is worth seeing, but its political conclusions are weak and obscure the need to struggle against this profit-driven, unplanned system.

## **Big business & global warming: Corporate manipulation moves to Phase II**

*Deirdre Griswold, July 16, 2006*

The huge corporations that have spent the last two decades lobbying forcefully to get government and the media to deny the existence of global warming and climate change have embarked on a new tack.

In the first phase of their campaign, these capitalist enterprises used every trick in the book to deny or belittle global warming. Since before the Kyoto Accords—which went into effect in 1994 and which the U.S. refused to sign—the energy companies in particular were setting up front organizations to dispute the scientific evidence.

These groups have had innocuous-sounding names like The Advancement of Sound Science Coalition (TASSC), Americans for Balanced Energy Sources (ABEC), Center for Energy and Economic Development, Cooler Heads Coalition, Global Climate Coalition, Global Climate Information Project and the Greening Earth Society.

There are many more. From a long list available at [sourcewatch.org](http://sourcewatch.org), the sampling provided here goes only as far as the Gs.

### **The wolf in sheep’s clothing**

TASSC started as a front for Philip Morris. It morphed from disputing the danger of tobacco smoke to advancing “industry-friendly positions on a wide range of topics, including global warming, smoking, phthalates and pesticides.” ([sourcewatch.org](http://sourcewatch.org))

The Cooler Heads Coalition, according to its website, [globalwarming.org](http://globalwarming.org), was formed in 1997 to “dispel the myths of

global warming by exposing flawed economic, scientific and risk analysis. ... The risks of global warming are speculative; the risks of global warming policies are all too real.”

Before it disbanded in 2002, the Global Climate Coalition (GCC) “was one of the most outspoken and confrontational industry groups in the United States battling reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.” It collaborated with groups such as Sovereignty International, which believes that global warming is a plot to enslave the world under a United Nations-led “world government.”

The members of the GCC read like a Who’s Who of the largest U.S. industrial corporations and their organizations, including the American Petroleum Institute, Chevron Oil, Chrysler, Dow Chemical, Duke Power, DuPont, ExxonMobil, Ford, General Motors, McDonnell-Douglas, Shell Oil, Texaco and Union Carbide.

According to the Los Angeles Times (Dec. 7, 1997) the GCC spent \$13 million on its 1997 anti-Kyoto ad campaign, an amount roughly equivalent to Greenpeace’s entire annual budget.

Common Cause has documented more than \$63 million in contributions to politicians from members of the GCC from 1989 to 1999.

The Global Climate Information Project, sponsored by the GCC and the American Association of Automobile Manufacturers, among others, was created to sponsor an advertising campaign in the U.S. against the Kyoto agreement.

The Greening Earth Society, funded and controlled by the Western Fuels Association, an association of coal-burning utility companies, claims that greenhouse gas emissions are a good thing because they will lead to greater plant growth and a greener environment.

For a while, this full-court press by U.S. big business fed the media with false information that kept a large part of the population confused. In this period, more than half the reporting by the U.S. corporate media echoed the well-funded industry lobbyists’ claim that climate change and global warming were just an unproved “theory.” They ridiculed the view that the combustion of fossil fuels—especially oil and coal—leads to an accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that then traps the earth’s heat.

But then came the hurricanes, the drenching rains leading to disastrous floods and mud slides, the tornadoes, the grapefruit-sized hail, the droughts, the wildfires, the melting of glaciers, the death of coral reefs, the shrinking of the polar ice caps, and the biggest “natural” disaster to hit a major U.S. city since the San Francisco earthquake—the flooding of New Orleans.

Global warming is now virtually undisputed in the world’s scientific community, which has moved on to creating models to predict the impact of climate change on low-lying coastal areas, deserts, tundra, ocean currents and so on.

So what are the big corporations that spent hundreds of millions on disinformation doing now?

### **The wolf gets through the door**

They are moving into the area of ecology and conservation in order to make sure that whatever is done is profitable for them.

Take something like the Pew Center on Global Climate Change. It is a product of the Pew Charitable Trusts, set up by the descendants of Joseph Pew, founder of the Sun Oil Co.

For generations, this super-rich family has funded a panoply of right-wing organizations, from the American Liberty League in the 1930s to the Christian Freedom Foundation and the John Birch Society in the 1950s and, more recently, the American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation and the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research. This last organization was set up by William Casey, later to become Reagan's CIA director.

Unlike the earlier industry-sponsored organizations, the Pew Center on Global Climate Change does not dispute global warming. Rather, it seeks to set the agenda of the environmental movement and any related legislation so businesses can take advantage of it.

Its website talks about "the emerging greenhouse gas market." The center has set up a Business Environmental Leadership Council, which says that "companies taking early action on climate strategies and policy will gain sustained competitive advantage over their peers."

"The BELC," they go on, "is now the largest U.S. based association of corporations focused on addressing the challenges of climate change, with 40 members representing \$2 trillion in market capitalization and over 3 million employees.

"Many different sectors are represented, from high technology to diversified manufacturing; from oil and gas to transportation; from utilities to chemicals. We accept the views of most scientists that enough is known about the science and environmental impacts of climate change for us to take actions to address its consequences."

And what kinds of actions do they propose?

"Businesses can and should take concrete steps now in the U.S. and abroad to assess opportunities for emission reductions, establish

and meet emission reduction objectives, and invest in new, more efficient products, practices and technologies.

"The Kyoto agreement represents a first step in the international process, but more must be done both to implement the market-based mechanisms that were adopted in principle in Kyoto and to more fully involve the rest of the world in the solution."

These words may sound innocent enough—to someone unfamiliar with the crafty and devious nature of the class of robber barons who, in a relatively short period of time, have become fabulously wealthy by disregarding the health and well-being of millions of workers and their families.

On closer examination, however, it should be clear that this wing of the ruling class has decided that there is a lot of money to be made from new technologies that may, or may not, slow down global warming. They want to push "market-based mechanisms" because that's where the money is. And the targets of much of their "analysis" on global warming are developing countries like China, India and Brazil, which they want to "fully involve ... in the solution."

According to Environment News Service, these three countries emit only one-tenth the amount of greenhouse gases per capita as North America. That hasn't stopped the U.S. government, which is bought and paid for by corporate lobbyists, from opposing the Kyoto Accord largely on the grounds that it doesn't demand enough of poorer countries. The corporate media, always ready to blame the Third World, is stoking the fires with dire speculation on what the world will be like when every Chinese family has a car, etc.

In fact, even though its opening of a market economy in many areas to spur development has brought grave problems to China—from

the growth of bourgeois values to a widening income gap, unemployment and horrendous conditions in its older, privatized coal mines—there is a robust environmental movement in China that has a great deal of input into government planning. (We will discuss this in our next article.)

### **Challenge facing environmental movement**

The biggest challenge facing the environmental movement here is to break free of the clutches of big capital, whose embrace is really the kiss of death. Too many of the “mature” environmental groups, like the Sierra Club, are tied in directly to the ruling class. Its library, for example, is named after William E. Colby, the first secretary of the Sierra Club and a director for 49 years. Colby launched the Accelerated Pacification Campaign during the Vietnam War and was named director of Central Intelligence by Richard Nixon in 1973.

This dependence on the largess of the very rich makes such groups look for solutions amenable to big business. It promotes the idea that the interests of the mass of people and of the billionaire owners of capital can be conciliated.

That approach may work when the object is to preserve a beautiful piece of wilderness for fortunate hikers to enjoy, or to keep a pristine lake unpolluted.

But the predicted catastrophes that will follow global warming and climate change are far too big to yield to this class-collaborationist approach. Climate change has the potential of producing disasters on a scale that we have seen only during the all-too-frequent imperialist wars of the last hundred years or so.

To politically prepare for what lies ahead, it is necessary to understand the mechanisms of the capitalist system and why even

the most illogical, anti-scientific courses of action can become the norm under the pressure of the profit needs of big capital.

## Big business and global warming: Why the fox mustn't guard the henhouse

*Deirdre Griswold, July 24, 2006*

Are exploitation and national oppression the major factors driving climate change?

Global warming is no longer a prediction. Its long-term effects are already unfolding across the planet. There are scads of scientific and news reports showing how serious it has already become for tens, if not hundreds, of millions of people.

In the literature dealing with this grave crisis, few if any references to the current social system can be found. Yet that doesn't mean it is not the basic issue that has to be addressed in order to find a solution.

Perhaps the reason the issues of class exploitation and national oppression are not discussed is because control over billions of people, their labor and resources by a few fabulously wealthy corporations and banks is taken for granted.

Since most of these mega-firms are rooted in highly developed capitalist countries and, in addition to exploiting workers at home, also super-exploit the rest of the world—creating the most malicious, self-serving and racist ideologies to justify their right to do so—the issue of social change really becomes one of overturning not just local class domination but the entire imperialist world order.

Most of the scientists and technical people dealing with the subject of global warming are looking for what they believe to be practical solutions, and the notion of changing social relations on a grand

scale is not on their agenda. Even those sympathetic to various struggles of the workers and oppressed for improvements in their conditions of life are not at this time looking to a revolutionary restructuring of the world.

Yet their own predictions as to the gravity of what is to be expected unless human economic activity is profoundly altered should drive them to look beyond the very small steps that they themselves admit are mere Band-Aids. Certainly, any social movement around this issue must tackle the question of profits versus human needs and survival.

### **Not a personal but a social problem**

However well intentioned, appeals to people on an individual basis to change their habits—"Don't drive a car," "Turn off your electric lights," "Stop being a consumer"—bring results that are trivial when measured against the problem.

If there's no adequate public transportation, if there's no attractive and affordable city planning that lets workers live close to jobs, shopping and recreation, how can they stop driving cars?

Ever since the mass production of cars began, big corporations in auto, steel, rubber and oil have deliberately prevented the U.S. government from developing an adequate mass transit system, directly leading to this country being the world's worst in emissions of greenhouse gases.

People are not "consumers" by nature. A multi-billion-dollar capitalist industry called advertising constantly works on their minds to convince them that happiness comes only through buying more products. The industry itself creates enormous waste—only a fraction of a "newspaper" is news, for example. Whole forests are

sacrificed every day to provide paper for advertising. Furthermore, trees absorb carbon from the main greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide. Their loss accelerates global warming.

Another direct corollary of class and national oppression is war. Today, wars are raging in the Middle East because the U.S. oil industry, which more than any other sector of capital controls the Bush administration and its foreign and domestic policy, wants undisputed control over that petroleum-rich era.

What is more destructive to the environment than war? Not only do the planes, ships and tanks of this giant military power contribute to global pollution, but the trillions of dollars spent on past, present and future wars is robbed from funding social programs—like housing, transportation and alternative energy—that could drastically reduce the problem of greenhouse gas emissions.

The destruction and waste built into this militarized, oppressive capitalist society dwarfs whatever energy and resources may be wasted in individual consumption.

The main issue in reining in global warming is social and political, not personal: Will economic activity continue to be based on privately owned corporate entities whose survival in the struggle for markets depends on generating ever greater profits, measured in quarterly bottom lines? Or will it be based on social ownership of all productive wealth, which then allows for broad planning geared to satisfying the long-term needs of the masses of people?

This leads directly to the question of which class will lead society—the workers, in alliance with all the oppressed, or the capitalist exploiters of their labor?

Not to take up these questions is to ignore the elephant in the room. It leads to the unscientific view that greed and inertia are “human nature” and can’t be changed. We are already hearing doomsday predictions from eminent scientists. The pessimism and despair of those who limit their outlook to a future constrained by capitalism can only grow more desperate.

### **Profiteers lied to the public**

The record of the U.S. capitalist class on global warming is undeniable.

As was pointed out in the first article in this series [[www.workers.org/2006/us/warming-0720/](http://www.workers.org/2006/us/warming-0720/)], big business in the U.S., especially companies in the energy and automobile industries, for about two decades spent hundreds of millions of dollars to discredit the scientific view that human activity—especially the combustion of fossil fuels—had created a blanket of carbon dioxide in the earth’s atmosphere that was trapping the sun’s heat. They created benign-sounding lobbying groups to disinform the public and make sure that the government didn’t impose regulations on greenhouse gas emissions or ratify the Kyoto Protocol, the only worldwide agreement to limit these emissions—and a very weak one, at that.

A year ago, the Guardian newspaper in Britain reported that State Department documents showed the Bush administration “thanking Exxon executives for the company’s ‘active involvement’ in helping to determine climate change policy, and also seeking its advice on what climate change policies the company might find acceptable.” The documents were written shortly before President George W.

Bush announced he would not sign the Kyoto Protocol. (“Revealed: how oil giant influenced Bush,” Guardian, June 8, 2005)

Not surprising, of course. The only thing surprising is that Greenpeace was able to get ahold of the government documents to prove it.

But now industry-sponsored propaganda has been thoroughly disproved by the dramatic and tangible evidences of global warming and climate change that are all around us. So some of the worst sources of disinformation—like the Global Climate Coalition, which got most of its funding from Exxon—have closed down.

In their place have come various well-funded NGOs that acknowledge global warming but promote “solutions” that will be profitable to big business. Last article, we mentioned the Pew Center on Global Climate Change. Their funding comes from the Pew family fortune, which comes from Sun Oil. There is also the Reason Foundation—which talks about “unleashing market forces” to solve global warming.

Britain’s first Special Representative on Climate Change, John Ashton, summed up the approach of these groups: “Climate change needs to be seen not as an economic threat, but an economic opportunity.”

Certainly there is much money to be made on selling autos, for example, that burn less gas. With oil prices high, more consumers want affordable hybrid cars. General Motors found out the hard way that its gas-guzzling SUVs and Hummers were losing out to lighter, more efficient vehicles.

Inventors hope to make money with new alternate-fuel devices and maybe even contraptions that remove carbon dioxide from the

atmosphere—although they haven’t figured out what to do with it once they have captured it.

The nuclear power industry hopes to make money by replacing coal-fired generating plants with nuclear.

In all of this, however, the main motivation is to make money. Push your product to make money. Ridicule the competition, bribe and even lie to prevent others from getting the contract. That’s how capitalism has always worked.

It should already be clear that, when discussing the future of the earth, decisions on how to allocate society’s resources need much more objective criteria than these.

It is precisely the drive for money and private profit on a short-term basis that has gotten humanity into this mess. And it is the control by a privileged few, who dominate even the so-called democratic political process with their huge fortunes, that prevents capitalist governments from taking the sweeping measures needed to restructure society on a rational basis.

## As floods ravage East Africa, Kenya urges action at UN climate conference

*Deirdre Griswold, November 19, 2006*

The timing could not have been more telling. Even as the United Nations' Framework Convention on Climate Change was meeting in Africa for the first time, torrential rains began to pound Kenya, the host country.

Kenya's Minister for Environment and Natural Resources Kivutha Kibwana had opened the convention on Nov. 6 with a dire warning: "Climate change is rapidly emerging as one of the most serious threats that humanity may ever face. ... We face a genuine danger that recent gains in poverty reduction will be thrown into reverse in the coming decades, particularly for the poorest people of the world and especially those in the continent of Africa."

Kibwana urged negotiators to "take concrete actions on immediate priorities."

The 6,000-plus convention delegates, representing 189 countries, then began a two-week process of debate and decision on what to do about climate change. But by Nov. 12, floods in Kenya had begun sweeping away roads and bridges and inundating towns and cropland, killing at least 20 people and displacing tens of thousands.

Just a few weeks earlier, the rains had pounded Ethiopia and Somalia to the north, also with deadly consequences. The rainy season, usually a welcome break for a region suffering from long-term drought, had turned into just another season of disaster.

"Africa is the least responsible for climate change but will be hit the hardest," Nick Nuttall, spokesperson for the United Nations Environment Program, told Inter Press Service from Nairobi.

A new report released to the convention found that 70 million people and 30 percent of Africa's coastal infrastructure face the risk of coastal flooding, linked to rising sea levels, by 2080. More than one-third of the habitats that support African wildlife could be lost. Crop yields will fall due to warmer temperatures and more intense droughts.

Less than two decades from now, some 480 million people in Africa could be living in water-scarce or water-stressed areas.

Even though today's rains are drowning Africa's eastern regions, higher temperatures are drying up the sources of water for much of the continent. For example, the summer melt from the snowcap on Mount Kilimanjaro in neighboring Tanzania has fed streams and rivers for as far back as anyone can remember. But now the snow is nearly gone and drought is killing the cattle that the Masai people at the mountain's foot rely on.

Nine years ago, the Kyoto accords were to set up a \$100 million Adaptation Fund to help poorer countries prepare for climate change. But the project has gone nowhere. There's still no agreement on who will decide how the money is spent.

According to Kimani Chege, writing for nature.com news, "The European Union, Canada and Japan are pitted against developing nations concerned that countries that have not signed the Kyoto Protocol, such as the United States, will have a say in how the fund is managed, and that the money will come with too many strings attached."

The United States, which produces 25 percent of the world's greenhouse gases that are trapping heat and causing global warming, has refused to sign even the weak Kyoto agreement.

Chege continues: "The Adaptation Fund is linked to the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism, which allows polluters to offset some of their greenhouse-gas emissions by investing in emissions-reducing projects in developing countries.

"In 2003 it was agreed that 2 percent of the proceeds from such projects would go into the fund. The fund is not yet operational, and contains only U.S. \$3 million."

Over nine years, only \$3 million has been put into a fund that is supposed to serve developing countries all over the world! In just a few hours, storm-related damage can cost much, much more than that in just one small area, draining funds away from development projects.

Chege adds, "The EU and many other industrialized nations want the fund to be administered by the Global Environment Facility, which is managed by the United Nations and the World Bank. But many developing nations oppose this, as the GEF is influenced by countries that are not party to the Kyoto Protocol [The U.S. and Australia—WW]. ...

"Developing nations also fear that funding will come with conditions similar to those commonly imposed by other multilateral funding agencies, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Typically, such conditions demand that recipients meet certain standards on good governance and human rights."

This shows the utter hypocrisy of the "human rights" stance of the major imperialist powers. When the United States was a developing

country trying to become independent, it was also a country that profited from slavery and attempted to exterminate the Native peoples. Had it been subject to the "human rights" litmus test, it could never have received the financing or military support from France that allowed it to break free of British colonial rule.

Today, Washington uses "human rights" as an excuse to hold back even the most minimal funding for a continent that is poor because its resources and even its people have been seized to enrich first the slave owners and then the capitalists of the United States and Western Europe. By any standards, the people of Africa deserve reparations, free of strings attached, to counter a problem caused by the exploiters of the world.

#### **Stern report on economic impact**

All of humanity has much to fear from global warming, according to a Review on the Economics of Climate Change released on Oct. 30 by Sir Nicholas Stern. This report, commissioned by the British government, says that unless greenhouse gas emissions are substantially reduced, there will be a loss of between 5 percent and 20 percent of global gross domestic product by 2100. But this could be avoided by spending 1 percent—about \$450 billion—per year of world GDP today to keep greenhouse gas concentrations below 550 parts per million.

Spending \$450 billion to prevent catastrophic climate change may sound like a lot, but it is less than what the Pentagon spends every year on an aggressive military tasked with maintaining the dominance of U.S. banks and corporations around the world.

By comparison, the \$3 million that the rich, exploiting countries have put into the UN Adaptation Fund so far is trifling.

If a hurricane were to strike Long Island and devastate some of the mansions there, the insurance companies would have to come up with many billions of dollars to cover the damage. One estate alone, that of Ira Rennert in Sagaponack, has been valued at \$185 million—enough to bring green development to millions of people in poorer countries.

The Stern report doesn't say it—he is, after all, “Sir” Nicholas Stern—but the problem is really imperialism and what it has done to the world.

Never before has there been such a concentration of wealth at one pole and poverty at the other. Never before has economic activity been driven so wildly by the search for greater profits, which in a capitalist society takes precedence over all other considerations.

What the Stern report does show is that a major effort by the developed countries could turn back the looming mega-disasters scientists now foresee.

To get there will take a global struggle by all committed people, especially the masses of workers and oppressed, against the present capitalist rulers of the earth.

## **U.S. biggest culprit of global warming**

*LeiLani Dowell, January 15, 2007*

The spring-like condition of the weather in the first week of January in New York had everyone talking. Flowers were blooming months early. It was the first snowless winter since 1877 (Los Angeles Times, Jan. 6), and many people were worrying about one thing: global warming.

While weathercasters reported that the recent oddities were due not to global warming but to El Niño—temperature fluctuations in surface waters of the tropical Eastern Pacific Ocean—it's not just New York that has been showing the symptoms. The Australian Bureau of Meteorology reported that 2006 saw the warmest spring there on record. Neil Plummer, senior climatologist of the bureau, said, “Most scientists agree this is part of an enhanced greenhouse gas effect. Of Australia's 20 hottest years [on record], 15 have occurred since 1980.” (Financial Times, Jan. 3)

Ted Scambos, a glaciologist with the National Snow and Ice Data Center in Boulder, Colo., reports, “From Europe, the East Coast, north to the Arctic and across to Siberia, there's a very large swath of the Northern Hemisphere for the months of September, October and November that [were] exceedingly warm.” (Washington Post, Jan. 7)

After petitions and a lawsuit from environmental groups, the Bush administration has recently proposed to put the polar bear on the threatened species list under the Endangered Species Act. In 2005, scientists found evidence that polar bears were drowning because they had to swim longer distances to find food, due to the melting of the Arctic ice shelf. (Sunday Times of Britain, Dec. 18, 2005)

On Dec. 29, the Guardian UK reported that a huge ice island had suddenly broken off from an ice shelf in the Canadian Arctic, alarming scientists who had assumed that global warming changes would occur much more gradually.

### **United States corporations guilty**

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the United States is the largest single emitter of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels, a leading cause in global warming. ([www.eia.doe.gov](http://www.eia.doe.gov)) Some state, city and local governments have passed legislation to cut emissions, as in California, New York, Washington, D.C., and Arlington, Va.

Yet the federal government has washed its hands of the issue—consistently refusing to ratify the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was originally negotiated in 1997. Signatory countries of the non-binding protocol commit to reduce their emissions of carbon dioxide and five other greenhouse gases, or provide economic incentives for reduction.

Placing the blame directly on the United States, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference filed a complaint with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights stating the United States' refusal to limit its emissions has violated the rights of the Arctic Inuit people to use their traditional lands, their rights to health and life, and to their livelihood. While the commission rejected the petition in December, Inuit leaders vow to continue the struggle to expose these violations. (Nunatsiaq News, Dec. 17)

Not only are capitalist corporations—the government's real bosses—unwilling to do anything to stop what is already becoming

a global crisis; some of them are still actively trying to mislead the public to think that global warming doesn't exist.

A Jan. 3 press release from the Union of Concerned Scientists announced their new report on "how ExxonMobil has adopted the tobacco industry's disinformation tactics, as well as some of the same organizations and personnel, to cloud the scientific understanding of climate change and delay action on the issue. According to the report, Exxon Mobil has funneled nearly \$16 million between 1998 and 2005 to a network of 43 advocacy organizations that seek to confuse the public on global warming science." The report is available at [www.ucsusa.org](http://www.ucsusa.org).

The release explains that ExxonMobil has:

- raised doubts about even the most indisputable scientific evidence;
- funded an array of front organizations to create the appearance of a broad platform for a tight-knit group of vocal climate change contrarians who misrepresent peer-reviewed scientific findings;
- attempted to portray its opposition to action as a positive quest for "sound science" rather than business self-interest;
- used its access to the Bush administration to block federal policies and shape government communications on global warming.

If ExxonMobil were a country, it would be the sixth-largest expender of global warming emissions. (AlterNet, Jan. 8)

Other corporations attempt to cover up their horrible track records on the environment by making only the paltriest efforts to help. For example, a New York Times editorial lauds Wal-Mart for pushing to sell 100 million compact fluorescent light bulbs—which use less

energy than regular light bulbs—a year. More than half the electricity in the U.S. comes from coal-burning plants, the editorial reports.

Yet from Connecticut to Washington to Pennsylvania, complaints have been filed against Wal-Mart stores for violations of water quality standards, as well as pesticide and fertilizer pollution. In Dallas, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency was willing to waive some water quality standards just for Wal-Mart stores.

While products like compact fluorescent light bulbs can provide some reprieve to the problem of global warming emissions, the largest contributors to the problem are not individuals, but these corporations. Under capitalism, they are allowed to run rampant, trampling over any rights of workers, including environmental protection, unless a struggle forces them back.

In addition, when disasters occur as a result of these policies—like Hurricanes Katrina and Rita—the U.S. government is not only ill-equipped but unwilling to deal with the consequences to the people. Recently, National Hurricane Center Director Max Mayfield stepped down from his 34-year position, saying that the United States lacked the political will to commit to the kind of hurricane preparedness that will be needed in the current highly active hurricane cycle. (Los Angeles Times, Jan. 3)

The struggle to save the planet from global warming is therefore yet another reason why capitalism must be replaced with a system that places people—and the environment that sustains them—over profits.

## Venezuela urges 'green' development in Latin America

*Berta Joubert-Ceci, Deirdre Griswold, August 13, 2007*

Caracas, Venezuela

Here in the capital of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the health of the people and of the environment is high on the agenda of the revolutionary process now underway.

Even though the developing countries of Latin America are responsible for only a small part of the enormous environmental crisis now facing the planet, there is an energy and determination here to do something about it. Venezuela's plans to restructure its economy in order to end poverty and oppression are being evaluated within the framework of sustainable, "green" development.

President Hugo Chávez has popularized this goal with the slogan "Socialism of the 21st Century."

On July 27 and 28, an International Seminar on the Environment was held here to inform the public about the grave ecological problems facing Latin America and to review the impact of outside forces on the region. The work of the seminar was covered widely on public television stations, whose programming is largely educational as opposed to the media still owned and controlled by the oligarchy.

The seminar was organized by the Venezuelan Parliamentary Group in the Latin American Parliament, known informally as Parlatino. While the Parlatino has no executive power, its work conveys moral and political authority.

The Venezuelan deputies in Parlatino have proposed a Charter on the Environment for Latin America and the Caribbean. In Venezuela, this charter has been widely discussed at seminars in a number of cities.

The session here in Caracas was the seventh in this country over the last four months. The first was also held in the capital; others took place in Maracay, Mérida, Puerto la Cruz, Amazonas and Maracaibo. They have had a profound impact, raising public consciousness on the gravity of environmental issues.

The first day of the most recent Caracas session was held in the Parlatino building and was opened by its alternate president, Amilcar Figueroa. Deputies from more than a dozen other countries participated.

Many specialists presented the latest scientific information on how pollution, overuse of natural resources and climate change are affecting the countries of Latin America, which is the most biologically diverse region in the world and also is home to 472 distinct ethnic groups.

Many of the last unspoiled areas on the planet are in Latin America—particularly in the Amazon basin, parts of the Andes and in the far south of the continent. But they are now in danger, especially because of deforestation and climate change.

From 1980 to 1990, Latin America lost 6 percent of its forests—an estimate that may reflect only half the real damage, according to Dr. José Monente, one of the presenters. Some 80 percent of the fishing areas in the southern Atlantic have been overexploited, and now fish stocks are declining along the Pacific coast as well.

As of the year 2000, 380 million people lived in urban areas of the region, many of which have become megacities in which pollution, unemployment and extreme poverty are concentrated.

In recent years, climate change has brought severe weather with devastating floods, mudslides and windstorms in which 45,000 people have been killed. Areas of drought are spreading, even in the Amazon, because of deforestation.

However, if properly managed, just 4 percent of the land area could feed all the people of the region by the year 2030.

### **Need for regional integration**

Manuel Briceño Méndez, a deputy in Venezuela's National Assembly, pointed out that, in order to achieve sustainable development, the countries of Latin America need regional integration based on sovereignty, equality and inclusion.

Parlatino Deputy Hamlin Jordan gave a fact-filled presentation that showed very clearly the origins of Latin America's problems.

The region has contributed only 5 percent of the atmospheric carbon dioxide gas that is the major factor in global warming. In fact, 88 percent of the world's greenhouse gases were generated by countries with just 20 percent of the world's population—and they are almost all countries where capitalist industrialization led to colonial and imperialist expansion.

The government of the U.S., the country that is by far the largest contributor to global warming, has refused to sign international agreements limiting carbon dioxide emissions.

Jordan showed in facts and figures how the economy of Latin America has been controlled by the imperialist powers.

In 1982, the external debt of all the Latin American countries amounted to \$300 billion. Fourteen years later, even though some \$739 billion had been repaid in that time, these countries were deeper in debt than ever, to the tune of \$607 billion. All these countries were at one time colonies and have vastly enriched the imperialist powers of the U.S. and Europe.

Jordan reiterated Venezuela's proposal that, to break this financial stranglehold, an Environmental Bank for Latin America and the Caribbean be established. This proposal is but one of many contained in the Charter on the Environment.

The charter was introduced last November by José Gregorio Hernández, president of the Commission on the Environment and Tourism of the Venezuelan Parliamentary Group in Parlatino.

At that time, he explained that the charter was "born at a time when the planet is at a critical point in its evolution and humanity must choose what path to follow. This initiative will be a legal instrument that encompasses the values, principles and ethics that can orient our efforts toward the adoption of a common framework that guarantees us a sustainable future environment, by speaking in one voice for a healthy and secure environment, for the development of green cities, for the struggle against climate change and for the conservation of biodiversity. ...

"This instrument will be a reply by which the impoverished countries of the region can, on the one hand, promote a humane and sustainable development, and, on the other, ... demand reparations for the social debt, historical and ecological, that the enriched countries have contracted with them."

### **Overflow audience in Altamira**

On the second day of the seminar, many of the same deputies and scientists spoke to a much larger audience at the University College of Caracas. This school is in Altamira, a wealthy neighborhood where many of the demonstrations opposing President Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution have occurred.

The hall was packed to overflowing with young and old as the presenters, using PowerPoint slides to emphasize their main points, went over much of the information presented earlier at the Parlatino.

In addition, a report described Misión Árbol, an educational project on the importance of reforestation that enlisted popular participation last year in the planting of 4.26 million trees.

Engineer Rodolfo Roa discussed Venezuela's plans to increase its hydroelectric power in the near future to a point where 71 percent of the country's energy needs will be provided by this renewable source. While Venezuela has vast oil deposits, it is using some of the proceeds from its petroleum to finance the greening of its infrastructure.

An important theme of the seminar was Venezuela's rejection of the capitalist model of development and its refusal to accept the plan whereby rich imperialist countries that should be cutting down their carbon dioxide emissions could instead buy greenhouse gas quotas from cash-poor countries.

A highlight of this final session was a talk by Piedad Córdoba, an Afro-Colombian senator who represents the area of El Choco. She alerted the audience to the displacement of many people on Colombia's Pacific coast, where large tracts have been cleared by

the aerial spraying of chemicals provided by the U.S. company Monsanto, maker of the herbicide “Round-Up.” Destruction caused by heavy rains in the area has been made worse by the killing off of the native vegetation.

Where once Indigenous communities existed, she said, large plantations have been set up to grow African palm trees and other cash crops. In an ironic twist, some are owned by paramilitaries employed by drug lords. The “fumigation” of the area, which has been part of Washington’s “Plan Colombia,” was supposedly to eradicate coca plants, which can be a source of cocaine.

A final report came from Dr. José A. Díaz Duque, a deputy from Cuba who described that socialist country’s extensive planning to reduce the impact of natural disasters. Díaz stressed that climate change is a fact that is already having a serious impact, especially on the countries of the Caribbean. His charts showed how every neighborhood in Cuba is organized, ready to respond instantly if a hurricane warning is given. Cuba also has sensors in place to alert scientists to possible earthquakes.

Because of Cuba’s ability to mobilize the people so quickly and move them to safer areas, deaths there from severe storms in recent years have been miniscule, compared to hundreds and even thousands of fatalities in neighboring countries.

Great changes are taking place today in much of Latin America. Where pessimism and resignation about the future of the planet seem to reign in much of the world, here in Bolivarian Venezuela there is optimism that any problem can be tackled if the people are aroused, educated and organized.

## **Gore and the Nobel Prize: ‘Green’ polluters get a boost**

*Deirdre Griswold, October 22, 2007*

Will it really help save the planet from environmental ruin that former Vice President Al Gore has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, along with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change?

That might seem like a strange question. So let’s ask another: Has it helped stop illegal and predatory imperialist wars that Jimmy Carter got the prize in 2002; that Yasser Arafat had to share it in 1994 with Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin of Israel; that Nelson Mandela was awarded it jointly with F.W. de Klerk of apartheid South Africa in 1993; or that Le Duc Tho had to share it with Henry Kissinger in 1973?

If the Nobel Peace Prize has stood for anything, it is rehabilitating war makers who have finally decided to pull back from their bloody adventures after being forced to do so by the incredible heroism of mass struggle. The imperialist military is then free to rebuild itself in order to strike out again when political conditions are more favorable.

The awarding of peace prizes to both sides in these conflicts was meant to hide the truth: that a national liberation struggle for sovereignty and independence has nothing in common with an imperialist bloodbath for neocolonies, resources and cheap labor. It is the de Klerks, Kissingers and Carters who are rehabilitated by being associated in the popular mind with real heroes of the peoples’ resistance.

However, this time the recipients are not associated with any particular war—certainly not the all-out attack on Yugoslavia by the

U.S. Air Force during the Clinton-Gore presidency and the dismembering of that socialist country.

Gore and the IPCC have been given the peace prize for their work in raising awareness about global warming.

It is certainly true that Gore's book and popular film "An Inconvenient Truth" shook up a lot of people about the dangers of melting polar ice caps and glaciers, rising sea temperatures leading to more powerful hurricanes and typhoons, and the widespread and unpredictable effects on climate—including droughts as well as floods—that can result from the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Yet while Gore's film painted the picture of a looming catastrophe for the planet and all its inhabitants, it had very little to say about how to stop it. Buy low-wattage light bulbs. Ride a bike to work or school. Invest in green industries.

Nevertheless, the extreme right wing in the U.S. is frothing at the mouth about him receiving the Nobel, as can be seen in the many on-line comments on this subject.

Gore, of course, is not a scientist. He is a politician who has taken up the issue of global warming since losing the presidential election to George W. Bush in 2000—even though he got a clear majority of the popular vote and there was undeniable exclusion of African-American voters that cost him the key state of Florida. But he didn't put up a fight when a rightwing-dominated Supreme Court gave Bush the election.

So Gore, who happens to be an heir to a family fortune built on oil—his father was very close to Armand Hammer of Occidental Petroleum—found himself without a job.

### **From denial to cooptation**

Two decades ago, the early reaction of the huge transnational corporations to the news of global warming, especially the ones related to energy, was to mount a well-financed campaign of denial. They feared being forced to cut back production—and lose profits.

In 1988, 300 scientists and policy makers from 48 countries met and issued the first call to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. The next year, 50 oil, gas, coal, automobile and chemical manufacturing companies and their trade associations formed the Global Change Coalition. For a decade, the GCC lobbied politicians—a legal form of bribery—and placed "experts" in the media who pooh-poohed global warming.

The GCC disbanded in 2000, although its members would lobby the new Bush administration against signing the Kyoto Accords. State Department briefing papers obtained by Greenpeace showed the administration thanking executives of Exxon- Mobil, the world's largest oil company valued at close to \$400 billion, for the firm's "active involvement" in helping determine the U.S. government's climate change policy. (The Guardian, June 8, 2005)

But by the time Gore was looking for something to do, the evidence of climate change was undeniable. Big money had to change its tactic. It made the adjustment to "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em."

So-called green development is now a huge international industry. There are several ways capitalists can make money while supposedly putting a dent in global warming.

One is through the market for carbon credits. The Kyoto Accords put a "cap" on greenhouse gas emissions that is intended to modestly reduce them by 2012. The United States did not sign the accords

but some state and local authorities have decided to regulate emissions. Wherever these “caps” exist in the world, polluting companies can legally exceed them if they buy carbon credits—the right to emit x amount of carbon dioxide. The credits are bought from other companies or even from countries which don’t exceed the imposed limits or which take an action—like planting trees—that sops up carbon dioxide from the air.

Generally, it is poor, developing countries that are being pressured to sell their credits—and forgo development—to polluting, richer countries.

Selling carbon credits now is a very, very big business.

The newly created Environmental Markets Network advocates for “market-based economic solutions to global environmental and climate issues.” In January it was announced that Jon Anda, a vice chairperson in charge of global capital markets at the investment banking firm of Morgan Stanley, was leaving his job there to become president of EMN.

A release from the new firm said that EMN would “focus on climate change legislation, where a cap on greenhouse gas emissions and a sound trading system offer a roadmap for economic growth and sound environmental policy.”

EMN is a spinoff of Environmental Defense, which in 2000 joined with a group of companies that had left the global-warming-denying GCC: DuPont, British Petroleum, Shell, Suncor, Alcan and Ontario Power Generation, as well as the French aluminum manufacturer Pechiney.

The board of directors of Environmental Defense has included executives from Morgan Stanley as well as the Pew Center for

Global Climate Change—funded by the Pew family of Sun Oil fame, the Bush-connected Carlyle Group, Berkshire Partners and Carbon Investments. (“The Corporate Climate Coup,” ZNet, May 8)

This rush of the biggest and most polluting transnationals into setting up organizations that will supposedly save the world should give anyone with a progressive bone in their body pause.

### **‘Green finance’**

The business publication Euromoney focused its September issue on “green finance,” interviewing “the thought-leaders at the world’s largest banks about their strategies to assist in—and benefit from—the challenge of climate change.”

Featured was an interview with Gore, who told the magazine, “Markets are the key to climate change.”

Gore had teamed up with Goldman Sachs executives David Blood, Peter Harris and Mark Ferguson to establish the London-based environment investment firm Generation Investment Management, with Gore and Blood (honestly!) at its helm. In May 2005, Gore, representing GIM, addressed the Institutional Investor Summit on Climate Risk and emphasized the need for investors to think in the long term and to integrate environmental issues into their equity analyses.

“I believe that integrating the issues relating to climate change into your analysis of what stocks are worth investing in, how much, and for how long, is simply good business,” Gore explained to the assembled investors. Applauding a decision to move in this direction, announced the day before by General Electric CEO Jeff Immelt, Gore declared that, “We are here at an extraordinarily

hopeful moment ... when the leaders in the business sector begin to make their moves.” (ZNet)

What Gore’s Nobel Prize underscores is that the biggest banks and corporations have moved, and are now up to their eyeballs in schemes to make “green” money.

Many people, especially those saturated by the U.S. monoculture that touts capitalism as the best of all possible worlds, will say, “What’s wrong with that? If they make money while solving global warming, why should I worry?”

Let’s look at the track record of these corporations once again.

They said technological change would eliminate hard, dangerous jobs and make everyone middle class. Instead, it has enriched the wealthiest one-tenth of one percent of the population beyond their wildest dreams, while leaving poverty intact and festering and more workers in minimum-wage jobs.

They said we didn’t need socialized medicine, where everyone gets free health care like in Cuba, or even a single-payer plan like the ones in capitalist Europe. The market would take care of it. Now U.S. medical care is the most expensive in the world, 47 million people here have no coverage, and the owners of the pharmaceuticals, HMOs and medical supply companies are among that richest one-tenth of one percent. The United States ranks 41st in the world in women surviving their pregnancies while babies born in the U.S. are three times more likely to die in their first month than babies born in Japan. (Save the Children report, May 10)

They convinced millions of workers to buy homes with ballooning mortgage rates, saying they could always refinance as the market

went up. The market went down and 2 million families face the loss of their homes this year.

They said nuclear power was going to provide cheap, limitless energy for everyone. It proved so dangerous and costly that the big money went back to coal and oil and left the radioactive mess behind for the government to clean up.

In all these cases, the rich get richer while the problems continue.

Now they’re saying that investing green will save the world from the pollution they have caused.

### **‘Climate change? Social change!’**

While many of the well-funded, mainstream environmental groups have bought into the view that nothing can be done without cooperating with the profiteers, not everyone concerned about climate change takes that view.

Take, for instance, the Durban Group for Climate Justice, formed in South Africa. It describes itself as “an international network of independent organizations, individuals and people’s movements who reject the free market approach to climate change. We are committed to help build a global grassroots movement for climate justice, mobilize communities around the world and pledge our solidarity with people opposing carbon trading on the ground.”

An associated group, Global Justice Ecology Project, says that large-scale production of biofuels, carbon trading and carbon offset forestry are “false solutions to climate change.” On the production of biofuels, which divert food crops into fuel production and are one of the hottest items on the corporate agenda these days, it says: “The stage is now set for direct competition for grain between the

800 million people who own automobiles and the world's 2 billion poorest people.”

And it quotes the Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement: “The only goal [of biofuels] is to maintain current patterns of consumption in the First World and high rates of profit for multinational corporations.”

It is the poorest and most oppressed who are already suffering the most from climate change—be they in New Orleans and Mississippi or in African countries hit, paradoxically, by both record droughts and floods.

The slogan of the Durban group is “Climate change? Social change!”

That is the right track. To bring the planet back into balance again, the means of production must be liberated from the class whose personal profit has been the driving motive of technological change for several centuries now.

Science and technology are not to blame. It is the social system under which they have developed that has perverted technology from its original purpose: to solve humanity's problems in the struggle to survive and flourish. Capitalism has been one headlong rush to produce more and more, create markets where none existed before, and even destroy other countries' industries in order to profit from rebuilding them.

Gore can never oppose this system—he is an advocate for it and a son of the ruling class.

Grassroots groups that work with the landless, the hurricane survivors, the villagers fighting Occidental Petroleum in Colombia, and the hungry deprived of food by biofuel production may never

get the money and publicity now flowing to Gore's projects, but they are the true environmentalists. They will be an integral part of the growing class struggle for a socialist system that totally reorganizes modern life, building mass transit, not Hummers; schools, not bombs; and energy-saving housing, not estates for the rich.

## Why mass struggle, not corporate profit, is Green

*Deirdre Griswold, November 18, 2007*

*Talk of Workers World Party Secretariat member Deirdre Griswold to the Party's National Conference on Nov. 18, 2007.*

Thanks to Comrade Teresa's remarks yesterday, I don't have to explain how serious a problem global warming is—you already know that. In fact, there's so much news about climate change—plus the disaster movies Teresa talked about—that many people are either numb or depressed by it all.

We all have seen what happened to the people of New Orleans and the Gulf after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The Southeast is having its worst drought on record. The city of Atlanta, Ga., with more than 5 million people in the metro area, is running out of water.

Climate change can't be denied any more. Up until five years ago, those companies selling fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas carried out a vigorous campaign to deny that human activity had anything to do with global warming, or that it existed at all. They spent millions of dollars setting up groups with names like Global Climate Information Project and the Greening Earth Society, whose so-called experts pooh-poohed the idea of global warming and got lots of exposure in the corporate media.

Politicians used this to justify not signing even the weak Kyoto Accords, which put some limits on emissions of carbon dioxide, the main atmospheric gas causing the earth to heat up.

The U.S. became a subject of ridicule and hatred all over the world for being the country most responsible for global warming while

refusing to do anything about it. Scientists here, even those with high-ranking jobs in the scientific establishment, like the head of NASA, began to revolt against the government's policies.

So the big corporations in the United States have come up with a new strategy. Everyone who is progressive needs to be aware that today, big business is trying to take over the Green movement.

Instead of funding organizations that deny global warming, today some of the biggest corporations, including the oil companies, are funding groups that say, "Yes, climate change is a big problem, but the only way to deal with it is through the capitalist market." And a lot of the more conservative environmental groups are buying into this.

This is why Al Gore got the Nobel Prize this year. Gore comes from Big Oil—his family fortune is with Occidental Petroleum. When he was in the Clinton White House, he and then Energy Secretary Bill Richardson pushed through deals for Oxy in Colombia—where community leaders have since been murdered for resisting the pollution and exploitation by Oxy and other transnationals.

Now Gore is seen as a great environmentalist—but one who says the answer to global warming is the market. This is also the position of the Clintons and of Rupert Murdoch—the multi-billionaire media mogul who owns Fox News, the Wall Street Journal, the New York Post, and hundreds of other generally right-wing newspapers, TV and radio stations and networks all over the globe. This reactionary now raises funds for Gore.

What's wrong with this outlook? Isn't it good if the auto companies develop more fuel-efficient cars? Isn't it good that there's a whole section of the stock exchange called "Green Finance" because the

companies that trade there are focused on more energy-efficient products?

There are three things we need to look at in this argument:

First, is this about solving the problem of global warming, or is this all about selling new products and making more profits? The automobile market is glutted. So, convince people they have to buy new cars that burn ethanol—even though ethanol, mostly from corn, takes cropland away from food production and drives up food prices.

Second, huge corporate lobbies now are focused on getting government funds to develop these new products. But private industry will make the profits.

This, of course, is how the U.S. entered the nuclear age. The government developed nuclear bombs and nuclear energy, then let private companies make money off of both of them. That, too, was supposed to solve the energy problem.

The billionaire mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg, proposes a carbon tax to pay for all this that will raise the price of gasoline. He says: “Green energy is going to be the oil gusher of the 21st century.” And I guess he wants to be the new Rockefeller.

Who supports Bloomberg’s tax? Its supporters include “business groups and even the companies that emit carbon dioxide and would be the most directly affected. The revenue from a carbon tax could be used to reduce the deficit [help the banks] or to finance cuts in income taxes [help the rich] or the alternative minimum tax.” (New York Times, Nov. 2)

When companies have to pay higher taxes, they pass the cost on to consumers—the workers. They’re already paying high gas prices, but have to drive to work because there’s no decent public transportation.

Another corporate scheme is called cap-and-trade. Companies would be given a quota to pollute X amount. Those who pollute the most can buy the emissions quotas of companies that pollute less.

Schemes like these boil down to how capitalists can make money off this global crisis and how they can shift the cost of cleaning the environment away from the corporations responsible for it and onto the workers.

The last question is: will all this turn back global warming? Or is it all too little and too late?

Actually, all the scientific projections show that, even if emissions don’t keep rising—which they are expected to do—the temperature of the earth will still rise drastically over this century.

Things are going to change a great deal. Will it mean the end of life on this planet, or the end of human society? No, no, no. The history of the planet is one of great changes—not usually this sudden, but ones with profound effects, yet humanity survived. Human beings are the most adaptable species on the globe. But global warming will cause great suffering. And it will put enormous strains on existing social institutions.

The poorest will suffer the most. We have seen this in New Orleans, and recently in Haiti and the Dominican Republic where hundreds died in Hurricane Noel.

Global warming is a class issue and it is an issue of national oppression. Those most affected are the workers and the oppressed nations, including the oppressed Black, Latin@ and Native nations inside the U.S. As long as we live in a capitalist society, the wealthy will be better equipped to avoid its worst consequences. Sure, they might lose a beautiful beachside home to rising sea levels, but they'll have other houses and they'll have the money to get out when it gets dangerous. And what do rising gasoline prices mean to those who drive limos and private jets and whose incomes are hundreds of times what workers earn?

Global warming will add more fuel to the explosion of class struggle that is coming.

And it's a class issue for another reason. The perilous state of the earth's health didn't happen just because of technology and modern industry. It happened because of capitalism. The earth has been degraded because, for 200 years, technology and industry have expanded wildly, without restraint, without a plan, purely to grow the profits of the capitalist owning class. What people need and what capitalism produces are two completely different things.

We need the rebuilding of our cities with fuel-efficient, well-insulated affordable housing and parks and green space to cool us in the summer.

We need a three-day work week! That would save a lot on commuting right there. And parents could get to stay with their kids on alternate days. We need public transportation and bike paths to get around, instead of wars to control the world's oil.

Will private capital do any of this? Not in a million years, and we don't have that long.

Some want to go back to a pre-industrial era. You couldn't do that without killing off most of the earth's people. The answer is not to go back—technology is here to stay. But we have to take technology out of the hands of private owners who are driven by the greed for profit and use it for the good of humanity and the earth. The answer is socialism.

Cuba shows how a socialist society can continue to develop for the good of the people even when there's a drastic reduction in material resources. After the Soviet Union fell in 1991, Cuba was forced to find more sustainable ways to feed the people—without artificial fertilizers and pesticides—and keep the economy going with far less oil and electricity. In this special period, Cuba felt the full destructive force of the U.S. economic blockade. Yet, even though its economy almost collapsed in the early 1990s, it didn't fall apart because of the bond between the people and their revolutionary leadership. The Cuban people put their heads together and reorganized everything, thus beginning a slow but steady climb out of extreme scarcity.

Today, Cuba leads the world in sustainable development. In fact, it's the ONLY country in the world where the people are making progress—in education, health, culture, making sure everyone's basic necessities are met—without degrading the environment. Don't take my word for it. That is the conclusion of a recent study by the Global Footprint Network, which looks at both the environmental impact of a country and whether the lives of the people there are improving. Some countries don't have a heavy "footprint"—that is, they don't affect nature very much—because they're so poor that they have no industry, no big cities, etc. Others,

like the United States, are rich (although with a lot of very poor people) but are literally ruining the world with pollution of all kinds.

Socialist Cuba is the only country in the whole world that is both making progress and protecting its environment.

And Cuba has done something else—something we must demand for this country and the world. It has worked out detailed plans to protect the people from natural disasters. The UN says it leads the world in this type of civil defense.

Let me ask everyone here: if your home were to be hit by a hurricane, or a tornado, or a terrible flood, would you know where to go? Would the government help you evacuate if you were sick, or disabled? Would it provide transportation to take you to a place to stay, make sure you were fed, and then get you back home again when the danger had passed?

In Cuba, all that happens every time a hurricane hits. And because of it, when Hurricane Noel last month caused more than 200 deaths in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, not one person died in Cuba.

Finally, is there time to heal the earth before utter catastrophe? In talks yesterday, we explained that in just two decades, imperialism has totally restructured the global economy in order to reduce wages and exploit workers all over the globe. In a workers' world, a socialist world, our class can beat their record and turn this disaster around. Global warming will be a major factor in convincing all forward-thinking people that the destruction of capitalism and the revolutionary reorganization of society is an absolute necessity.

## **Bali: Washington sabotages climate conference**

*Deirdre Griswold, December 20, 2007*

The “unborn children” that the Bush administration professes to care so much about have yet another reason to curse this reactionary imperialist government. It has again dissed the world, especially future generations, by throwing a monkey wrench into plans worked out by thousands of scientists and officials to get all the countries in the world to agree on limiting greenhouse gas emissions.

It happened during the first two weeks of December at the United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Bali, Indonesia.

Ministers and government heads attended from nearly 190 countries, most of which already have seen extreme weather events directly linked to global warming. They had been warned by scientists that urgent action is required.

In August the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, which brought together both scientists and officials, had announced that the window of opportunity to prevent catastrophic changes to the planet's climate is narrowing rapidly. Greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced between 25 and 40 percent by 2020, said the UNFCCC, or many changes may become irreversible, leading to massive extinctions of animal and plant species and economic havoc in many parts of the world.

In November the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which was recently awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, reaffirmed that view, issuing urgent warnings that a commitment must be made to turn things around and begin reducing greenhouse gases within 10 to 15 years.

But no action was adopted at the December meeting in Bali, despite two weeks of discussion.

The major roadblock, as has happened before, was the U.S. government, which at first refused to be part of any global action at all. The United States is the country most responsible for global warming.

Finally, at the very end, the delegation from Washington signed on to the weakest possible resolution: that it would take part in more discussions over the next two years. The scientists' proposal that mandatory limits be placed on emissions was reduced to nothing but a footnote reference in the final document. That Washington agreed to anything at all was written up in the U.S. corporate media as though it were a big concession.

Among the 11,000 people present at this conference were many from NGOs that state their mission is to protect the interests of the poor of the world. For the first time, and largely because of their presence, much of the discussion focused not only on the science and technology of climate change but also on how to deal with the terrible social consequences of drought, floods, severe storms and other climate events that are predicted to grow worse in the poorest areas: drought in Africa, floods in South Asia and Latin America, melting of the permafrost in the Far North and the virtual disappearance of many island nations as sea levels rise.

Also under discussion was how to reduce emissions while promoting sustainable development in poorer countries. So far, according to the Global Footprint Network, only one country in the world—socialist Cuba—has been able to build up its infrastructure and raise the people's educational and health levels without

impacting adversely on the environment. Among the proposals at the Bali meeting was an "Adaptation Fund" that would provide some help to developing countries having to deal with dramatic changes in the environment.

A side meeting organized by developing countries heard an analysis by some of the social groups present that "revealed the depth of inequity the poor would face from some of the solutions that were being discussed," commented Pakistani ambassador Munir Akram, who currently chairs the G-77 plus China group. (Inter Press Service, Dec. 17)

That meeting drove home the message that there was a "missing perspective in the discussion" of the official conference, said Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, the Asian regional policy coordinator for Action Aid. "It can no more be limited to a discussion only about the environment. What we have in Bali are questions about politics and power, like the issues of trade and finance being taken up. That is why we are here."

Action Aid, which originated in South Africa, used the conference in Bali to raise the perspective of "environmental justice." The approaches being pushed by the wealthy imperialist countries would leave the underdeveloped countries—made that way by years of colonial domination and plunder—to take the brunt of climate change with the fewest resources.

### **How can this happen?**

It is hard to imagine a more urgent and universal problem than global climate change. Scientists are no longer ambiguous or doubtful about it; rather, they are crying out in anguish that work must start immediately to turn the clock back before it is too late.

Moreover, polls have shown that most people in the United States are aware of the dangers and are willing to support measures and regulations that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Indeed, whole new industries are now selling products that supposedly will benefit the environment—although they amount to little more than a drop in the bucket.

On the government level, however, nothing much seems to happen. And each year the scientific projections keep getting more ominous.

To understand this criminal dilly-dallying one must look beyond the personality of George W. Bush and his immediate cronies to the record of U.S. imperialism's impact on the world over many generations. Take the beautiful island of Bali, for example, where the conference was held.

Just a little over four decades ago, in 1965 and 1966, the streams and rivers of Bali ran red with the blood of communists and nationalists when the Indonesian military overthrew the Sukarno government and installed General Suharto as the new ruler. Even the U.S. media admitted that the fascist coup killed upwards of 1 million people.

The generals had the blessings and material support of the CIA and the Lyndon B. Johnson administration in Washington.

On Bali, an estimated one-tenth of the population was slaughtered as the military went from village to village, picking out the activists—students, workers, farmers, women—and killing them.

The Suharto regime did exactly what U.S. big business wanted. It opened up the vast territory of Indonesia to breakneck exploitation. Vast fortunes were made by transnational corporations that

pumped out the oil, cut down the mighty rainforests, and established factories where once there were green fields.

Bali and other islands were developed as havens for wealthy tourists. The mangrove swamps that had protected the shoreline were cut down to create beachfront hotels—some of which were washed away in the terrible tsunami of 2004.

The generals took their cut of this “development,” but the lion's share went to wealthy investors in the West.

Global warming and climate change are the heritage of centuries of this kind of imperialist plunder of the earth's people and resources, which frequently brings the added devastation of war, as we see today in Iraq and Afghanistan. All the suffering, all the crimes carried out by the capitalists and their agents have never yielded to conferences and discussions, no matter how well meaning. They have the power and they use it primarily to secure the profits that keep their system going. Everything else is window dressing.

The grim prospect of global climate change can only deepen the revolutionary mass struggle to bring down capitalism that is surely coming. It must be replaced with a socialist planned economy, like Cuba's, that can bring about human development for all, free of the rapacious and destructive profit motive.

## Midwest floods & crumbling levees: Why capitalism can't deal with global warming

*LeiLani Dowell, June 19, 2008*

A series of flooding, storms and tornadoes throughout the Midwest has once again called attention to the crumbling nature of U.S. public infrastructure and the increasing crisis of global warming.

At least 15 deaths in the Midwest and elsewhere have been attributed to the recent weather that has hit the region. People have been displaced from their homes in the thousands in Indiana and the tens of thousands in Iowa. Power outages have occurred in Michigan, Ohio and Iowa, while in some areas, people have been required to limit their water usage to drinking only.

Reminiscent of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, levees broke throughout the region. Two levees broke on June 14 near Keithsburg, Ill., near the Mississippi River, and emergency workers and residents have been fervently trying to reinforce nearly 30 levees along that river before they too break. Another levee broke along the Iowa River, flooding the community of Oakville, Iowa. And in Wisconsin, an embankment along a human-made lake broke, washing out a highway and five homes.

A levee in Des Moines, Iowa, burst on June 14, flooding part of the city's northeast side. According to Des Moines Public Works Director Bill Stowe, the city had been seeking federal approval to reconstruct that levee, which was built in the 1950s. (Washington Post online, June 14)

The American Society of Civil Engineers, in its 2005 Report Card for America's Infrastructure, gave the U.S. an overall failing grade of D, with grades of D+ or less in the categories of aviation, dams,

drinking water, energy, hazardous waste, navigable waterways, roads, schools, transit and wastewater. Their Web site, updated for 2008, states, "Establishing a long-term development and maintenance plan must become a national priority." (www.asce.org)

Happening during an overall economic crisis, the poor will be bearing the brunt of this disaster—not only in the Midwest, but everywhere. The price of corn, a staple food, jumped to a record \$7 a bushel after the floods destroyed crops in the Midwest.

In Iowa, Gov. Chet Culver has requested federal disaster status for 83 of the 99 counties there, so that the Federal Emergency Management Administration can provide food, water and other resources and individuals can request individual assistance. Whether or not FEMA will neglect the people of these Midwest states—as it did the people of New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita—remains to be seen.

### **Global warming a reality, not a threat**

The recent surge in natural disasters such as tornadoes and other extreme weather events speaks to the fact that global warming is increasing their threat and intensity.

In Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the National Weather Service reported on June 12 that the Cedar River was expected to reach a record crest a staggering 12 feet higher than the previous record, which was set more than 150 years ago in 1851. Jeff Zogg, a hydrologist for the Weather Service in Davenport, Iowa, told the New York Times, "Usually if you break a record, you only do it by an inch or two." (June 13)

At the same time that flooding was occurring in the Midwest, the East Coast was experiencing a rash of heat waves from North Carolina to New Hampshire, with record temperatures in New York. According to the National Weather Service, heat is the primary weather-related killer, accounting for 1,500 deaths in the U.S. annually. (New York Times, June 10)

The World Health Organization made climate change the theme of World Health Day on April 7. A statement by WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan asserts: "Climate change endangers health in fundamental ways. ... The effects of extreme weather events—more storms, floods, droughts and heat waves—will be abrupt and acutely felt. Both trends can affect some of the most fundamental determinants of health: air, water, food, shelter, and freedom from disease. ... In short, climate change can affect problems that are already huge, largely concentrated in the developing world, and difficult to combat."

The utter lack of planning or accountability for human needs under capitalism has created both an environmental crisis that will lead to even more natural disasters and an infrastructure that is unable to cope with them. The prospects are ominous for people in the U.S. and throughout the world.

However, there is an alternative. The planning and response to natural disasters in some socialist countries show a way forward.

In Cuba—which according to the Global Footprint Network is the only country that has built its infrastructure and raised educational and health levels without adversely impacting the environment—hurricanes are frequent, yet lives are seldom lost. In China, the

entire government has responded with urgency and resources for earthquake survivors.

These two examples show just a glimpse of how socialism, based on people's needs and not profit, can better handle the damage to the environment and also turn it around.

## **Midwest floods are another wakeup call: Capitalist gov't does little as climate disasters grow**

*LeiLani Dowell, June 26, 2008*

The floodwaters caused by extreme weather are receding in the upper Midwest, but they have left behind at least 24 people killed and 148 injured. As of June 24, some 35,000 had been displaced from their homes and lost all their possessions. Between southern Iowa and St. Louis, the water had topped or breached 31 levees along the Mississippi River. More flooding may still occur further downstream along the Mississippi.

Volunteers from the community, people returning to their homes and emergency workers face a toxic cocktail of manure, pesticides, mold and raw sewage in the waters surrounding them, not to mention swarms of mosquitoes. It is estimated that it will take days and even weeks for the floodwaters to totally recede.

The floods have resulted in record-high corn prices. About one quarter of the corn crop had already been diverted to the production of ethanol in the past two years. Corn is not only a staple found in many food products consumed throughout the world but is also the primary feed used for raising livestock. The prices of chicken, pork and beef are also expected to increase.

An estimated 4 million acres of prime farmland have been washed out by the floods, and analysts predict that the area may produce 15 percent less corn than last year. In what will probably turn out to be a stunning underestimate, the federal government predicts that food prices will rise by 5.5 percent this year.

As climate change threatens to increase the occurrence and severity of extreme weather events on the planet, the recent storms and flooding in the Midwest have shown how the lack of planning under capitalism can have exponentially devastating consequences.

### **Capitalist development leads to deadlier rivers**

Even the most openly capitalist of all the newspapers, the Wall Street Journal, reports that a push for development which paved over wetlands and flood plains in the St. Louis area has increased the likeliness of huge floods there. "Since the historic flood of 1993, nearly 30,000 homes have been built on land that was underwater around the Mississippi and Missouri rivers near St. Louis," the Journal states. "By building along the riverbanks and forcing the Mississippi into a bed that is less than half the width of where it ran a century ago, residents are displacing water and forcing the river to run faster and higher." (June 19)

The increase in development along riverbanks has led, in turn, to an increase in the construction of levees. However, these same levees channel runoff water back into the river, raising the water level once again.

The results can be found in the record-breaking flood levels seen recently. During the big floods of 1993, the Mississippi River crested 12 feet higher than it did during the floods of 1903, even though the same amount of water washed down the river. During the floods this month, the Cedar River in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, crested 12 feet higher than the previous record in 1851. Record flooding has been reported this year at 12 locations on four Iowa rivers.

Many of those who lost their homes in the recent floods, instilled with a false sense of security due to nearby levees, did not have

flood insurance. In Gulfport, Ill., a town that was completely flooded over in recent weeks, the Federal Emergency Management Agency had rated two levees as sufficient to withstand a 100-year flood (a flood that has a one in 100 chance of happening in any given year). As a result, only 28 of the 200 residents there had flood insurance.

The problem is compounded by a lack of comprehensive planning when it comes to the building and maintenance of the levees, which are controlled by a hodgepodge of federal, local, county and state officials, and even individual community members.

A recommendation by a committee of experts, after the 1993 floods, to put all levees under federal jurisdiction was never enacted. Some of the levees have not even been recorded by federal officials. This lack of coordination makes it difficult to accurately predict where water levels will break over the levees.

Dr. Gerald G. Galloway, Jr., chairperson of the committee and a former brigadier general with the Army Corps of Engineers, told the New York Times that after Hurricane Katrina Congress passed a bill to inventory and inspect levees, but neglected to provide enough money to do so. (June 22)

Meanwhile, a lack of funding has forced the U.S. Geological Survey to discontinue hundreds of stream flow gauges across the country, making flood prediction increasingly difficult.

### **Profits over people in agricultural production**

Even more lack of foresight can be seen in the profit pressures that have shaped capitalist agriculture in the region. The Washington Post reports, "Some Iowans who study the environment suspect that changes in the land, both recently and over the past century or

so, have made Iowa's terrain not only highly profitable but highly vulnerable to flooding." (June 19)

Natural characteristics of the land that served to absorb water have often been replaced with little thought to the repercussions. Lands closer to creeks and rivers have increasingly been farmed. Ninety percent of the wetlands have been lost, according to Mary Skopec, a water quality monitor for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. (Washington Post, June 19)

In addition, 106,000 acres of Iowa land have been taken out of the federal Conservation Reserve Program in the past two years. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, the program "encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover, such as tame or native grasses, wildlife plantings, trees, filter strips, or riparian buffers. Farmers receive an annual rental payment for the term of the multi-year contract." ([www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)) The vegetative cover that the CRP encourages serves to absorb water.

The recent boom in the production of ethanol from corn for use as an additive to gasoline has led to an increase in cultivation of the crop, leading some farmers out of the CRP. Corn now covers a third of Iowa's land surface.

At least one politician, Sen. Charles E. Grassley of Iowa, has called on the Agriculture Department to release tens of thousands of farmers from their CRP contracts in response to the recent floods—when it's apparent that the opposite, increasing the amount of conservation lands, would have a positive effect on flood threats in the future.

The White House has asked Congress for \$1.8 billion in emergency aid for the flood. Meanwhile, more than \$531 billion has been spent to date on the war in Iraq alone. ([www.nationalpriorities.org](http://www.nationalpriorities.org)) The recent war-funding bill passed by the House of Representatives calls for another \$162 billion for the war—and a paltry-by-comparison \$2.7 billion for emergency flood relief.

From protection of the environment to agricultural development and emergency response, a complete neglect of preventative measures has spelled destruction for the people of the Midwest and beyond and portends future chaos.

This lack of planning is an inherent characteristic of the capitalist system, which places the drive for profit above all other concerns, heedless of the destruction it causes. It will take the continuing people's struggle to see to it that survivors of natural disasters are taken care of. It will take a new social system to roll back the devastation created by the one we now live under.

## **What is the real culprit? Climate Action Day exposes dangers to planet**

*Jennifer Waller, October 30, 2009*

On Oct. 24, International Climate Action Day, activists in 181 countries around the world participated in over 5,200 events in an attempt to raise awareness about the threats of climate change.

In New Brighton, Australia, a huge drawing in the sand included text that could be read from the sky—"There is no planet B." In Mongolia men on horseback posed for a picture holding up a banner about climate change. In South Africa rock climbers hung banners on the side of a cliff reading, "[President Jacob] Zuma, climate proof our food and jobs." An action was held underwater in the Maldiv Islands to draw attention to the fact that the Maldives is seriously threatened by rising sea levels in the Indian Ocean.

International Climate Action Day was organized primarily by a U.S. organization named 350. The number 350 holds significance in the struggle against global warming because 350 parts per million of carbon dioxide is the limit that scientists have identified as safe for our atmosphere. Presently the number is 387 ppm.

Despite the fact that this analysis is scientific, and potentially difficult to fully understand, 350.org's accessible Web site has given people all over the world a number to push for and greater understanding of the climate crisis. As a result, International Climate Action Day consisted of many groups around the world holding up 350 banners and standing in formations that from an aerial view read "350." A group in the Philippines even grew plants into the formation of 350, and in Copenhagen the 350 emblem was mowed into a meadow.

The United Nations Copenhagen Climate Conference will take place Dec. 7-18. Although President Barack Obama's administration has said that no U.S. climate bill will be passed before the conference, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee will hold hearings the week of Oct. 26 to discuss a climate change bill proposed by Senators Barbara Boxer and John Kerry.

### **Capitalism is to blame**

Despite the ongoing grassroots efforts to raise awareness within the political arena, as well as with voters and consumers, people in the United States seem surprisingly unconcerned about the swift and imminent obliteration of planet Earth as a place that can sustain human life. A recent poll by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press found that only 57 percent of respondents believe there is real evidence that the world is getting warmer—down from 77 percent in 2006. The poll also reveals that just 35 percent of people in the U.S. regard global warming as a very serious problem. (people-press.org)

These alarming statistics come after years of grassroots and also mainstream efforts to get people to drive less, recycle more and bring reusable bags with them to the grocery store. Yet these efforts are not attacking the real problem. Often such "green" campaigns are run or sponsored by corporations such as Wal-Mart and Shell in an effort to implicate consumers in the destruction of our planet, while the globalized capitalist system is the real culprit.

The possibility of sustaining human, animal and plant life on this planet is only possible if this system is completely overhauled or, better yet, dismantled. Though the people of the United States are

sleeping on this issue, the rest of the world is much more aware of the catastrophic effects the climate crisis will bring on all of us.

Unfortunately, reducing one's carbon footprint by "buying green" will not save the planet. The people of the world must rise up against the corporate greed that has been killing the planet and its inhabitants for too long. Or we will all see the consequences far sooner than most of us can imagine.

*The writer is an activist with the militant youth organization FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together.*

## **Natural gas drilling & hydraulic fracturing: 'Fracking' causes environmental, human disaster**

*Betsy Piette, December 10, 2009*

Imagine finding methane and metals in your drinking water or having your water well explode or catch on fire. Imagine getting thrown out of bed one morning as your entire house is lifted off the ground from an explosion due to methane gas build-up. These nightmares are a reality for a growing number of families whose homes are located near natural gas drilling sites in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and other states across the U.S.

These explosions, along with massive fish kills, and chemical and even radioactive contamination of drinking water, are linked to a practice known as hydraulic fracturing or "fracking," used in nine out of 10 natural gas wells in the U.S.

Pioneered by Halliburton, the process involves injecting millions of gallons of water, sand and chemicals at high pressure down and across horizontally drilled wells as far as 10,000 feet below the surface. The pressure causes the rocks to crack and release natural gas. The fissures are held apart by the sand particles allowing natural gas from the shale to flow up the well. Halliburton refuses to divulge the contents of the chemical cocktail used in the process.

Since 2004, much of this practice has been concentrated in the Marcellus Shale, a geological formation that spreads from midstate New York across more than half of Pennsylvania and into Ohio and West Virginia. It reaches cities from Cleveland, Buffalo N.Y., and Pittsburgh in the western region almost to New York City and Philadelphia in the east.

The major companies involved in drilling in the Marcellus Shale area include Oklahoma City-based Chesapeake Energy, with rights to 1.45 million acres; Texas-based Range Resources, with 1.4 million acres; and Cabot Oil & Gas, also headquartered in Texas, with 1.2 million acres. Several billion-dollar companies, including Norwegian colossus StatoilHydro Asa, Texas-based Anadarko Petroleum and EOG Resources, are also feeding at the Marcellus Shale trough.

The natural gas content of the Marcellus Shale is estimated to range from 168 trillion to 516 trillion cubic feet. From 2000 to 2008 the number of active oil and gas wells in New York nearly doubled, from 6,845 to 13,687. In Pennsylvania 4,000 wells have been drilled since 2008, and are anticipated to produce 19 million gallons of waste water a day by 2011. While the industry claims that thousands of new jobs are being created, so far much of the field work is being done by crews from Texas and Oklahoma who have expertise in shale gas.

Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell had pushed for a tax on gas extracted from the wells, but dropped the plan despite record budget deficits that kept the state from paying vendors for more than 100 days this summer. The natural gas industry spent over \$1 million lobbying the state Legislature to oppose the tax. Instead of the tax, Rendell has proposed tripling the number of leases for drillers in state-owned forests.

### **Targeting poor communities**

Much of this area is in the impoverished northern Appalachia region, dotted by isolated small towns and farms that are no longer productive, and are communities with high rates of unemployment. The poverty and relative isolation of the region have made residents

prime targets of corporate salespeople, who have pushed them into leasing land for oil wells.

In Dimrock, Pa., one out of seven residents was out of work and people were facing foreclosure of their homes. When Cabot offered \$25 an acre for the right to drill for five years, plus royalties when gas started flowing, it sounded like a good deal to people who owned vacant fields but little else.

Cabot, which earned close to a billion dollars in revenue in 2008, drilled 20 wells in the area and is producing \$58 million worth of gas annually. The subsequent water contamination has forced many low-income Dimrock residents to turn to expensive bottled water.

Problems stemming from fracking are surfacing in communities throughout the Marcellus Shale region. In Dimrock, considered “ground zero” for drilling, several drinking-water wells have exploded.

“Nine were found to contain so much methane gas that one homeowner was told to open a window if he planned to take a bath. Dishes showed metallic streaks that couldn’t be washed off, and tests also showed high amounts of aluminum, lead and iron, prompting fears that drilling fluids might be contaminating the water along with the gas.” (ProPublica, April 26).

In September, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection officials charged Cabot with five violations after nearly 8,000 gallons of hydraulic fracturing fluids spilled in two separate incidents near Dimrock. It took a third spill for Cabot to voluntarily halt the fracking. According to Halliburton the substance spilled was a lubricating gel that poses “a substantial threat to human health” and was a “potential carcinogen” that has caused skin cancer in animals.

Residents near the town of Roaring Branch, Pa., reported rust-colored water flowing from a spring and two small creeks bubbling with methane gas. The incidents were among more than 50 similar cases related to gas drilling in the state. In several instances houses exploded as a result of gas leaks and in one case three people were killed.

Workers at U.S. Steel and Allegheny Energy near McKeesport found that water used to power their plant contained so much salty sediment it was corroding their machinery. An estimated 10,000 fish died on a 33-mile stretch of Dunkard Creek in this area.

### **A giant ‘science experiment’**

There is also a growing concern that the huge amount of water needed for drilling as well as the enormous volume of waste water created in the fracking process could eventually put water supplies in jeopardy, including the supply to New York City that, in fact, serves half the state’s population.

Along with the rapid expansion in the Marcellus Shale region has come growing environmental concerns. Many of the practices used in the extraction are still experimental. “In this gas rush, New York is fast becoming a geological science experiment that many experts fear will have profound, dire environmental and health consequences. The drilling companies use a witch’s brew of water, pressure and chemicals to force the gas from the shale. It is the secrecy of what is in that brew that has New Yorkers worried,” stated Allison Sickie. (DCBureau, Nov. 30)

Oil-based chemicals have been used in the gas drilling process, but are known to be harmful to the environment. Toxic mud and fracturing fluids, along with waste water that resurfaces, can contaminate soil and surface water. Spills have already resulted

from the transport of chemically-laden fluids and wastewater to and from drilling sites.

The New York Department of Environmental Conservation has detected high levels of radium-226, a radioactive element, in 13 samples of wastewater from Marcellus Shale drilling, according to ProPublica. The state now faces a wastewater disposal problem.

Chemicals coming out with wastewater from wells in Pennsylvania and West Virginia were found to include 4-nitroquinoline N-oxide, used to induce tumors in laboratory animals, and benzene, a known carcinogen.

Sickle notes, "Environmentalists fear increased natural gas production has a huge risk of ruining some of the most pristine watershed, park, farm and recreational land in the United States." The region involves 7,500 lakes and ponds and 50,000 miles of rivers and streams.

Fracking also occurs in parts of the Midwest and southwestern U.S. There are no regulations for hydraulic fracturing in 21 of the 31 states where the practice has been in effect for several years. Fracking was exempted from the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Clean Water Act passed by Congress as part of the Energy Policy Act in 2005.

Dec. 3 marked the 25th anniversary of the widespread and continued contamination resulting from the Union Carbide chemical leak in Bhopal, India, that claimed tens of thousands of lives. Without any serious regulation of hydraulic fracturing practices, is the U.S. facing a disaster of that magnitude?

## **Copenhagen: Africa bloc leads walkout over suppression of debate**

*Abayomi Azikiwe, December 16, 2009*

African countries at the COP-15 climate change summit in Copenhagen led a walkout for several hours on Dec. 14 to protest the efforts of the United States, Britain and other imperialist countries and their allies to sidestep responsibility for the worsening impact of carbon dioxide emissions. The increasing concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere has caused climate change that threatens the total collapse of agricultural production on the African continent.

The walkout could have derailed the entire conference. Heads of state from 120 countries were scheduled to arrive in Copenhagen within a few days.

Developing nations in Asia and Latin America, along with the People's Republic of China, joined the African states in accusing the summit's Danish president of refusing to allow discussion on the major issues that affect the overwhelming majority of people on the planet.

Developing countries refused to participate in the working groups scheduled to begin on Dec. 14, the second week of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The African bloc, along with the Group of 77 developing countries, is demanding universal adherence to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which sets goals for emission standards to be reduced beyond 2012.

These emissions result from the burning of oil, gas and coal. Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere traps solar heat, causing a rise in the

earth's temperature. Atmospheric scientists have predicted that, if no serious actions are taken over the next decade, the planet will warm significantly and there will be an escalation of drought, floods and storms, along with rising sea levels, that will bring famine to billions of people throughout the world.

A new United Nations environmental report has indicated that approximately 60 million people have suffered the effects of 245 natural disasters this year alone. More than 90 percent of these serious weather-related events have been amplified by climate change.

African states have made the case that their region is the hardest hit by pollutants generated by the industrialized states, whose governments refuse to agree on limits to emissions. At the same time, these governments are unwilling to provide compensation to developing countries for the damage caused to the environment.

The U.S. has not even signed the Kyoto Protocol, which set modest goals and timelines for curbing pollutants.

World Wildlife Fund director Kim Carstensen told the BBC, "The point is being made very loudly that African countries and the wider G77 bloc will not accept non-action on the Kyoto Protocol, and they're really afraid that a deal has been stitched up behind their backs." (BBC, Dec. 14)

### **China vs. U.S.**

The dispute escalated between the developing states, allied with China, and the imperialist countries when the Danish government made an attempt to place another draft agreement on the agenda and consequently ignore the Kyoto Protocol.

During the first week of consultations in Copenhagen, tensions arose between the People's Republic of China and the U.S. over setting goals for the curbing of emissions. China accused the U.S. and the West of trickery for their attempts to shift the focus of discussion from the concerns of the developing states to broader, undefined talks. Such a vague approach would absolve the capitalist countries from taking any action to address the worsening food crisis in Africa and other parts of the world.

African states and other developing countries demanded that conference president Connie Hedegaard of Denmark place the question of curbing emission standards for the industrialized states at the top of the agenda prior to the arrival of world leaders in Copenhagen. These countries, along with China, believe that the Danish government is working to destroy the Kyoto Protocol.

G77 chief negotiator Lumumba Dia Ping stated in relationship to the stalled talks, "It has become clear that the Danish presidency — in the most undemocratic fashion — is advancing the interests of the developed countries at the expense of the balance of obligations between developed and developing countries." (BBC Radio 4's "The World at One," Dec. 14)

"We are seeing the death of the Kyoto Protocol," said Djemouai Kamel of Algeria, who is leading the 53-nation Africa group. (AP, Dec. 14)

One Western negotiator, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that discussions involving 50 environmental ministers on Dec. 13 were contentious as a result of the "growing disputes between the Americans and the Chinese."

“At the back of everyone’s mind is the fear of a repeat of the awful scenario in The Hague,” when another climate change conference held in 2000 that was designed to set up definite guidelines related to the Kyoto Protocol broke up without an agreement. (AFP, Dec. 14)

During the previous week of consultations in Copenhagen, the Pacific island nation of Tuvalu had created a crisis with the simple demand that efforts to amend the U.N. climate convention and the Kyoto Protocol be debated fully at the summit.

### **African states demand compensation**

African countries, including even the pro-Western Ethiopian regime, planned to demand \$50 billion in compensation for the damage done by industrialized states to the continent’s environment over the last several years.

According to the News Agency of Nigeria, “Africa is the worst hit when it comes to global emission. We are going to Copenhagen with one voice and our position is that the developed countries should pay us \$50 billion in the short term. Our requisition also is that in 2015, the compensation should be increased to \$250 billion.” (Xinhua, Dec. 11)

The African Union’s Presidential Commission has agreed on this position unanimously, saying that the continent, which generates only 4 percent of the world’s carbon emissions, has been the most severely affected by climate change. In addition to compensation through funding, Africa is also demanding technology transfers that would foster the replacement of outmoded machinery.

In making its case for compensation from the Western industrialized countries, the Monitor newspaper published in Uganda wrote in an editorial on Dec. 14, “The entire Eastern Africa region has, for

example, this year witnessed extensive drought with crop failure and livestock deaths commonplace in semiarid areas. Secondly, Africa is home to a big percentage of the world’s natural rain forests, which help stabilize climate by sucking carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases — methane, nitrous oxide, perfluorocarbons, hydrofluorocarbons and sulfur hexafluoride.”

The Monitor editorial continues by stressing, “We must be compensated for each tree standing. Modalities of compensation should be a key item on the agenda in Copenhagen. The USA, the principal culprit, must be at the forefront of efforts to both save the environment and to pay reparations.”

Demonstrations outside the UNFCCC have drawn tens of thousands of people. At a vigil held outside the City Hall building in Copenhagen, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and former Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa handed over a petition signed by more than 500,000 people demanding immediate action to curb the threat posed by rising greenhouse gases.

Tutu told the crowd, “This is a problem. If we don’t resolve it, no one is going to survive.” (South African Mail & Guardian, Dec. 14)

A pre-conference article in the Irish weekly An Phoblacht states, “An alliance between the developing countries, progressive forces in the industrialized states and the growing global climate change justice movement is facing hugely powerful governments and business interests at the Copenhagen summit that are determined to prioritize short-term profit over the survival of the planet. Public opinion, pressure and mobilization are the keys to changing this balance of forces and ensuring action is taken.” (anphoblact.com, Dec. 10)

## Add climate havoc to war crimes: Pentagon's role in global catastrophe

*Sara Flounders, December 16, 2009*

In evaluating the U.N. Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen — with more than 15,000 participants from 192 countries, including more than 100 heads of state, as well as 100,000 demonstrators in the streets — it is important to ask: How is it possible that the worst polluter of carbon dioxide and other toxic emissions on the planet is not a focus of any conference discussion or proposed restrictions?

By every measure, the Pentagon is the largest institutional user of petroleum products and energy in general. Yet the Pentagon has a blanket exemption in all international climate agreements.

The Pentagon wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; its secret operations in Pakistan; its equipment on more than 1,000 U.S. bases around the world; its 6,000 facilities in the U.S.; all NATO operations; its aircraft carriers, jet aircraft, weapons testing, training and sales will not be counted against U.S. greenhouse gas limits or included in any count.

The Feb. 17, 2007, Energy Bulletin detailed the oil consumption just for the Pentagon's aircraft, ships, ground vehicles and facilities that made it the single-largest oil consumer in the world. At the time, the U.S. Navy had 285 combat and support ships and around 4,000 operational aircraft. The U.S. Army had 28,000 armored vehicles, 140,000 High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles, more than 4,000 combat helicopters, several hundred fixed-wing aircraft and 187,493 fleet vehicles. Except for 80 nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers, which spread radioactive pollution, all their other vehicles run on oil.

Even according to rankings in the 2006 CIA World Factbook, only 35 countries (out of 210 in the world) consume more oil per day than the Pentagon.

The U.S. military officially uses 320,000 barrels of oil a day. However, this total does not include fuel consumed by contractors or fuel consumed in leased and privatized facilities. Nor does it include the enormous energy and resources used to produce and maintain their death-dealing equipment or the bombs, grenades or missiles they fire.

Steve Kretzmann, director of Oil Change International, reports: "The Iraq war was responsible for at least 141 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MMTCO<sub>2e</sub>) from March 2003 through December 2007. ... The war emits more than 60 percent of all countries. ... This information is not readily available ... because military emissions abroad are exempt from national reporting requirements under U.S. law and the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change." ([www.naomiklein.org](http://www.naomiklein.org), Dec. 10) Most scientists blame carbon dioxide emissions for greenhouse gases and climate change.

Barry Sanders in his new book, "The Green Zone: The Environmental Costs of Militarism," says that "the greatest single assault on the environment, on all of us around the globe, comes from one agency ... the Armed Forces of the United States."

Just how did the Pentagon come to be exempt from climate agreements? At the time of the Kyoto Accords negotiations, the U.S. demanded as a provision of signing that all of its military operations worldwide and all operations it participates in with the U.N. and/or NATO be completely exempted from measurement or reductions.

After securing this gigantic concession, the Bush administration then refused to sign the accords.

In a May 18, 1998, article entitled “National security and military policy issues involved in the Kyoto treaty,” Dr. Jeffrey Salmon described the Pentagon’s position. He quotes then-Secretary of Defense William Cohen’s 1997 annual report to Congress: “DoD strongly recommends that the United States insist on a national security provision in the climate change Protocol now being negotiated.” (www.marshall.org)

According to Salmon, this national security provision was put forth in a draft calling for “complete military exemption from greenhouse gas emissions limits. The draft includes multilateral operations such as NATO- and U.N.-sanctioned activities, but it also includes actions related very broadly to national security, which would appear to comprehend all forms of unilateral military actions and training for such actions.”

Salmon also quoted Undersecretary of State Stuart Eizenstat, who headed the U.S. delegation in Kyoto. Eizenstat reported that “every requirement the Defense Department and uniformed military who were at Kyoto by my side said they wanted, they got. This is self-defense, peacekeeping, humanitarian relief.”

Although the U.S. had already received these assurances in the negotiations, the U.S. Congress passed an explicit provision guaranteeing U.S. military exemption. Inter Press Service reported on May 21, 1998: “U.S. law makers, in the latest blow to international efforts to halt global warming, today exempted U.S. military operations from the Kyoto agreement which lays out binding commitments to reduce ‘greenhouse gas’ emissions. The

House of Representatives passed an amendment to next year’s military authorization bill that ‘prohibits the restriction of armed forces under the Kyoto Protocol.’”

Today in Copenhagen the same agreements and guidelines on greenhouse gases still hold. Yet it is extremely difficult to find even a mention of this glaring omission.

According to environmental journalist Johanna Peace, military activities will continue to be exempt from an executive order signed by President Barack Obama that calls for federal agencies to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. Peace states, “The military accounts for a full 80 percent of the federal government’s energy demand.” (solveclimate.com, Sept. 1)

The blanket exclusion of the Pentagon’s global operations makes U.S. carbon dioxide emissions appear far less than they in fact are. Yet even without counting the Pentagon, the U.S. still has the world’s largest carbon dioxide emissions.

### **More than emissions**

Besides emitting carbon dioxide, U.S. military operations release other highly toxic and radioactive materials into the air, water and soil.

U.S. weapons made with depleted uranium have spread tens of thousands of pounds of microparticles of radioactive and highly toxic waste throughout the Middle East, Central Asia and the Balkans.

The U.S. sells land mines and cluster bombs that are a major cause of delayed explosions, maiming and disabling especially peasant farmers and rural peoples in Africa, Asia and Latin America. For

example, Israel dropped more than 1 million U.S.-provided cluster bombs on Lebanon during its 2006 invasion.

The U.S. war in Vietnam left large areas so contaminated with the Agent Orange herbicide that today, more than 35 years later, dioxin contamination is 300 to 400 times higher than “safe” levels. Severe birth defects and high rates of cancer resulting from environmental contamination are continuing into a third generation.

The 1991 U.S. war in Iraq, followed by 13 years of starvation sanctions, the 2003 U.S. invasion and continuing occupation, has transformed the region — which has a 5,000-year history as a Middle East breadbasket — into an environmental catastrophe. Iraq’s arable and fertile land has become a desert wasteland where the slightest wind whips up a dust storm. A former food exporter, Iraq now imports 80 percent of its food. The Iraqi Agriculture Ministry estimates that 90 percent of the land has severe desertification.

### **Environmental war at home**

Moreover, the Defense Department has routinely resisted orders from the Environmental Protection Agency to clean up contaminated U.S. bases. (Washington Post, June 30, 2008) Pentagon military bases top the Superfund list of the most polluted places, as contaminants seep into drinking water aquifers and soil.

The Pentagon has also fought EPA efforts to set new pollution standards on two toxic chemicals widely found on military sites: perchlorate, found in propellant for rockets and missiles; and trichloroethylene, a degreaser for metal parts.

Trichloroethylene is the most widespread water contaminant in the country, seeping into aquifers across California, New York, Texas,

Florida and elsewhere. More than 1,000 military sites in the U.S. are contaminated with the chemical. The poorest communities, especially communities of color, are the most severely impacted by this poisoning.

U.S. testing of nuclear weapons in the U.S. Southwest and on South Pacific islands has contaminated millions of areas of land and water with radiation. Mountains of radioactive and toxic uranium tailings have been left on Indigenous land in the Southwest. More than 1,000 uranium mines have been abandoned on Navajo reservations in Arizona and New Mexico.

Around the world, on past and still operating bases in Puerto Rico, the Philippines, South Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Japan, Nicaragua, Panama and the former Yugoslavia, rusting barrels of chemicals and solvents and millions of rounds of ammunition are criminally abandoned by the Pentagon.

The best way to dramatically clean up the environment is to shut down the Pentagon. What is needed to combat climate change is a thoroughgoing system change.

## To change the climate, change the system

*Sara Flounders, December 23, 2009*

The International Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, which was two years in the planning, ended in a train wreck. Nothing was arrived at: no treaty, no deadlines, no binding agreement of any sort.

For years the real dividing lines in this struggle were obscured by technical language and the most detailed schemes for reducing carbon emissions. But underneath all the debate was the class struggle in its most virulent form.

Based on intense U.S. pressure, backed by European maneuvers, the financial pledges to poor and developing countries ended as vague statements of zero substance. By the final day the commitments to strict carbon emissions framework dissolved into a “let’s all do our own thing” handshake.

President Barack Obama and the U.S. delegation called the conference finale an “unprecedented breakthrough.” Most other countries and environmental groups considered it a disaster. In this intense struggle two revolutionary leaders, President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela and President Evo Morales of Bolivia, sharpened the debate by defining the real problem: capitalism.

The economic crisis that has wracked the global economy for the past 18 months has confirmed for millions of increasingly desperate people the inherent instability of capitalism. But Copenhagen confirmed in the starkest light that capitalism is a totally irrational system. Corporate survival based on the drive to maximize profits trumped planetary survival.

Now clearly the battle to save the environment means taking on these dinosaur corporations and the social system that gives them life.

The conference was a world gathering on a scale not seen before, meeting on an issue that all agreed was of the most urgent concern to all humans. Representatives of 193 countries gathered, including 128 heads of state. Over 45,000 delegates, members of the international media, lawyers, lobbyists and countless representatives of “special interests” of giant corporations gathered, registering along with thousands of activist nongovernmental organizations that focus on environmental justice.

Everyone agrees that cooperation is desperately needed on an international scale. But cooperation was impossible! The reality was that irrational competitive forces tore every possible agreement apart. The leaders of countries whose rulers serve a handful of powerful transnational corporations held the conference as they hold all of society — in an economic, political and military vise-grip.

### **Repression and exclusion**

In the streets outside the conference 100,000 people joined mass protests and counter meetings. In the largest police action in Denmark’s history, police used tear gas, pepper spray, mass cages, baton charges and mass preemptive arrests to suppress the voices of dissent. There were more than 1,800 arrests.

Inside the Bella Center, the United Nations suspended even mainstream environmental groups and barred registered delegates from re-entering the conference. Organizations staged a sit-in to protest their exclusion from the talks. African nations, joined by

China and some other members of the G77 group, walked out of the controlled sessions as the issue of reparations was pushed off the agenda.

Every strong-arm effort was made to exclude the positions and views of those countries most impacted by climate change and to place demands and restrictions on their future development. Big business in the rich nations used the conference as a cynical maneuver to maintain their economic dominance.

The U.S. has 5 percent of the world's population and is responsible for at least 25 percent of greenhouse gases. From the beginning of this global effort, Washington has fought to prevent any restrictions or controls on its emissions. It has used its enormous political and economic weight in past international climate conferences to win concessions and exclusions.

Since the Kyoto Accords the U.S. had secured the blanket exclusion of its entire military machine, with its thousands of bases and installations across the U.S. and all around the world, its hundreds of warships, aircraft carriers and destroyers on the seas and its jets, helicopters, rockets and drones in the air. The U.S. also wrangled other set-asides in past negotiations. That all international maritime shipping and aviation — a major and growing source of carbon emissions — was also excluded also benefits U.S. corporations.

With its own military facilities safely excluded, the U.S. negotiators in Copenhagen upped the ante by demanding the right to set up inspections of all industrial facilities in China and all developing countries. This was of course seen as an attack on the national sovereignty of all formerly colonized and oppressed countries.

Many of the G77 countries, environmentalists and thousands of street activists were demanding reparations for the environmental destruction caused by major corporations in over 200 years of industrial development.

According to many environmentalists, developed countries should pay a climate debt of \$1 trillion a year to help reverse carbon emissions in poorer countries, which suffered centuries of deliberate underdevelopment, colonialism, racism and toxic dumping. This concept of "climate justice" was an accepted goal of all past climate negotiations. It was pushed off the agenda at Copenhagen.

By the second week, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's presentations in Copenhagen made it clear how much the U.S. was demanding and how little it was willing to give.

She grandly offered that "the United States is prepared to work with other countries toward a goal of jointly mobilizing \$100 billion a year by 2020 to address the climate change needs of developing countries. We expect this funding will come from a wide variety of sources, public and private, bilateral and multilateral, including alternative sources of finance."

In essence this amounted to nothing except a possible \$100 billion — 10 years from now, with no specific U.S. commitment, except an offer to help raise funds. This vague financing package would be available only if all countries agreed to the U.S. terms. These terms included killing the already insufficient Kyoto Accords and all legally binding measures and universal emissions targets and replacing them with the fuzzy concept of "transparency." This was the same package that President Obama offered two days later.

### **Cap and trade — capitalist nonsolutions**

The real sources of environmental destruction were not being addressed because the Copenhagen Conference had a profit-driven agenda. The big capitalist powers used the global warming consensus to justify a global multibillion-dollar scheme for trading permits to produce carbon emissions.

The major European Union politicians, former Vice President Al Gore and other imperialist forces have long proposed creating a global carbon market with caps of total emissions, but which allows trading of emission rights among nations and industries. This is called “cap and trade.” With this approach, industries that produce high carbon emissions in the wealthiest imperialist countries could offset their extra emissions by purchasing permits from industries in the poorer countries. These proposals make permits for carbon emissions an important commodity that can be bought and sold.

In essence this scheme means that uncontrolled development can continue in the wealthiest, most developed countries by a system of credits or promised payments to curtail carbon emissions, while allowing the pollution that harms the poorest countries.

Many critics of these market schemes consider the proposals to be a recolonization of the global South. The basic proposal of a global cap-and-trade plan is a market-based approach that will do little to slow dependence on fossil fuels. It merely allows polluters to continue polluting and Wall Street traders to make billions of dollars in global offset markets and complex trading schemes.

“A Nov. 29 British Guardian article was entitled, “Carbon trading could be worth twice that of oil in next decade — Carbon market at

the heart of Copenhagen Conference could be worth \$3 trillion a year.”

Wall Street is poised to make billions of dollars in the “trade” part of cap and trade. The market for trading permits to emit carbon dioxide appears likely to be loosely regulated, to be open to speculators and to include derivatives.

A Dec. 4 Bloomberg News article titled “Carbon Capitalists Warming to Climate Market Using Derivatives” shows the real deal: “JPMorgan, Goldman Sachs Group Inc. and Morgan Stanley will be watching closely as 192 nations gather in Copenhagen.

“Estimates of the potential size of the U.S. cap-and-trade market range from \$300 billion to \$2 trillion. ... Banks intend to become the intermediaries in this fledgling market. Although U.S. carbon legislation may not pass for a year or more, Wall Street has already spent hundreds of millions of dollars hiring lobbyists and making deals with companies that can supply them with ‘carbon offsets’ to sell to clients.

“The banks are preparing to do with carbon what they’ve done before: design and market derivatives contracts.”

Here is how Green Chip Stocks editor Jeff Siegel, featured on CNBC’s Green Week, posed the issue: “There’s no telling just how lucrative this market will become. Why else would huge companies like GE, DuPont, and Johnson & Johnson be racing to reduce their emissions? It’s because of the huge profits that stand to be made.”

This pro-capitalist Web site brags: “Here are some recent Green Chip Review issues our readers picked as their favorites: Investing in Water: An Ounce of Water, a Pound of Profits. ... The Hottest Stock

Market on the Planet: It's all about Energy and Minerals, and the Party's Just Getting Started."

The failure to reach any clear agreement is expected to deflate this latest speculative bubble for a time. An article in the Sidney Morning Herald as the conference closed was titled: "Copenhagen fallout: carbon trade to tumble." The article complained: "The two-week climate meeting, concluded a day behind schedule, failed to deliver most of the improvements needed in the U.N. market, said Kim Carnahan, a U.N. emissions-trading researcher at the International Emissions Trading Association, a lobby group in Geneva. Its members include Goldman Sachs and Royal Dutch Shell."

### **Revolutionary challenge**

Bolivian President Evo Morales explained the essence of the problem: "We cannot end global warming without ending capitalism.

"Capitalism is the worst enemy of humanity. Capitalism — and I'm speaking about irrational development — policies of unlimited industrialization are what destroys the environment. ... And that irrational industrialization is capitalism.

"The budget of the United States is \$687 billion for defense. And for climate change, to save life, to save humanity, they only put up \$10 billion. This is shameful.

"The best thing would be that all war spending be directed towards climate change, instead of spending it on troops in Iraq, in Afghanistan or the military bases in Latin America. This money would be better directed to attending to the damages that were

created by the United States. And, of course, this isn't just \$100 billion; this is probably trillions and trillions of dollars."

President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela asked: "Can a finite Earth support an infinite project? The thesis of capitalism, infinite development, is a destructive pattern, let's face it. How long are we going to tolerate the current international economic order and prevailing market mechanisms? How long are we going to allow huge epidemics like HIV/AIDS to ravage entire populations? How long are we going to allow the hungry to not eat or to be able to feed their own children? How long are we going to allow millions of children to die from curable diseases? How long will we allow armed conflicts to massacre millions of innocent human beings in order for the powerful to seize the resources of other peoples?

"One could say, Mr. President, that a ghost is haunting Copenhagen, to paraphrase Karl Marx, the great Karl Marx. A ghost is haunting the streets of Copenhagen, and I think that ghost walks silently through this room, walking around among us, through the halls, out below, it rises. This ghost is a terrible ghost. Almost nobody wants to mention it: Capitalism is the ghost, almost nobody wants to mention it. It's capitalism, the people roar, out there. Hear them.

"Socialism, the other ghost Karl Marx spoke about, which walks here too, rather it is like a counter-ghost. Socialism, this is the direction, this is the path to save the planet. I don't have the least doubt ... that's the way to save the planet. Capitalism is the road to hell. ... Let's fight against capitalism and make it obey us."

A complete English version of Chávez's speech can be found at [iacenter.org](http://iacenter.org).

## After Copenhagen debacle, U.S. China-bashing reaches new low

*Deirdre Griswold, December 23, 2009*

Ever since the Kyoto Protocol of 1997, which the United States never ratified, the capitalist political establishment in Washington has focused on one thing: trying to put the onus on China for the lack of any binding world agreement that could prevent catastrophic climate change.

The recent Copenhagen summit saw a repeat of this U.S. duplicity, despite the hopes of many environmentalists and poorer countries that the Obama administration would set a new course.

New Scientist, a British weekly, reported that the U.S. brokered a last-minute, nonbinding deal at Copenhagen that pushed aside the agreement, hammered out by the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, which would have set limits on emissions. Instead of signing a commitment to specific numbers, countries were pressured to be listed as “taking note” of the deal. U.N. sources told the magazine that only countries on the list would receive funds to cope with the impacts of climate change and reduce their carbon emissions.

“Western leaders,” said the Dec. 19 article, left the conference claiming to have secured “a global agreement to keep global warming below two degrees Celsius. But the deal provoked immediate anger for failing to include concrete measures to reach that target, and scientists at the talks said it would set the world on a path to 3.5°C of warming by 2100.

“The Western leaders responded to the accusations that the text was stripped of any concrete measures by blaming China and other

developing nations for the failure of the Copenhagen conference to achieve more.”

For many years, Washington refused to acknowledge the impact of greenhouse gas emissions (GGE) on climate change, totally ignoring the warnings of climate scientists. The Bush administration, especially, was preoccupied with protecting the profits of the energy companies that hold such power over the levers of government.

Greenpeace in 2005 made public State Department documents showing that the Bush administration actually sent letters of thanks to ExxonMobil for its “active involvement” in determining the government’s climate change policy.

During this whole period, the U.S. was spewing out more greenhouse gases than any other country. Yet it said again and again that it couldn’t ratify an agreement like Kyoto. Why? Because while it somewhat curbed the emissions of the rich developed countries that have been responsible for the lion’s share of GGE, it gave latitude to those formerly colonized countries trying to overcome decades and even centuries of underdevelopment. China, Brazil, India and Mexico are among the largest of these developing economies.

Because of this undeniable history, the peoples of the world rightly view the U.S. government as the main culprit for the probability that before the middle of this century, a “tipping point” will be reached that would make global warming irreversible and bring disaster to many nations.

## **Deflecting world anger with lies**

At the Copenhagen summit, just as George W. Bush had done before him, President Barack Obama tried to deflect the anger of the world's people by accusing China of being the stumbling block to a meaningful agreement. At the same time, he claimed "success" in pushing through the final deal.

What came out of Copenhagen, however, is nothing but a wish list. It is barely even a verbal concession to the 100,000-plus people who came to demonstrate outside, or to the 192 countries that sent representatives.

After two weeks of discussion and debates, the agenda was taken over by the imperialists, led by the U.S., and an agreement that scientists and economists had labored over for months was scrapped for a document that committed no one to anything. However, it dangled in front of the most impoverished nations the possibility of billions of dollars for green development — most of it beginning 10 years from now.

Oxfam, an anti-poverty organization based in Britain, warns that these offers are full of "caveats and loopholes." It also estimated that even \$100 billion a year would amount to less than half what poor countries need to obtain the technology for green development.

New Scientist also reported that climate consultants say loopholes in the document "could allow developed nations to carry on increasing their emissions until 2020." The U.S. now emits 17 percent more greenhouse gases than it did in 1990 — the benchmark year of the Kyoto Protocol, which called for developed

countries to reduce their emissions to 5 percent below that year's level by 2012.

The fact is that the U.S. has done practically nothing toward reducing GGE. This is clear when one considers the state of the economy today. Because of a crisis of capitalist overproduction, many businesses have closed down or curtailed their rate of production. Tens of millions of workers are unemployed and are cutting back on heating, travel and other energy-consuming activities because they just don't have the money. U.S. corporations have been moving factories and jobs overseas in search of higher profits through cheaper labor. Yet emissions here continue to rise — proof that the government has done nothing meaningful.

## **'China's investment in clean energy is extraordinary'**

In China, on the other hand, a country that just a few decades ago was deeply impoverished, much has already been done to redirect economic development. In the Dec. 24 issue of WW we reported on how climate scientists in the U.S. are taking note of China's broad commitment to increased energy efficiency and development of alternate, nonpolluting energy sources.

An extensive letter from China by Evan Osnos in the Dec. 21-28 New Yorker magazine confirms this. Entitled "Green Giant — Beijing's crash program for clean energy," it tells how, for years, the Chinese government has been pumping billions of dollars into labs, universities and enterprises so China could assimilate the new technological revolution into its development plans.

"In 2006," says Osnos, "Chinese leaders redoubled their commitment to new energy technology; they boosted funding for research and set targets for installing wind turbines, solar panels,

hydroelectric dams and other renewable sources of energy that were higher than goals in the United States. China doubled its wind-power capacity that year, then doubled it again the next year, and the year after. The country had virtually no solar industry in 2003; five years later, it was manufacturing more solar cells than any other country.”

Osnos says that U.S. Assistant Secretary of Energy for Policy and International Affairs David Sandalow, who had been to China five times in five months, told him, “China’s investment in clean energy is extraordinary.”

But the U.S. State Department and White House, who crafted Obama’s aggressive strategy in Copenhagen, don’t know this?

## **A travesty for women & the environment**

*Deirdre Griswold, March 28, 2010*

It seemed like a scandalous disconnect, a case of the right brain not knowing what the left brain was doing.

On March 12 Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations announced the appointment of a High-level Advisory Group on Climate Change Financing. The group is supposed to mobilize the money to help poorer countries deal with climate change, which had been promised them during the U.N. conference in Copenhagen in December.

March 12 also happened to be the last day of a two-week session of the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, which of course had received high praise from Ban and other officials. At those meetings, reports were given on how climate change impacts women and their children even more severely than men.

Ban had also issued a statement on International Women’s Day saying that “empowering women is central to all other millennium development goals.”

And, according to Selina Rust, writing from the U.N. on March 18 for the Inter Press Service news agency, “Ban himself gave a speech last September underlining the importance of ‘an environment where women are the key decision makers on climate change, and play an equally central role in carrying out these decisions.’

“‘We must do more to give greater say to women in addressing the climate challenge,’ he said at the time.”

It was all just talk.

Of the 19 appointees to the high-level climate change group announced March 12 by the secretary-general, not one was a woman. Jaws dropped. Women's groups still gathered at the U.N. were shocked and outraged.

Was it just an oversight? Certainly from the point of view of public relations, it was a huge blunder to make such an announcement that day. But leaving timing aside, this was not unusual. High-level appointments in which women are shut out get made all the time by capitalist governments and supposedly international bodies. Sometimes they include just a token woman — something the secretary-general's office scrambled to do once news of his all-male appointees hit the fan.

It should be noted that the meetings on the Status of Women, like many other progressive activities that use the U.N. as a venue, are organized through the General Assembly, which currently has 192 member states. However, the secretary-general of the U.N. is nominated by the much smaller Security Council and is subject to a veto by any of its five permanent members.

Thus it is the Security Council — dominated for decades by U.S., British and French imperialism, which occupy three of five permanent seats — that pulls the strings in matters like these appointments. They are the ones who get to decide what is, to them, the most important question regarding climate change: money.

They also represent highly industrialized capitalist countries whose drive for profits is responsible for most of the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere that is causing climate change.

### **The usual suspects**

So who were on Ban's list of appointees? They included:

- Lawrence H. Summers, current director of the White House's National Economic Council, who in 2006 had to resign as president of Harvard after he had tangled with African-American activist professor Cornel West and also had said in a speech that the underrepresentation of women in the top levels of scientific academia could be due to a "different availability of aptitude at the high end."
- George Soros, the multibillionaire currency speculator and founder of the Open Society Institute, which played a big role in getting control of the media in Eastern Europe and engineering the overthrow of the workers' states there. This led to a disastrous decline in living conditions, especially for women, and soaring rates of sexual trafficking.
- British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who has alienated much of his Labour Party constituency, but pleased Washington, by sending thousands of British troops to Afghanistan.
- Executives from the central banks of both France and Germany.

Of course, this group would have no credibility without also having members from the global South. But the imperialists made sure that the person who is co-chair, along with Brown, is someone they can trust: Meles Zenawi. He became prime minister of Ethiopia after an imperialist campaign brought down the revolutionary government there. His troops have collaborated with the Pentagon in the invasion and bombing of Somalia.

The IPS article on the Status of Women hearings cited a report by the British-based Women's Environmental Network showing that more than 10,000 women die each year from weather-related disasters such as tropical storms and droughts, compared to about 4,500 men. Women, it says, are also the main producers of food, providing 70 percent of agricultural labor in sub-Saharan Africa, and so are particularly affected by reduced agricultural output. And because of diminishing water supplies in many developing countries due to climate change, women must travel farther each day to collect water and fuel.

Any group tasked with finding the money for poorer countries to survive climate change that does not include genuine representatives of the people affected will bend to the will of the financiers, the bankers and the imperialist politicians. What has just happened is a travesty not only for women but for all people struggling against the horrific consequences of unbridled capitalism.

## **Bolivian climate change conference offers peoples' alternative**

*LeiLani Dowell, April 11, 2010*

A Peoples' World Conference on Climate Change and Mother Earth's Rights, scheduled for April 19-22 in Cochabamba, Bolivia, will present a people's alternative to the failed Copenhagen conference on climate change that took place in December.

The U.N.-sponsored Copenhagen conference was supposed to review and to renew commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions first framed as the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. However, the U.S. and other imperialist nations at the conference, at the behest of corporations, prevented the participation of people's organizations and blocked any meaningful commitment to these goals. The resulting Copenhagen accord includes no legal commitments and no time frame to achieve emissions reductions.

On Jan. 5, Evo Morales Ayma, president of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, issued an invitation for the peoples' conference that calls on "the peoples of the world, social movements and Mother Earth's defenders, and invites scientists, academics, lawyers and governments that want to work with their citizens" to attend.

The call noted, among other things, that "climate change is a product of the capitalist system" and that the poor will suffer the most from the effects of climate change. Morales asserted, "In order to ensure the full fulfillment of human rights in the 21st century, it is necessary to recognize and respect Mother Earth's rights."

The statement expresses confidence “that the peoples of the world, guided by the principles of solidarity, justice and respect for life, will be able to save humanity and Mother Earth.”

Conference objectives include analysis of the structural and systemic causes of climate change and the proposal of radical measures to combat it; the initiation of a project to create a Universal Declaration of Mother Earth Rights; and the organization of a Peoples’ World Referendum on Climate Change and a Climate Justice Tribunal.

### **Climate change a result of profit system**

At a meeting in New York on March 24, Pablo Solón, ambassador of Bolivia to the United Nations, explained that the upcoming conference reflects the desire to deepen the discussion on climate change.

“Greenhouse gas emissions are not the cause of this crisis,” Solón stated. “They are an effect of a system of consumption, production and profit — a system of exploitation and a culture that helps to accomplish the goal of more and more profit. This system is not based on humans as they are, but based on what they have.”

Solón continued: “None of these points are part of the official discussion. There is no talk of the structural causes of this crisis, or the real deep costs. The real discussion has not yet begun. This is the main reason for the conference in Bolivia. Alternatives to the current ways of doing things must be built at a global level. ... Climate change is not just about the weather — it is a discussion about ways of living. We must learn to share and build a new society based on sharing.”

Solón explained that the conference will discuss “the rights of Mother Earth” because nature should have rights as well, including the right to live, to exist and to regenerate. He asserted that as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the United Nations in 1948, represented one step, there was now a need for an “environmental and social contract” to defend the rights of all.

As an example of the current crisis, Solón stated that a 30-year-old territorial dispute between India and Bangladesh over a tiny, uninhabited island recently came to an end when the island disappeared into the ocean — a result of rising ocean levels due to climate change. Sugata Hazra, a professor from the School of Oceanographic Studies at Jadavpur University in Kolkata, told Agence France-Presse that temperatures in the region had been rising at an annual rate of 0.8 degrees Fahrenheit. (March 25)

For more information on the Peoples’ World Conference on Climate Change and Mother Earth’s Rights, see [cmpcc.org](http://cmpcc.org).

## Led by Indigenous peoples, climate change conference slams capitalist crimes

*Jen Waller, April 28, 2010*

### **Cochabamba, Bolivia**

Thirty thousand people convened at the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in Cochabamba, Bolivia. The conference, which took place from April 19-22, hosted people from more than 135 countries and 90 official state representatives. Climate activists, community organizers, artists, musicians, scholars and workers from around the world joined forces over the common goal of finding an effective and practical solution to the climate crisis — a task that the rich, ruling countries of the world proved, at the Copenhagen Climate Summit, that they are incapable of accomplishing.

Organized by Evo Morales, the first Indigenous president of Bolivia, the conference was overwhelmingly representative of the people of Latin America, as well as residents of other developing countries in Asia and Africa. The common message was that the task of fighting the effects of climate change cannot be left to the countries that historically and presently are the biggest polluters and the most disrespectful of the rights of Pachamama (Mother Earth) and her people. The people who have historically lived in harmony with the earth and who are now feeling the most dramatic effects of climate change must determine the steps that need to be taken to fight environmental destruction. This message was echoed over and over again by Indigenous people and oppressed people from all over the world.

Seventeen working groups worked tirelessly throughout the conference to discuss topics such as climate debt and climate migrants, as well as to establish a plan for a climate justice tribunal and a world referendum on climate change. Ultimately a summary of the groups' conclusions was put into an Agreement of the People, which can be found on the conference website at [pwccc.wordpress.com](http://pwccc.wordpress.com).

The Agreement demands a commitment period from 2010 to 2017 “under which developed countries must agree to significant domestic emissions reductions of at least 50 percent based on 1990 levels, excluding carbon markets or other offset mechanisms that mask the failure of actual reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.” This proposal is vastly more demanding than the weak proposals that have been suggested by the rich countries that have thus far dominated the climate change debate.

Overall, the rhetoric of the conference was scathingly critical of capitalism and of the current state of mainstream climate change policy. At the inauguration of the conference on April 20, Morales and others spoke of climate change as a symptom of the disease of capitalist greed, which shamelessly oppresses the majority of the people of the world in the name of unbridled profits.

At the closing event on April 22, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez spoke against the capitalist system as well, linking it unmistakably with the current peril the earth is in. He said: “After all the setbacks, socialism has burst forth in Latin America. And that's the epicenter of the battle.”

Latin America was, in fact, a very relevant place for the conference to be held, as it is already experiencing many of the effects of

climate change. Bolivia's glaciers are melting at breakneck speed — its iconic Chacaltaya glacier completely disappeared in 2009, a decade before it was projected to.

In Bolivia, the Indigenous peoples of Latin America, as well as of Asia, Africa, North America and other places in the world, made it known that they are ready to lead the movement to fight global climate change. It is people such as them who are feeling the worst effects of climate change after committing little or no crimes against nature to cause this crisis.

The global climate change movement was built up stronger at the conference in Cochabamba. It is growing still, as more and more people open their eyes to the terror that has been wreaked on our earth and its people by the globalized capitalist system of oppression.

## **To save the planet, get rid of capitalism!**

*Teresa Gutierrez and Jennifer Waller, June 21, 2010*

*Following are excerpts from talks given by Teresa Gutierrez and Jen Waller at a Workers World Party/Fight Imperialism, Stand Together forum on June 11 in New York. Both Gutierrez and Waller attended the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, held from April 20-22 in Cochabamba, Bolivia.*

### **TERESA GUTIERREZ: Climate change and revolution**

Capitalism's war on the environment argues for the overturning of capitalism and imperialism. The future of humanity is at risk.

Scientists have warned that urgent action is required on the climate crisis. It is well documented how extreme weather events are directly linked to global warming.

In August 2007, at the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, scientists and government officials stated that the window of opportunity to prevent catastrophic changes to the planet's climate is narrowing rapidly. The U.N. conference called for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent to 40 percent by 2020, or, it warned, many animal and plant species could become extinct and economic havoc caused around the world.

The biggest polluter has been the United States. Yet, the U.S. won't agree to reduce emissions and undermines all attempts to reach agreements.

### **Mother Earth, yes; capitalism, no**

The fundamental questions of "how we got to this point" and "how we can get out of it" were asked at the historic Cochabamba

conference. Workers World Party and FIST representatives were honored to attend.

This working-class conference gave political and revolutionary answers to this crisis; it called for an end to capitalism. A key slogan was “Pachamama si, capitalismo no” (“Mother Earth, yes; capitalism, no”). The leaders concluded that only socialism could resolve the environmental crisis.

The Cochabamba conference put fear into the ruling class here, even more so because it took place in Latin America, which has a rich history of militant, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggles and is today the center of revolutionary upheaval.

The election of Evo Morales, the first Indigenous president in Bolivia, was itself a huge step forward, striking a blow against racism and colonialism and advancing the struggle for self-determination.

That the Cochabamba conference took place and that the environmental crisis was elevated was because of socialist Cuba’s impact on the world movement.

Nicaraguan leader Tomas Borge urged everyone to stand with Cuba. He stressed that without Fidel, without Cuba, neither President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela nor President Morales could have surfaced and thrived.

For 50 years, Cuba has withstood imperialist aggression and remained the beacon of revolutionary inspiration. Imperialism has not been able to defeat Cuba.

Cuba is the number-one sustainable country in the world, says Global Footprint Network. This is another reason why the world movement must defend Cuba.

Socialist Cuba has provided the material basis for the advancement of a revolutionary movement in Latin America. It has provided critical Marxist thinking and analysis on every burning question.

It has shown that not only a movement but also a class can stand up to imperialism, and it can win if there is political will, a class understanding and unity.

### **BP: A crisis of capitalism**

The BP oil spill is a tragedy of epic proportions. In the 53 days since its rig exploded, 90.1 million gallons of oil may have spewed. No one really knows what the environmental consequences will be — the loss of animal life, of jobs, of income and the effects on the ecosystem. It is another rapacious crime of capitalism, perpetrated by one of the world’s largest oil companies.

BP repeatedly disregarded safety problems and attempted to silence anyone who tried to tell the truth about the spill. This disaster exposes the true nature of capitalist corporations: Profits come before the workers, before safety, before environmental concerns.

Another hazard is the existence of 80,000 chemicals used in the U.S., of which only about 200 have been tested. This was raised in a recent CNN series, “Toxic America,” which told how more children are experiencing cancers.

Who is doing the testing?

Who spends millions to lobby the government to support a chemical? Isn’t the Environmental Protection Agency ineffective and in the corporations’ pockets? Who pays for research at universities if it isn’t the same chemical companies?

Although the government passed the Toxic Substance Control Act, even a congressperson admitted that it would have little effect in protecting anyone.

An American Chemistry Council representative told CNN that his industry doesn't want a system that sets high barriers for new products but one "that allows our industry to maintain its competitive edge."

They want capitalism, the free market system where they have free rein to make profits at the cost of humanity.

We want a system that puts workers before profits, that protects the earth and turns back the clock on the ravages made on the earth. The capitalists have ravaged the world's forests and drilled in the earth for profit, disregarding the consequences. In order for humanity to survive, capitalism must be abolished.

These crises powerfully illuminate the need for workers' control of the means of production. It cries out for a revolutionary and socialist transformation of society.

What other government but one like socialist Cuba's can replace much of its energy needs with solar power and environment-friendly resources, and do so much more?

The environmental crisis is a struggle for socialists.

***JEN WALLER: U.S. environmental movement must address capitalism***

I feel that the most important thing about the Cochabamba conference is that it represents a growing anti-racist, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist climate justice movement. The spirit of the conference looks at the environmental crisis as a result of this

capitalist system of exploitation and constant growth for the sake of profit for few at the expense of many. The U.S. climate justice movement must learn from this model.

Making the connections between environmental destruction and capitalism is not the norm here. Take the BP oil spill. If it had been going on when the conference took place, everyone would have been relating it to capitalism. But here, people talk about it as though it is a cross between an inevitable reality and a freak accident. The idea that it is an unnecessary tragedy that is typical of corporations within this system is not even considered by most in the U.S.

One of the main messages of the conference was that the climate justice movement must include all oppression. Demanding climate justice must mean demanding an end to all injustices. This includes freedom of movement for all.

We can't separate the climate crisis from immigration, as the issue of climate migrants is all about racism and exclusion. One meter of water rise could wipe out 20 percent of Bangladesh. Where are those people going to go? We all have to think about how we are going to support climate migrants. Many migrants are already climate migrants. Many of the world's conflicts in recent years are due to the environment — for example, the war in Afghanistan or the conflict in Darfur must both be thought of as wars over natural resources.

The structural causes of climate change and climate migration are due to capitalism. It's a globalized economy, which is based on intensive development reliant on the consumption of carbon and the exploitation of the natural resources of the entire planet. But

people aren't allowed to move like capital, because the only thing this system attempts to sustain is capital. Right now we're controlling migration as determined by economy, but it needs to be based on human rights and needs, not on the economic needs of governments and corporations.

Even the so-called "solutions" to climate change that the U.S. government promotes, such as reforestation and carbon trading, are causing displacement. The way the U.S. and other powerful countries are dealing with climate change is not in any way going to solve the problem. The decision has already been made that the people of the world are going to be sacrificed because the rich and powerful do not want to lose their power and privilege.

We will all be affected by climate change, but not at all equally. Last year's Copenhagen summit truly signed a death warrant for countries. President Obama threatened poor countries, saying they would only get aid if they signed the Copenhagen accord. Who would sign their suicide? Some did. The Ethiopian leader may have sold out his people by signing it — but was the alternative better? The leaders of other countries refused to sign the accord, such as Ecuador and Bolivia. At the Cochabamba conference, the foreign minister of Ecuador claimed that the U.S. cut off \$2.5 million in aid after Copenhagen; he stated that he would send \$2.5 million to Obama if he would sign the Kyoto protocol.

In Cochabamba I was around so many people who truly understand the enormity of this crisis. Meeting people from Latin America and from all over the world who are facing the destruction of climate change was a humbling experience. We shared our thoughts and agreed on so much. They were excited and surprised to meet someone from the U.S. who agreed with and understood their

views — and I was overjoyed to speak to everyday people who didn't think my anti-capitalist views about the environment were completely crazy.

And then I came back here to so much waste. So many wasted resources and a climate "justice" movement that is willing to discuss consumerism but refuses to mention capitalism. We have to talk to our people. This is our people, whether we like it or not, and we have to change their hearts.

It became clear in Cochabamba that the people of the world are demanding that capitalism be discussed as the root cause of this crisis. Very few of us are facing climate change head on, so who are we to deny that? We have no right.

## **Pollution, exploitation and socialism**

*Fred Goldstein, June 21, 2010*

The struggle to save the environment must end up as a class struggle.

The BP oil company, which has just unleashed the worst environmental disaster in U.S. history, is part of the oil lobby that defeated all attempts to stop climate change in Copenhagen this past spring.

The Massey coal mining company, which killed 29 miners through criminal negligence and defiance of safety rules, is part of the coal lobby that also has blocked attempts to save life on earth by stopping climate change.

General Motors, Ford, Chrysler and big auto have resisted limits on pollution for decades and participated in the payoffs to lobbyists to block environmental protection for the planet.

In fact, big oil and gas, the utility companies, most of big industry, the Chamber of Commerce — in a word, big capital — are the powers that are mining, drilling and clear-cutting from one end of the earth to the other. These are the powers that are destroying the rainforests and the ice caps, destroying habitats and endangering island and coastal civilizations that are thousands of years old, all in the pursuit of profit.

This relentless pursuit of profit is threatening much of life on the planet. The subordination of life to profit seems to be madness. But this appears as madness strictly from the point of view of humanity as a whole. CEOs and boards of directors of giant banks and corporations do not operate, cannot operate, from the point of

view of humanity, but only as the agents of accumulation of profit without regard to result — even to the point of risking self-destruction and the destruction of life.

The corporate polluters are the same ones that are laying off workers and pressuring those who remain on the job to work more intensely than ever. They are lowering wages, cutting benefits, speeding up production and services, and getting richer and richer as they pauperize the working class more and more.

Thus those who pollute are those who exploit. There is no separation. The process of capitalist production is also the process of environmental pollution. The process of capitalist production is the process of making profit. The working class has a profound interest in protecting the planet and ending the profit system and exploitation.

The means of production under capitalism are both the means of pollution and the means of exploitation. It is by seizing the means of production and putting them to use for human need, for society as a whole, on a planned and rational basis that includes the protection of the environment, that life on the planet can be saved. Socialism can save life and society. And the working class, whose historic need is to end its own exploitation, is the class that can put an end to environmental destruction.

## Environmental activists expose Chevron's crimes

*Gloria Rubac, June 7, 2010*

### **Houston, Texas**

Emem Okon traveled halfway around the world from Nigeria to Houston to attend the annual stockholders meeting of Chevron Oil Company on May 27. But she and 13 others were denied entry despite having legal proxy credentials.

Okon wanted to represent the voices and tell the stories of the women in the Niger Delta — women who have called, written letters and protested in Nigeria to no avail. They have organized to demand that Chevron clean up the environment, end gas flaring, and “respect their own human rights policies which call for two-way communication between Chevron and the Niger Delta communities.” (Justice in Nigeria Now press release)

Not only were the delegates banned, but police arrested five of them who did civil disobedience after being refused entry. Among the five arrested was Antonia Juhasz, author of “The True Cost of Chevron: An Alternative Annual Report.” Juhasz was dragged from the meeting as shareholders and their proxies chanted, “Chevron lies, people die.” CEO John Watson abruptly ended the meeting.

Others arrested included Rev. Ken Davis of Community for a Better Environment from Richmond, Calif.; Juan Parras of Houston-based Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services; and Mitchell Anderson and Han Shan of Amazon Watch.

Before his arrest, Rev. Davis stated, “I represent an area where there is no beauty shop, groceries, or cleaners. Our industry is

Chevron. My people breathe their contamination every day and are constantly sick. Our health is not for sale.” (JNN press release)

Chevron's actions in Houston have contradicted its own so-called human rights policy by silencing the voices of people from Nigeria, Australia, Ecuador, Burma, Colombia, Canada and Richmond, Calif. Nigerian Omoyele Sowore explained, “Chevron continues its criminal behavior by denying its shareholders a voice, as it has denied impacted communities a voice about pollution and climate change and they continue their connivance and collusion with military dictators around the world to suppress the voices in the communities where it operates.” ([www.TrueCostofChevron.com](http://www.TrueCostofChevron.com))

## Speculators feast on Russian heat wave

*Deirdre Griswold, August 11, 2010*

The race is already on in commodities markets worldwide to wring new fortunes out of the climate catastrophe now raging in Russia. It's a chilling example of how capitalism works in a time of crisis.

Russia is in the middle of the worst heat wave ever recorded in that vast country, most of which lies far to the north and historically has experienced relatively cool summers and frigid winters.

Over the 130 years that records have been kept, Moscow had a pleasant average of 75 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer months. This July and early August the thermometer spiked at 100 degrees — and is staying there. Hundreds of wildfires are raging in the parched forests, causing deadly smog throughout the area. The death rate in Moscow has doubled to 700 a day, which health officials blame on the smog.

Further south, in the breadbasket steppes of Russia that have made it the world's third-largest exporter of wheat, temperatures have been even hotter and crops are failing. Cattle and poultry are dying from the heat, the drought and lack of fodder. Some automakers temporarily halted production because of the extreme heat in southern Russia. (Bloomberg BusinessWeek, Aug. 5)

The Russian government announced in early August that, due to this crisis, it would not be exporting any more wheat this year.

### **Capitalist vultures feast**

Immediately, the speculators went to work.

In the Chicago Mercantile Exchange and other markets around the world where betting goes on over the future of crops, huge sums

began changing hands as capitalists gamble over how high the price of wheat will go if the devastating heat wave and drought do not end in time to rescue most of this year's harvest.

Relief does not appear to be in sight. The state weather service predicted that temperatures in most parts of central Russia would run about 14 degrees above average through Aug. 12, rising to as high as 108 degrees Fahrenheit in some areas. And only the privileged have air conditioning in most of Russia.

The weather service also reported that rainfall in July in central Russia and along the Volga River, the areas hardest hit by fires, ranged from 10 percent to 30 percent of the long-term average.

"Futures prices [of U.S. wheat] fell sharply in the financial crisis, from nearly \$13 a bushel in early 2008 to around \$4.50 a bushel less than 10 months later. In early June, they were trading around \$4.28 due to an apparent glut," reported the Wall Street Journal on Aug. 9, which hastened to add that, with the Russian disaster, "Prices surged above \$7 last week."

Speculators who are betting that wheat prices will go even higher hope there will be no rain.

But others are betting that the rains will come, the Russian crop will be saved, and there will consequently be a glut on the market next year, causing prices to fall.

Farmers in grain-exporting countries all over the world, especially the U.S., Canada and Australia, are trying to figure out whether wheat will be making money next year or prices will continue to be low. If the latter, they are likely to plant corn instead of wheat, figuring they can sell it to the energy market for ethanol.

The irony is that world grain stocks are now at the third-highest level on record and prices have been dropping, even though in the U.S. farmers have pulled back from wheat in favor of corn. The size of the wheat crop shrank 11 percent in the past two years, to 2.2 billion bushels, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Whatever happens over the next year, the world will not run out of wheat, but poorer countries and people may not be able to afford it.

The speculators and exploiters of human labor don't look at the problem from the point of view of hunger and suffering. They're concerned only about profits. "A titanic 2011 U.S. acreage battle is brewing," said Rich Feltes, senior vice president for research at MF Global, a commodities brokerage firm. (Wall Street Journal, Aug. 9)

This means that it will be the speculators, not the farmers, who in the end determine which crops are grown — and it will be based on how much profit they think can be made. They are also already speculating in the currencies of the countries involved, anticipating that inflation will depreciate the money.

### **Capitalism and climate change**

It is the drive for profits that has pushed capitalist expansion in both industry and agriculture in the modern age. This drive for profits is not only behind the speculation that is driving up wheat prices — it is also behind the climate change that is so cruelly buffeting Russia this summer.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, a U.S. governmental body, released a report on July 28 that confirmed the planet is heating up rapidly. The report got scant attention in the corporate media, even though it summarized the findings of more

than 300 climate scientists in 48 countries who measured 10 separate planetwide features, including air and sea temperatures, humidity, Arctic sea ice, glaciers, and spring snow cover in the Northern hemisphere.

The impact of continuing change, it says, will be extreme heat waves, heavy downpours in some areas and drought in others, rising ocean temperatures and acidification, insect infestations and wildfires, and sea level increases of more than three feet in some areas. (noaanews.noaa.gov) It all adds up to widespread disasters unless governments rein in greenhouse gas emissions — which appears remote, as that would threaten the interests of the ruling classes that dictate the economic policies of the capitalist countries and have blocked any meaningful international treaties on climate change.

Do today's leaders in Russia acknowledge this problem?

After all, Russia used to be part of the Soviet Union, which developed its industry according to a plan, not according to the whims of the capitalist markets. That economic plan was of course damaged by the vicious struggle of the capitalist world against socialism — both the invasion by Hitler Germany in 1939 that cost the USSR 20 million lives and much of its industry in World War II, and then the U.S.-led Cold War. This unrelenting military offensive forced the Soviet leaders to prioritize defense when the people needed relief from extreme wartime scarcity.

The Soviet Union, despite many gains for the masses made possible by the workers' revolution of 1917, did not survive. Russia today is a capitalist country where "entrepreneurs" look to profit out of any disasters. This bourgeois view of "development" has been

expressed by its political leaders, who have looked for business opportunities in the thawing of the permafrost and in the melting of sea ice north of Siberia that now blocks potential navigation channels between Europe and Asia. But the current crisis has forced a change.

President Dmitri Medvedev, who until now has been one of those leaders ambivalent about global warming, said recently: “Our country has not experienced such a heat wave in the last 50 or even 100 years. We need to learn our lessons from what has happened, and from the unprecedented heat wave that we have faced this summer.

“Everyone is talking about climate change now,” he continued. “Unfortunately, what is happening now in our central regions is evidence of this global climate change, because we have never in our history faced such weather conditions in the past. This means that we need to change the way we work, change the methods that we used in the past.” (“Russian fires prompt Kremlin to abruptly embrace climate change,” *Christian Science Monitor*, Aug. 9)

It is not likely that politicians who have embraced capitalism will learn the real lessons of the growing disasters now plaguing the world. The future lies instead with anti-capitalist forces that are growing, especially in the oppressed countries, and that say, along with Bolivian President Evo Morales, “Save the world — from capitalism.”

## **U.S. versus clean energy: Workers need jobs, not China-bashing**

*Deirdre Griswold, October 21, 2010*

The Obama administration has announced it will investigate China for subsidizing its clean-energy industries, which produce wind and solar energy products, advanced batteries and energy-efficient vehicles. This is supposed to be a move for “free trade” and to help U.S. workers, the logic being that if China is forced to give up these subsidies, that will somehow create jobs here.

If the U.S. government really wanted to help the workers and at the same time combat global warming, it would create a jobs program here and employ millions of workers to upgrade and green the infrastructure. This move by Washington has nothing to do with helping U.S. workers, who are in their worst crisis of unemployment since the Great Depression. It is all about blaming China for U.S. capitalism’s debacle while pretending to be friendly to labor in an election year.

This move by the government shows its completely two-faced attitude toward China. On the one hand, it has tried to blame China for global warming — a ridiculous charge, but one repeated endlessly by the imperialist media. On the other, it shows its complete contempt for the environmental movement and science itself by trying to obstruct China’s development of green technology.

### **Capitalism and global warming**

The problem of global warming and climate change, more than almost any other sociopolitical issue, shows that the world’s people

need socialist economic planning and cooperation in order to take control of today's enormously advanced science and technology.

If the means of production continue to belong to a highly privileged few who develop them for their private profit, however, the disastrous changes that have already begun will only multiply and intensify the misery of the masses of people — no matter how many spectacular breakthroughs are made in the fields of physics, chemistry and biology.

There cannot be a turnaround in this dismal situation until the rule of capital has been broken.

It is the people of the United States who most need to grasp this concept, because it is the U.S. ruling class that has done far more than any other to sabotage the setting of limits on greenhouse gas emissions (GGEs) — the main factor in global warming and climate change.

It is this country that for more than a century, with its tremendous industrial growth and its equally huge consumption of oil, coal and natural gas, has spewed carbon dioxide into the air. Some 25 percent of the CO<sub>2</sub> presently trapped in the earth's atmosphere came from the U.S., a country with only 5 percent of the world's people.

Because of the power of the corporations and banks that control the energy industry, the automobile industry and the real estate industry, we have no rational system of mass transportation, no green upgrading of city housing, no efficient electrical grid, no city planning to alleviate long commutes, and little green space to moderate summer heat.

Because of the power of the military-industrial-banking complex, the people's tax money that could be spent on improving all this is instead wasted on vicious wars that big businesses — especially Big Oil — hope will strengthen their weakening grip on the oil-producing countries of the world.

These same banks and corporations control the political system. Because of their financial hold over legislators, judges and officials, Congress and the White House can't even consider taking any meaningful steps to cut back on GGEs. Even worse, the political field is more and more dominated by politicians who deny that the problem even exists, despite all the scientific evidence.

So it was not surprising that last December, when 192 countries met in Copenhagen for a U.N. climate summit, even the limited goals that had been proposed by a majority of the countries were blown out of the water by the U.S. delegation. The U.S. rejected attempts to set strong limits on global warming, leaving developing countries, especially in Africa, faced with imminent disasters from climate change.

Lumumba Di-Aping of Sudan, chief negotiator in Copenhagen for the G77 group of 131 developing countries, was in tears when he said that the final agreement had "the lowest level of ambition you can imagine. ... It locks countries into a cycle of poverty forever. Obama has eliminated any difference between him and Bush."

### **China-bashing based on myths**

Washington's tactic, then and now, has been to blame China for the failure to reach a meaningful international agreement that would begin to turn around the problem of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

China bashers like to cite the fact that more than a year ago China's CO2 emissions surpassed those of the U.S. But that is only one-quarter of the story.

First of all, China has four times as many people as the U.S., so China's per capita emission of greenhouse gases is still only one-quarter that of the U.S.

Secondly, China's economy has been growing despite the worldwide capitalist economic crisis. Its industrial sector consumes 70 percent of the country's electricity. Meanwhile, U.S. industrial output has been declining in recent years, especially since the 2007 economic downturn.

Also, many U.S. manufacturers that used to operate in the U.S. have moved to China and other low-wage countries, moving their consumption of energy and the related emission of greenhouse gases offshore.

U.S. emissions in 2008 (the last year for which figures are available) actually declined by 2.2 percent from 2007, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. According to the EIA itself, this decline was due to three factors: higher energy prices, economic contraction and a lower demand for electricity. ([www.eia.doe.gov](http://www.eia.doe.gov)) None had anything to do with action taken by Washington to curb greenhouse gases.

The truth is that China, not the U.S., has made some very significant moves to begin to wean its economy away from dependence on nonrenewable sources of energy.

China is leading the world in the production of wind turbines, solar panels, energy-efficient lighting and energy-saving technology. It included in its current five-year development plan, which will be

completed this year, a 20-percent reduction in energy use per unit of gross domestic product. A similar drive to improve energy efficiency is expected to be included in the next five-year plan, beginning in 2011. (Financial Times, Oct. 18)

The U.S. has no five-year plan or even a one-year plan. This is not a planned economy, it is a capitalist economy. Capital rules, and whatever produces the biggest profit wins out. Capitalists are not held responsible for what they do to the environment; they make profits while society as a whole loses.

For a sustainable, green world we need to get rid of capitalism.

## **At Cancún climate talks: Poor countries to demand climate justice**

*Jennifer Waller, October 24, 2010*

With the close of the most recent round of climate talks in Tianjin, China, which took place during the first week of October, the world is gearing up for the next major talks in Cancún, Mexico, to begin in late November. The Tianjin talks, with delegates from more than 150 countries, produced very little progress, as the fundamental divide between the desires of rich countries and the needs of poor ones was not resolved.

At this point, few are optimistic that the talks in Cancún will result in a binding global deal. Many fear they will resemble those that took place in Copenhagen last year, which resulted in a nonbinding accord that fails to hold rich countries accountable for their contribution to climate change.

Adjacent to these arguably fruitless U.N.-organized talks, there is a growing global people's movement for climate justice that is calling for real solutions through system change. This movement can be seen protesting outside the official climate talks, from Copenhagen to Cancún. It has also taken steps to come up with real solutions for the climate crisis, under the leadership of Indigenous Bolivian President Evo Morales.

Morales organized the first World Peoples Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, which took place in Cochabamba, Bolivia, this past April. Unlike the Copenhagen conference, which excluded most climate justice activists, nonprofits and even some heads of state from certain discussions, the conference in Cochabamba welcomed all people. With about

30,000 participants from more than 142 countries, the conference addressed the climate crisis as a symptom of the larger disease of unbridled consumption, greed and disrespect for Mother Earth — all characteristics of imperialist capitalism.

### **People's Agreement in Cochabamba**

The Cochabamba conference called for greenhouse gas emissions to be cut in half by 2020, the creation of an international climate tribunal to judge countries on their contribution to the climate crisis, and the organization of an international referendum on the climate crisis.

The conference culminated in the creation of a People's Agreement, an extensive document discussing the great dilemma humanity now faces: "to continue on the path of capitalism, depredation and death, or to choose the path of harmony with nature and respect for life."

A central theme of the text is the concept of climate debt: The attendees of the conference united around the idea that rich countries must assume their responsibility for creating this colossal environmental crisis that is and will continue to be hitting poorer countries first and hardest. "The focus [for the repayment of the debts] must not be only on financial compensation, but also on restorative justice, understood as the restitution of integrity to our Mother Earth and all its beings."

The People's Agreement also highlights the fact that the Copenhagen conference featured the leaders of rich countries (under the leadership of President Barack Obama) attempting to undermine the steps taken in the Kyoto Protocol, the only legally binding agreement that addresses greenhouse gas emissions by

developed countries. The administration of Bill Clinton had succeeded in weakening the language of that accord but then refused to sign it.

The People's Agreement calls for the conference in Cancún to approve an amendment to the Kyoto Protocol for a second commitment period from 2013 to 2017 "under which developed countries must agree to significant domestic emissions reductions of at least 50 percent based on 1990 levels, excluding carbon markets or other offset mechanisms that mask the failure of actual reductions in greenhouse gas emissions." The entire text of the document can be found at <http://pwccc.wordpress.com/>.

The state of Bolivia released a communiqué on Oct. 10 with an update about the negotiating text to be taken up in Cancún, which was agreed upon by the countries present in Tianjin. The text includes many proposals from Cochabamba, such as limiting the global temperature increase to 1°C; reducing emissions by more than 50 percent by 2017; recognition of the rights of Mother Earth; no new carbon markets; 6 percent of GDP in developed countries to finance climate change actions in developing countries; the formation of an International Climate Justice Tribunal; and full respect for human rights and the rights of Indigenous peoples and climate migrants.

### **Capitalism vs. Mother Earth**

However, the road ahead to Cancún is full of many possible dangers. A document could be imposed by the rich countries that was not agreed upon by all countries, as was done at the last minute in Copenhagen. Therefore, those who hold to the beliefs of the global people's climate justice movement must show serious

support for the demands of the People's Agreement and the negotiators representing developing countries in Cancún.

As President Morales stated in Cochabamba in April, "We have two paths: either Pachamama or death. We have two paths: Either capitalism dies or Mother Earth dies."

## **Cancún: WW interviews participant in climate change protests**

*January 9, 2011*

Workers World interviewed Che Lopez, organizer with the Southwest Workers Union in San Antonio, Texas, at the Dec. 9-12 Southern Human Rights Organizers Conference in Birmingham, Ala. Lopez had just returned from La Via Campesina caravan and protests at the U.N. Forum on Climate Change (COP 16):

WW: Tell us about the La Via Campesina caravan that protested against the U.N. Forum on Climate Change.

CL: The La Via Campesina caravan started on Nov. 27 from Guadalajara. Six caravans from across Mexico traveled through the country and converged on Cancun on Dec. 3.

At the El Salto de Jalisco forum, farmworkers, youth, working class and Indigenous people testified about big business' contamination of the Santiago River and connected it to the struggle for food sovereignty. All were members of La Via Campesina as well as the National Assembly of Affected Peoples, the National Liberation Movement and the farmworkers union UNORCA. Members of the Mexican electricians union (SME) testified. But SME was smashed by the government when 44,000 workers were laid off.

On Nov. 28 in Morelia, Michoacán, we met with Siglo XVIII, which is composed of unions of teachers, public and electrical workers. About 4,000 workers marched and rallied at Lázaro Cardenas' monument, then marched to Morelia's plaza, demanding environmental justice, the right to unionize, and against liquidation of the electrical workers' union.

On Nov. 29 we went to Tepuxtepec and rallied with community people. We met with students and organizations at the university in Puebla. That is where Smithfield, the hog industry and other multinational corporations have displaced Indigenous and poor communities, although they have united in protest.

On Dec. 1 we went to Mexico City where caravans from San Luis Potosi and Acapulco joined us. We did an action in a Toluca market.

We met with petrochemical industry workers in Veracruz and with OilWatch and other organizations.

On Dec. 2 we went to Coatzacoalcos. We stopped at a roadblock where pineapple and sugar workers had taken over the road because the government promised to fix the roads for the farmworker communities.

In Merida another caravan from Oaxaca and Chiapas joined us, and we did an action there. We were hosted by UNORCA in Temozon del Norte, where we rallied. We went to Chichen Itza, a Mayan temple, where we joined in a ceremony led by Indigenous people.

In Cancun we went to the Via Campesina Camp, where the six caravans united with nearly 2,000 people. We stayed in a tent city. There were meetings and panels with people from different movements and daily actions, including at the World Bank and at Green Spaces where CEOs and industry bosses were meeting.

WW: Did you have an impact on the meeting?

CL: Yes, we had people inside with credentials as well as outside. We commemorated Lee, the Korean farmworker who committed suicide at World Trade Organization meeting in 2003. There was discussion of the Cochabamba Accords that came out of the Rights

of Mother Earth Conference held in April in Bolivia and against carbon trading, carbon sinks, and the U.N.'s REDD plan (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation).

The REDD plan includes the right to buy clean air. Negotiators go into clean communities and undeveloped places, and they buy communities' carbon credits. They then force people to move out of their communities. Corporations get the right to pollute more where they already are, surpassing their parts-per-million pollution rate. REDD is promoting dams and flooding and displacing many communities.

WW: Were there people there other than from Mexico and the U.S.?

CL: Yes, there were people resisting with us from Dakar, Copenhagen, China, India, Japan, Korea and from all continents, including Latin America, Africa and Europe, and they represented many struggles. Dec. 7 was the Global Day of Action for the Rights of Mother Earth, Climate Justice and Life in respect for the Cochabamba Accords. We marched for six miles to ground zero where Lee committed suicide.

On Dec. 9 we hosted Evo Morales and other international diplomats at the Via Campesina camp to promote ALBA, the Latin American and Caribbean alternative to free trade.

WW: What was the main message you wanted the COP16 bosses to hear?

CL: That the capitalists, with their neoliberal agenda of globalization and transnational organizations, must stop their ways of making money, polluting and creating global warming. People are rising up and demanding alternative ways of finding energy, food

sovereignty, an end to the displacement of Indigenous nations and calling for working class people to unite. So-called "free trade" and borders are creating divisions. There must be connections to the immigrant rights movement and grassroots mobilizing.

## As Washington sues Beijing over green subsidies, U.S. climate scientist calls China 'hope of the world'

*Deirdre Griswold, January 26, 2011*

A leading U.S. scientist who deals with global warming and climate change is calling the People's Republic of China "the best hope" for turning around a looming disaster for the world and "stopping rule by fossil fuel interests."

Dr. James Hansen, head of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York, also wrote in the South China Morning Post on Nov. 3, "Fossil fuel interests reign in Washington and other capitals. Big money forces legislatures to hatch ineffectual schemes such as 'cap-and-trade-with-offsets,' a system designed by big banks and fossil fuel interests that assures continued fossil fuel addiction." The South China Morning Post is an English-language daily published in Hong Kong.

China last year became the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases on an annual basis, exceeding the U.S. for the first time. So why is it the world's "best hope"? Hansen says, "China leads the world in clean energy investments — nuclear, wind and solar power."

China is also forging ahead with new technology to improve energy efficiency during the generation and transmission of electricity.

China's biggest energy source — and biggest problem — is coal, which generates 80 percent of its electricity. Its abundance has fueled China's industrial revolution. It has also contributed to air

pollution inside China and to greenhouse gases in the world's atmosphere.

However, since 2006 it has closed down many inefficient and dangerous small coal mines, cutting annual coal consumption by about 82 million tons and annual carbon dioxide emissions by some 165 million tons.

### **Most CO2 came from Britain**

It takes many years for the impact of greenhouse gases to be felt. The blanket of CO2 and other greenhouse gases now warming Earth has been accumulating since the 19th century. Hansen says the largest portion of these gases was generated by Britain, where the industrial revolution in the West started. Germany is second. It is followed by the U.S., with responsibility for 27 percent, and China, with only 9.5 percent of the total.

Even looking just at current emissions, China, with its very large population, produces far fewer emissions per capita than any other industrialized country, even though it has now become the "factory to the world."

Hansen first testified before Congress on global warming in 1988. He was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1996 and has received many prestigious awards for his scientific work. He first gained fame for having figured out which gases are in the atmosphere around Venus and creating a model based on that which correctly predicted the temperatures on the surface of that extremely hot planet. He then began using the same methods to study the composition of Earth's atmosphere and its effects on global temperatures here.

Being a scientist with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Hansen has the benefit of examining data from all over the world collected by NASA's satellites, including detailed information on the state of the polar ice caps and the mile-deep ice sheet covering Greenland, all of which are melting at an accelerating speed.

### **Dire predictions ignored**

Hansen warned in his article for the South China Morning Post that, if all the fossil fuels now underground were to be consumed, sea levels would rise by about 75 feet, inundating whole countries and forcing the migration of hundreds of millions, if not billions, of people away from coastal areas.

He has been stymied by succeeding U.S. governments in his efforts to get a global agreement, like the one that President Barack Obama shot down in Copenhagen in 2009. Therefore, he is urging the Chinese leaders to do more about weaning their economy away from coal and is applauding the steps they have already taken in that direction.

Hansen is on a collision course with big capital and its politicians, who have gone from denying that global warming exists to coming up with schemes like "cap and trade." This supposed solution, pushed by Al Gore, does nothing but shift around the responsibility for atmospheric pollution while creating a profitable market for the traders. By the way, the Gore family fortune, which got him into the Senate in the first place, comes from Occidental Petroleum.

### **China spends heavily on green infrastructure**

After world markets dramatically imploded in 2008, China worked out a stimulus package of hundreds of billions of dollars to be spent

mainly on upgrading its infrastructure. This was while the U.S. was spending its stimulus money mainly on propping up financial institutions and corporations that had been making big profits before the crash.

Since then, China has poured a lot of that money into incorporating green technologies in its development plans. For example, at the end of 2009, China budgeted \$600 billion to upgrade its electricity grid, using sophisticated ultrahigh-voltage transmission, which substantially reduces energy loss. Today there is a labor shortage in much of China as these big projects transform the landscape.

China has shown that it takes global warming seriously by putting its money where its mouth is. That is why scientists like Hansen are encouraged.

Here's the kicker: What is the U.S. government doing about all this?

In December, Washington filed a complaint against China with the World Trade Organization — for subsidizing its wind-power industry. Washington says that is a violation of "free trade." By the end of 2010, China had the wind-power capacity to produce 31 gigawatts of electricity — three times its nuclear power capacity.

### **U.S. sues China**

Come again? Yes, the U.S. is suing the Chinese government for putting money into its green industries. Moreover, even worse, this suit is supported by the Steelworkers union, on the ill-advised notion that forcing China to stop its subsidies will somehow create jobs here.

Is joining Washington in its rancorous anti-China campaign really going to convince the capitalist politicians, who have authorized

trillions of dollars to rescue Wall Street firms and wage wars overseas for the oil companies, that this money should instead be going for a jobs program here?

While capitalism has been allowed to grow in China, widening the gap between rich and poor, the government and the Communist Party, both born out of revolution, still retain control over the economic levers that make large-scale, long-term planning possible. What has proven impossible in the corporate-ridden United States — the development of a plan, any plan, to move away from fossil fuels — is a reality in China today.

Workers' organizations should focus on militantly combating the bosses, bankers and their politicians here and force them to create green jobs that could solve two daunting problems at the same time: the widespread unemployment that is grinding down workers of all ages and the environmental catastrophe that looms over the next generation.

## **Intersection of race & class: Tornadoes rip through South**

*Larry Hales, May 5, 2011*

The tornado outbreaks in the southern Midwest and Southeast states of the U.S. between April 25 and April 27 were unusually fierce and deadly. At least 339 people — and possibly more than 400 — have died. Thousands were injured by the storms and hundreds are missing. Many are homeless as whole areas were razed and completely devastated.

There are reports of over 425 tornadoes occurring over a four-day period, 259 of them on April 27, with 16 states reporting funnel clouds. This is the third deadliest tornado outbreak in the country since the Tristate outbreak of 1925 and the Tupelo-Gainesville outbreak of 1936.

A debate is going on now about the relation of the fierce and prolific tornadoes to climate change. The right-wing suggests that the effects of a warming earth due to pollution and other human causes cannot be as bad as once thought. Such a position is full of fallacies and is blatantly ridiculous, especially given all the evidence of how climate change affects earthquakes.

The storms have no prejudice. However, in the U.S., the dry line — the point at which a tornado forms where different air currents meet — is at the intersection of race and class. The most vulnerable are the poor and dispossessed of the working class, which because of the history of the U.S. are disproportionately oppressed nationalities. Whether oppressed nationalities or not, poor working people will be saddled with the effects of the tornado outbreak for a long time to come.

While President Barack Obama visited Tuscaloosa, Ala., the hardest-hit city, eager not to repeat the criminally negligent, slow response of the federal government after hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the reality is that a capitalist society is fundamentally ill prepared to give the type of response necessary during times of devastating storms.

While the U.S. is materially prepared, the priorities of capitalism and imperialism and the organization of society are such that many will be left behind.

### **Intersection of social storms**

For instance, according to a study done in 2008 by Northern Illinois University meteorologist Walker Ashley, the area with the most tornado fatalities is southeastern U.S. This is partly because, according to Ashley, "Mobile homes make up 30 to 40 percent of the housing stock in some counties in the deep South." Ashley believes that 50 percent of deaths from tornadoes are people who live in mobile homes. (New York Times, April 29)

Alabama suffered more than 200 deaths. Tuscaloosa accounted for 70 or more, with the city faring the worse with widespread damage and death.

More than half of Mississippi counties were affected, as well as parts of Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas and Georgia, along with reports of tornadoes as far west as Texas and as far north as New York.

Many parts of the South that suffered are some of the poorest in the country. Mississippi is the poorest state with the lowest per capita income; Arkansas ranks second, Alabama eighth, Tennessee

fourth and North Carolina ninth, according to a CNN report from September.

In Mississippi 22 percent of people are listed as impoverished. All the states listed above, with the exception of Virginia and New York, have poverty rates at 16 percent or higher. The poverty rate in New York State is about 13 percent.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics illuminates even more the economic degradation of the areas in the storm's path. Mississippi has an unemployment rate of 10.2 percent, North Carolina 9.7 percent, Tennessee 9.5 percent, Alabama 9.2 percent, and Arkansas 7.8 percent. These are official unemployment rates, measured by those who filed for unemployment and not taking into account the many who have dropped out of the labor market altogether. These numbers do not reflect the devastating unemployment in Black and Indigenous communities, which face the highest unemployment rates in the country.

People without homes, insurance, jobs or who live on the brink — teetering just above the threshold that separates official poverty from being not so poor — will be left to figure out how to get on with their lives at the mercy of the free market for jobs, a place to live and every necessity of life.

The states will give a bare minimum of relief for a short time. But many of the areas hit, locally and at the state level, have instituted cutbacks. Forty-four states have projected deficits for fiscal year 2011-2012 and proposed cutbacks will dig deep into the social wage.

Workers, the oppressed, the unemployed and youth are left to fend for themselves under the conditions of capitalism. The capitalist

state is not organized to provide for people's needs. This has become more evident now, as austerity is being enforced at all levels.

It is important to fight against all cutbacks, for more resources, and ultimately for the type of society that will be organized to provide for the needs of all workers and the oppressed instead of profits for the capitalists.

## **Floods, tornadoes & social revolution**

*Deirdre Griswold, June 1, 2011*

Whether it's precipitation driven by strong storms or the lack of rain, the weather has been changing — sometimes drastically. It used to be that weather was one of those things you couldn't change. You just had to accept what came and make the best of it.

But it turns out that we actually were changing it. We just didn't know. Now we do. Despite what the energy corporations and their lying think tanks have been feeding the public, there is no dispute among real scientists.

The last couple of centuries of burning coal, oil and natural gas — the so-called fossil fuels — have surrounded the earth with a blanket of heat-trapping carbon dioxide. This in turn has warmed the oceans and the land masses, meaning more moisture is sucked up into the clouds creating heavier precipitation and stronger winds.

We can't ignore the results. Much of the world has recently become a much more dangerous place to live. We hear fatalistically reported news about terrible droughts in parts of Africa and torrential rains in South America. But now that deadly flooding and tornadoes are hitting the Midwest and the South, wouldn't you expect there to be a sense of urgency in government and the media here?

The Union of Concerned Scientists on May 19 held a telephone press conference from its offices in Washington, D.C., soon after the Mississippi River reached its highest flood levels ever recorded.

A panel of scientists discussed the connection between extreme weather events and global warming. Reuters reported: “Heavy rains, deep snowfalls, monster floods and killing droughts are signs of a ‘new normal’ of extreme U.S. weather events fueled by climate change, scientists and government planners said. ‘It’s a new normal and I really do think that global weirding is the best way to describe what we’re seeing,’ climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe of Texas Tech University told reporters. ... Hayhoe, other scientists, civic planners and a manager at the giant Swiss Re reinsurance firm all cited human-caused climate change as a factor pushing this shift toward more extreme weather.”

Reuters is a British news service. Why wasn’t this reported by the Associated Press and the powerful U.S. networks?

### **Weather & ‘security’**

Alabama was hit by a wave of tornadoes in April that together killed 243 people. Those were followed on May 22 by the deadliest single tornado to hit the U.S. in 65 years, which killed 140 people in Joplin, Mo. — with 100 more still missing.

By May 28, this year had 519 confirmed fatalities from tornadoes — already matching the previous record — and there’s still a month to go in tornado season.

Scientists are cautiously saying that global warming causes more tornadoes. While the number of tornadoes reported has been increasing, more accurate reporting of these storms could have contributed to that. But better records have long been kept of actual tornado deaths, and these are definitely on the rise.

If 519 people had died in plane crashes this year, wouldn’t there be a huge investigation? Wouldn’t the responsible authorities be told

to take immediate action to protect the flying public? And what about that well-financed agency, the Department of Homeland Security? Why does it seem to do nothing except manufacture “conspiracies” so it can railroad people to jail and call that a victory over “terrorism”? No security there.

The lack of any meaningful response to global warming, despite its costs — and they are only beginning — creates an atmosphere of pessimism and leaves the field open to the most irrational “explanations” of where we are headed.

When capitalism first came on the scene as a social system, combatting the medieval views of the feudal nobility and the church, it championed science as against mysticism and fatalism. It nurtured optimism that the ability of humans to unravel the mysteries of nature would bring us as a species to a much better place, able to end famine and disease, and develop our productive skills so that all could enjoy a comfortable life. The rigors and hardships suffered by the majority of producers would become a thing of the past.

### **Science & social change**

Those days are long gone. The forces of production have developed exponentially under capitalism — but wildly, driven by the market and the lust for ever greater profits. The class divide has widened enormously. The application of scientific thinking to social questions has been sabotaged by the urgent need of the big corporations and banks to make their bundle and the rest of society be damned.

Look at how long it took the medical industry to demand that smoking be discouraged. It took the intervention of the big insurance companies, which didn’t want to pay for all the illness and

deaths caused by smoking, to get laws that would encourage a healthier life style. And what it will take to move to a sustainable economic system is immeasurably more demanding than merely banning smoking.

Is it a stretch to mention the “rapture” craze in this analysis of the results of global warming? With climate scientists much maligned, charlatans who quote scripture that the end of the world is nigh are free to hoodwink the gullible. And people are gullible because the knowledge they need to understand their world is hard to get through the haze of obfuscating, reactionary talk shows and a profitable mass culture that promotes the “paranormal,” scaring people half to death with sensational and mystical nonsense.

The salvation of the world and its peoples lies in social change that will clear away all the obstructions to rational use and development of our natural and human-made resources. This means taking ownership and control away from the class of super-rich who presently make the rules and decisions. They always have a narrow goal: to promote their interests as a highly privileged class that derives its power from its ownership of capital. Private ownership must be overthrown and social ownership instituted. That’s the only real meaning of socialism, and it requires the revolutionary reconstitution of society.

There is a convergence of interest between the working class, which historically has had to stand up to capital just to survive, and all those intermediate strata who are deeply concerned about the freight train of climate change bearing down on us. All progressive struggles are lifted once the workers are in motion. What once seemed impossible becomes possible at last.

## **Climate & planning: The other crisis that is undermining capitalism**

*Deirdre Griswold, June 9, 2011*

The ink wasn’t even dry on last week’s Workers World article dealing with climate change when tornadoes swept through western Massachusetts on June 1, killing at least three people and devastating more than 20 communities.

Scientists can’t say if a particular storm or set of storms was caused by global warming. Massachusetts has experienced tornadoes before, although rarely. But what scientists are saying with certainty is that the planet is heating up, that warmer temperatures cause more precipitation in some areas and drought in others, and that the frequency and severity of storms has been increasing.

There is also no doubt that the rise in temperatures is due to human burning of fossil fuels, which causes greenhouse gases (GHGs) to collect in the atmosphere and trap heat that otherwise would radiate away from the earth.

### **Three decades of conferences**

These facts have been known or suspected for decades. The First World Climate Conference was held in February 1979 in Geneva, sponsored by the World Meteorological Organization of the United Nations. Nine years later the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was set up to centralize data and issue reports to inform the public on what was happening.

That was followed in 1992 by the creation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at what became known as the Earth Summit. In the almost two decades since then, the

parties to the UNFCCC have held annual meetings. The data presented there have shown that the process of climate change is moving much faster than originally anticipated. But no binding agreement on reducing GHGs has been reached among the member nations.

The main obstacle has been the imperialist U.S. government. In March 2001, President George W. Bush rejected the Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement that set very modest limits on GHGs and had been signed in 1992 by his father, the first President Bush.

When Barack Obama was elected in 2008, there was hope among climate activists that this would put the U.S. back on track to cooperate with a world agreement to reduce GHGs. But that was blown out of the water in 2009 at the 15th Climate Change Conference, held in Copenhagen, Denmark, a gathering that aroused great hope and was attended by ministers and officials from 192 countries. Obama himself went there and blocked the conference from issuing a binding resolution that world scientists had labored over for months and that would have taken effect after the Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012.

Thus, it was with a sense of great frustration and even desperation that Bolivia in April 2010 hosted a World People's Summit on Climate Change and Mother Earth Rights. It reaffirmed the damage being done to the environment, especially in countries oppressed by neocolonial capitalism, and called for respecting the rights of the earth. Some 15,000 people attended from all over.

It needs to be understood that even if GHG emissions were right now to be cut to nothing, the planet would continue to warm for quite a while because of the persistence of carbon dioxide in the

atmosphere. And the chain effects of that would continue to be felt for centuries. (IPCC, "The Long-Term Perspective," 2007)

There are two urgent needs, immediate and long-term: 1) to prepare for the consequences of sea-level rise and more extreme weather, both of which are sure to come, and 2) to reorganize human life and activity on this planet so GHGs can be reduced to a level where the earth's temperature and climate can eventually recover some equilibrium.

The first reaction to such a daunting prospect is likely to be despair. If the huge inequities in the world can't be righted, and are only getting worse, what hope is there that the governments of the rich imperialist countries, the ones responsible for the vast majority of the GHGs emitted over the last two centuries, will shoulder the burden of rectifying global warming and rebuild their societies accordingly?

No, there is no chance of that happening. The capitalist governments are already in chaos over the irrational workings of their economic system, and won't even address the severe social problems of unemployment, ballooning health costs and the education crisis.

Prepare better shelters for when a deadly storm strikes? Build sturdy homes for the millions who live in flimsy trailers and substandard housing? Build a mass transit system that would reduce auto emissions? All these things — and much more — need to be done. And there are plenty of people looking for work who would love to do them. But that won't happen — not under capitalism.

### **Think outside the box**

This article is not meant to belittle the many struggles that environmentally conscious people are engaging in to ameliorate the effects of global warming. Rather, it is to get all of us to think outside the box.

The box is this profit system. It is self-perpetuating, even when it's in crisis, until a force emerges strong enough to oust the super-rich class of property owners from their seats of economic and political power.

And that force is the working class and all those oppressed by capitalism. It is the only force able to paralyze the system just by withholding its labor — as seen recently in microcosm in Wisconsin and much bigger during the Great Depression of the 1930s, when the workers fought tooth and nail to build industrial unions and there was a great leap forward in progressive consciousness on all social questions.

The multinational working class, especially in the imperialist countries, is being walloped by the capitalist bosses and the state and is starting to fight back. It is in the process of painfully developing its own world view, one in solidarity with the workers and oppressed peoples of the planet. Internationalism of the workers is absolutely crucial in this time of a global network of exploitation created by the transnational banks and corporations.

The environmental movement is also being walloped. It needs to develop class consciousness, to identify clearly the root cause of this problem: capitalism. It needs to understand that the super-rich will never become its partners in facing up to the GHG crisis.

Private property divorces the owners of the means of production from the harmful consequences of their productive processes. When the factories, the mines and most of the infrastructure of society are owned and operated to produce maximum profits for a few, then “social responsibility” is just a charade, a cover-up, the spending of a few dollars on look-good projects to hide the fact that the major decisions are calculated to increase the bottom line. And that bottom line leaves out the costs to society. Global warming is one of those costs.

It is a huge problem and can only be truly solved by planning on a mass scale. For planning like that to happen, there will have to be a social revolution. The workers and their allies will have to take over the means of production and operate them on an entirely new basis: not to produce profits for the few, but to meet the needs of the many, including the need to have a sustainable, healthy world.

A tall order? Yes. But capitalism is in crisis and social revolution is more and more on people's minds. The Bolivia conference showed that. It's time for climate activists in the U.S. to think outside the box of capitalism.

## **Tornadoes, acid oceans and insurance companies**

*Deirdre Griswold, March 8, 2012*

The tornado season in the United States started early this year — a whole season early. Winter’s grip was still on the land when deadly twisters in the Midwest and South disintegrated homes and flung people and animals around like rag dolls. Like everything else about the weather these days, that broke all kinds of records.

The number of tornadoes was mind-boggling: More than 100 of them coiled and roared over 12 states, killing 40 people. It happened three weeks before the start of spring. Thousands picking through the rubble of their broken homes days later shivered as snow fell.

A huge swath of the United States was affected, from Nebraska to South Carolina, from Mississippi to Ohio. The Feb. 29-March 3 storm system was so large and powerful that debris sucked up by a twister in Henryville, Ind., was later found 68 miles away.

Such tragic scenes are becoming all too familiar as the planet warms and weather patterns are disrupted. Stunned survivors call out for help, while frustrated scientists who know only too well the cause of such disasters plead with increased urgency for government action to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

Scores of international conferences have been held with little political result. Let’s not forget that the U.S., with just 5 percent of the world’s population, is responsible for 25 percent of the accumulated carbon dioxide gas warming the planet. But the capitalist government in Washington is too busy waging wars and cutting social benefits to pay much attention to the problem of

global warming, even when it strikes so close to home. In fact, many elected representatives — who represent first and foremost the powerful energy companies that profit off oil, natural gas and coal — still profess the thoroughly discredited view that global warming doesn’t exist.

### **Insurance industry weighs in**

Will that change now that the insurance industry has weighed in, calling on the government to do something about climate change?

On March 1, one day after the latest outbreak of tornadoes began, insurance industry representatives spoke at a press conference in Washington organized by Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, an independent, and Rhode Island Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, a Democrat. Present were people from the Reinsurance Association of America, the firms Willis Re and Swiss Re, and the nonprofit organization Ceres.

“As a member of the global insurance industry, we have witnessed the increased impact of weather-related events on our industry and around the world,” said Mark Way, head of Swiss Re’s sustainability and climate change activities in the Americas. “A warming climate will only add to this trend of increasing losses, which is why action is needed now.” (Insurance Networking News, March 2)

What has led the insurance industry to take on the lies and misinformation spread by the energy industry? Profits — or rather the threat of losing them. In other words, the capitalist insurance industry is driven by the same motive as the capitalist energy industry. But in this case their interests collide head-on.

And those speaking at the press conference made no bones about it. Their unusual activism is all about money, they said. In the 1980s,

insurers paid out an average of \$3 billion a year on claims related to weather-caused damage. That number went up to \$20 billion a year by the end of the last decade. And it continues to rise.

“Property and casualty insurers in the United States experienced an estimated \$44 billion in losses last year when hurricanes, droughts, tornadoes and other natural disasters were more severe, longer, more frequent and less predictable than in the past,” said Insurance Networking News in its report on the press conference. What the insurance companies are looking for is government money to make up their losses.

This is not the first time that the insurance industry has lobbied against practices that cut its profits and drove up the price of premiums. While health advocates warned for decades about the deadly risks of smoking, it took the intervention of insurers for the government to intervene and ban smoking in public places. Again, it was all about profits — something that capitalist politicians can understand.

### **Don't bet on market forces**

Could this happen again? Don't bet on it. The problem of tobacco was very small compared to the problem of global warming, and the energy industry is much more powerful, with strong ties to banking and the military. Plus, the change effected was primarily in individual behavior — stopping smoking. But no matter how conscientious individuals try to be with regard to climate change — driving cars with better mileage, riding bikes and walking to work — it's all a drop in the bucket.

What is needed to slow down, much less reverse, global warming is a massive reorganization of production, transportation and housing

simultaneously with seeking and developing new sources of energy and energy conservation.

Meanwhile, the situation grows more dire. The magazine *Science* just published an alarming report by 21 scientists on the acidification of the oceans. One of its authors, Andy Ridgwell of Bristol University, said, “The geological record suggests that the current acidification is potentially unparalleled in at least the last 300 million years of Earth history, and raises the possibility that we are entering an unknown territory of marine ecosystem change.”

The increasing acidity of the oceans comes directly from the release of carbon dioxide. One quarter of the gas is absorbed by sea water, where it is converted into carbonic acid.

There is no lack of evidence that a planetwide disaster is unfolding. And the cause is right here at home. Meanwhile, hundreds of millions of people cannot get jobs as the capitalist system sheds workers and cuts needed services.

Clearly, time is growing short for a revolutionary reconstruction of society. No Band-Aids can do the job. Only by defying bourgeois property rules can the working class — the vast majority, the 99%, many of whom have no future under capitalism — take over and control the world's immense productive apparatus that exists so that socialist planning can begin to convert it to meet human needs and save the planet.

## Rio+20 Summit: No agreement on sustainable development

*Abayomi Azikiwe, June 27, 2012*

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, hailed as the largest U.N. conference ever held, ended on June 22 after more than a week of speeches, but with no specific timetables or achievable goals.

Held in Rio de Janeiro 20 years after the first Earth Summit in the same city, the conference, informally called Rio+20, was supposed to tackle the formidable problems of climate change, now an acknowledged fact.

It was attended by more than 45,000 people from around the globe, representing 190 countries. At least 100 heads of state articulated their views on the environment, economic development and the balance of power between the industrialized capitalist states and the so-called developing countries.

But a 49-page document entitled “The Future We Want,” which was released after the summit, did not commit to any concrete solutions.

At the end of the Copenhagen climate-change summit of 2009, African countries walked out to protest the inability of the developed states to take responsibility for global warming and its impact on the continent.

### **‘Talk shop’ fails to address poverty**

This time many nongovernmental organizations and so-called civil society groups condemned the event as another talk shop that would not bring about any tangible improvement in the conditions

of poverty and underdevelopment inflicting billions of people around the world.

The two most militaristic imperialist powers, the United States and Britain, did not bother to send their top leaders to address the conference. Barack Obama, who sent Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, was busy trying to assure his reelection. David Cameron, who sent his Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, was submerged in the worsening sovereign debt crisis in Europe that threatens to engulf the continent and other parts of the world in another capitalist downturn, with even graver implications than the one from 2007 to 2009.

When Clegg appeared on a giant screen at the food court outside the gathering, his image was met with hisses and boos — an indication of the anti-Western sentiment at the conference.

Bo Normander, European director of Worldwatch Institute, said, “I want more of the future than this agreement’s long list of platitudes and feeling-good rhetoric.” (Irish Times, June 25)

In regard to the section on the “green economy” included in Chapter 3, Normander noted that “the description is ambiguous, unambitious and immeasurable [and] there are no specific targets or commitments which can bind countries to do something. The EU should not have accepted it.”

The document does not contain any commitments to phase out fossil fuel subsidies, worth an estimated \$1 trillion internationally. Justin Kilcullen, director of the Irish charity Trocaire, devoted to working for a just world, pointed out that levying taxes on financial transactions, “which could generate billions in revenue each year to eliminate poverty and tackle climate change,” was not mandated.

Over the last two decades conditions related to the environment and the class divisions between rich and poor have worsened. The Earth Summit of 1992 put forward significant ideas exposing the problems of climate change and biodiversity as well as the need to eradicate poverty and achieve social justice.

Nonetheless, since 1992, global emissions have increased by 48 percent, while the world population has grown by 1.6 billion, with no real plans to provide food, water, shelter, education and economic resources for these people. Over the last several years, more uncertainty has developed due to the multi-trillion-dollar debt crisis, the rise in unemployment and the many NATO and U.S. military interventions in Central Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

#### **Alternative approaches from Africa & Latin America**

However, two speeches, delivered by the presidents of Zimbabwe and Cuba, did shed light on the current crisis as well as show a way forward for the majority of people throughout the world.

President Robert Mugabe of the Republic of Zimbabwe said that the imperialist states are almost in denial about the severity of the current situation. He called for “the complete overhaul of the global economic and financial governance structures so that they are more responsive to the needs of poor states, particularly those that are more vulnerable.”

President Raul Castro Ruz of Cuba observed: “What could have been considered alarmist, today constitutes an irrefutable reality. The inability to transform unsustainable models of production and consumption is threatening the balance and regeneration of natural mechanisms which sustain life forms on the planet.” (Granma International, June 22)

President Castro continued, “The effects cannot be hidden. Species are becoming extinct at a speed one hundred times faster than those indicated in fossil records; more than 5 million hectares of forests are lost every year; and close to 60 percent of ecosystems are degraded.”

The Cuban leader concluded by emphasizing, “The only alternative is to build more just societies; to establish a more equitable international order based on respect for the rights of all; to ensure the sustainable development of nations, especially those of the South; and place advances in science and technology at the service of the salvation of the planet and human dignity.”

#### **Capitalism is unsustainable**

It is the world capitalist system that is causing monumental problems throughout the globe. These abuses, involving exploitation and oppression of both human society and the natural environment, which are largely dictated by the developed capitalist states, affect the overwhelming majority of the world’s people, especially those in the developing countries.

The problems of environmental degradation, poverty and hunger will not be overcome without the overthrow of international finance capital and its surrogates. The profitability of capitalism is derived from these very problems that imperialists claim they are committed to alleviating.

Inside the industrialized states, the workers and oppressed must work vigorously to bring about fundamental economic change.

## Heat waves, global warming & capitalist politics

*Gene Clancy, July 18, 2012*

Gov. Mitch Daniels of Indiana has not had much to say about the current deadly heat wave that has swept his state and much of the United States. Sitting in his air-conditioned office, he is largely insulated from the disaster that is sweeping not only Indianapolis, the state capital, but most of the country.

In Fort Wayne, Ind., the temperature of 103 tied an all-time record high set during the Dust Bowl era in 1934 and 1936 and later during the blistering summer of 1988. As of July 8, one of the worst heat waves in U.S. history continues its hold, with temperatures of 100 degrees or higher spreading to northeastern cities, including Philadelphia and New York.

The heat set records on July 7 in Washington — 105 degrees — as well as in St. Louis with 106 and Indianapolis with 104. More than 2,500 heat records have been broken in the U.S. since July 1, and almost 25,000 heat records have been broken so far this year. (ABC News, July 9)

At least 30 deaths are being blamed on the heat, including nine in Maryland and 10 in Chicago, mostly among the elderly. Heat was also cited as a factor in three deaths in Wisconsin, two in Tennessee and three in Pennsylvania. (Associated Press, July 7)

In Colorado 30,000 people are recovering from one of the most devastating wildfires in history, which destroyed hundreds of homes. Across the West a record number of wildfires are raging more or less out of control, caused by months — in some cases, years — of record heat and drought. A steady drop in the annual

snowpack on the Rocky Mountains has severely limited irrigation and the water available for people to drink.

Oppressive heat waves. Horrendous wildfires. Devastating droughts as well as flooding from giant deluges. And a powerful freak wind storm, called a derecho, which downed power lines across a wide swath of the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic regions.

### **Daniels leads ‘deniers’ of climate change**

Is all this just freakish weather — or something more? Some climate specialists suggest that if you want a glimpse of the future of global warming, just take a look at U.S. weather in recent weeks.

Gov. Daniels would not agree. Here’s the derisive and bigoted language he used to dismiss global warming last year:

“A relentless project has inundated Americans for years with the demand that we must drastically reduce the carbon dioxide we emit as a society. It is asserted that the earth is warming; that this warming would have negative rather than positive consequences; that the warming is man-made rather than natural; that radical changes in the American economy can make a material difference in this phenomenon. ...

“The debate, so far, has been dominated by ‘experts’ from the University of Hollywood and the P.C. Institute of Technology.

“Any dissident voice is likely to be the target of a fatwa issued by one Ayatollah or another of the climate change theocracy, branding the dissenter as a ‘denier’ for refusing to bow down to the ‘scientific consensus.’

“The late author and scientist Michael Crichton spoke witheringly of this pattern in a speech at Cal Tech. He said, ‘I regard consensus

science as an extremely pernicious development that should be stopped cold in its tracks.” (Daniels’ speech to Rose-Hulman graduates quoted in gadfly.blogspot.com, May 2011)

Apparently, Daniels prefers Michael Crichton, whose main claim to fame was that he became a multimillionaire by marketing a series of science fiction books like “Jurassic Park” and “The Andromeda Strain,” to scientists and academics from Purdue University, an Indiana engineering school which has issued many warnings about global warming and the influence of carbon dioxide emissions.

On June 21, as record wildfires raged in Colorado and across much of the West, the Daily Green republished a 2009 report by Purdue University’s Duffenbaugh Laboratory, which linked the risk of fires to global warming.

On the same day, Purdue University trustees announced they had chosen Gov. Daniels to be president of the university.

It is the first time that Purdue appointed a president who did not have any experience in running an academic institution. Daniels has savaged both university and public schools. He has been a loyal supporter of both the petroleum and coal industries in Indiana.

But that is ignoring his main “qualification.” He appointed eight of the 12 trustees.

Whether all these recent weather events are the result of global warming can only be verified in the future. But it is clear that “deniers” like Mitch Daniels and his ilk don’t really care about the future well-being of humanity. They’re too busy padding the wallets of their capitalist paymasters.

## **Sizzling summer in Detroit: Profit motive creates heat misery**

*Martha Grevatt, August 2, 2012*

### **Detroit**

The recent heat waves have had a devastating effect in Michigan, which already suffers from high rates of unemployment, poverty and foreclosures. A study by the Union of Concerned Scientists showed that the number of days with record high temperatures has doubled in Detroit since the 1950s. (Detroit News, July 26)

On July 4, after blazing temperatures drove electricity usage up close to capacity, a freak storm knocked out power for hundreds of thousands of metro Detroit residents. Two days later, most workers, including this writer, were still without service, suffering in the heat and throwing out food that many could ill afford to lose. It took a week before DTE Energy had everyone’s power back on.

Lower than average rainfall, combined with record high temperatures, has had a serious impact on agriculture in Michigan. Almost all this year’s tart cherry crop — Michigan supplies the majority of pie cherries in the U.S. — was lost. Every fruit or vegetable crop, with the lone exception of blueberries, had been substantially reduced. With their source of income nearly wiped out, how many farmers will now face foreclosure?

What about the farm workers, already low paid and super exploited, who will not have work? If they do find work, it will be the same backbreaking labor, but in temperatures that have topped 100 degrees.

While power outages and agricultural losses have made headlines, another aspect of the heat crisis has been ignored by the capitalist-owned media. That is how workers in the auto plants are suffering on the job. None of the Detroit Three's assembly and parts plants in the area is air conditioned. When it is hot outside, it is hotter and stuffier inside, due to poor air circulation and the added heat generated by the machinery. Fans are frequently inadequate.

Workers in some plants are offered free bottled water and sports drinks to alleviate heat stress, but that is as far as management is willing to go. There are no extra or longer breaks. Instead, workers have to insist on getting the relief time allowed by contract. Under the 2009 contract modifications, incorporated into the current 2011-2015 agreements, relief time was cut by about 40 hours per year. Workers risk discipline and even discharge if they take too many days off. Many are on "alternative work schedules" and working 10-hour days.

Workers have passed out in some plants, but the fear factor has kept them on the job. Several years ago, workers who led a heat walkout were fired from Chrysler's Warren Truck Assembly Plant. They were eventually reinstated, but the company achieved its goal of scaring workers. There have been no more walkouts at WTAP.

Workers in UAW Local 892 did picket their plant in Saline, Mich., in the second week of July, in 102-degree heat, to protest the lack of ice and a rule against having drinks on the line. On June 1 Ford had sold the plant to parts supplier Faurecia. Union president Mark Caruso, who organized the protest, was then transferred to a Ford plant three weeks ahead of his scheduled departure. "This sends a chilling effect to us regular workers," an unnamed worker told the Saline Patch. Picketers have reportedly been disciplined.

### **Climate change = pain for workers**

On July 5, while Detroiters were working in hot factories and coming home to houses without power to run their fans and air conditioners, the Detroit News published an Associated Press article on the weather crisis which stated "it's far too early to say" that "global warming is the reason 3,215 daily high temperature records were set in the month of June." Nevertheless, this year's wildfires, droughts, heat waves, flooding and "a powerful freak wind storm called a derecho" are "the kind of extremes experts have predicted will come with climate change."

In March, the Nobel prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicted "unprecedented extreme weather and climate events." In an unusually hot June, there were heat advisories affecting 113 million people. University of Arizona professor Jonathan Overpeck stated, "This is what global warming looks like at the regional or personal level."

Of course, none of these assessments ties the general crisis of climate change or its current manifestation in Michigan — or anywhere — to the profit system.

But the worst offenders in perpetuating dependency on fossil fuels are the same utility companies that took their time restoring power and the auto companies that allow workers to suffer in the heat.

It's estimated that 75 percent of all carbon emissions that create the "greenhouse effect" behind steadily rising global temperatures come from power plants. Yet utility companies have steadfastly resisted conversion to renewable energy sources. DTE, rather than spend money hiring more workers to restore power faster when crises occur, is funding a campaign to defeat a ballot initiative that

would require 25 percent of all power in Michigan to come from renewable sources by 2025.

The auto companies continue to oppose mandatory fuel economy standards. Ford, General Motors and Chrysler, while adding more fuel-efficient and electric vehicles to their model lineup, depend on gas-guzzling trucks and sport utility vehicles to maximize their profit margin. These same companies have contributed to the crisis of unemployment by closing 75 Michigan plants since 1979 — more than half of them since 2004. Many Detroit activist groups are calling for these plants to be converted to manufacture “green” products. The profit motive has not generated even one conversion; instead, more than half of those plants have been demolished, often to lower taxes.

The United Auto Workers union, to its credit, has supported raising the Corporate Average Fuel Economy standards to 54 miles per gallon. Of course, the leadership would have more credibility with the rank and file if it would fight harder for workers on the shop floor. Unions in other countries, including the Canadian Auto Workers and the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, have held major conferences on jobs and climate change.

The theme of NUMSA’s conference was “Renewables: too important to be left in private hands.” The struggle against the capitalist mode of production draws together the fight for full employment, a safe and comfortable home and work environment, and the planet’s very survival.

*Martha Grevatt has been a UAW Chrysler worker for 25 years.*

## Same storm, different responses

*G. Dunkel, September 10, 2012*

The storm called Isaac hit Haiti, Cuba and the United States. When it lashed Haiti and Cuba, meteorologists called it a storm; when it brushed Florida and came ashore in Louisiana, they called it a hurricane. No matter what it was called, it was dangerous.

Georges Ngwa Anuongong, spokesperson for the United Nations’ humanitarian mission in Haiti, reported Aug. 30 that Isaac had killed 24 people in that impoverished country, injured 42 and left more than 6,000 families without shelter. Major damage was done to Haiti’s agriculture. Most observers expect these figures will worsen.

By contrast, the Cuban press agency Granma reported: “There was virtually no social or economic damage in the country. Isaac entered Cuba via Guantánamo in the easternmost part of the island, in the morning of Saturday, Aug. 25 and exited in the evening of the same day from the northern coast of Holguín province.”

In the U.S., the AP reported two deaths from Isaac’s winds as it passed through Louisiana and Mississippi. But as flood waters receded in Plaquemines Parish, which stretches from New Orleans to the mouth of the Mississippi, more victims were discovered. Parish President Billy Nungesser said Isaac did more damage to his parish than Katrina did in 2005. At least seven people were killed in the storm in the U.S. — five in Louisiana and two in Mississippi. (Daily News, Sept. 3)

### **Haiti: ‘We don’t exist’**

Nearly 400,000 people in Port-au-Prince are still living under tarps and in huts 32 months since Haiti’s disastrous 2011 earthquake. This

means fatalities from Isaac could have been much higher. Most of the people living in the camps spent the night standing up, cradling their children, for fear that if they lay down they would be drowned.

One resident of “Camp Accra” told Haïti-Liberté: “The wind came and blew away our tarp. We spent the night in the rain. All of our things got wet. We didn’t sleep. We didn’t see any authorities. They left us here to die. We live amidst garbage. We don’t have security; all the time criminals steal our things, or rape us. The cholera that Minustah [the U.N. occupation force] brought is killing people in the camp since it started raining. Someone died here [of cholera] already last week. The way we see it, we don’t exist in the eyes of Haitian authorities.” (Aug. 29)

Besides urging people to tape their windows — hard to do if you live in a tent — and to stock up — also hard to do if you are poor — the government told people to be prepared to evacuate to suitable shelters. About 15,000 people — less than 4 percent of the people in the camps — actually made it to shelters in churches and schools. According to videos posted by some NGOs, most of the people in the camps, who live without electricity, didn’t know Isaac was coming.

When residents of Canapé Vert tried to mobilize on Aug. 25 to make their voices heard, the cops arrested nine of them for the crime of calling on the Haitian state to protect them against the effects of Isaac.

All electric power was lost in Port-au-Prince and was being restored one neighborhood at a time.

The U.S., through the U.N., has spent billions in Haiti for its “stabilization,” which is just a cover for keeping the situation stable for corporate and strategic interests. It extols the government of Michel Martelly as democratic and the situation in Haiti as

“improving,” even as cholera sickens hundreds of thousands and hundreds of thousands more are denied even a minimally adequate existence.

### **Cuba: Infrastructure worked**

Cuba has much experience in confronting meteorological events. The National Civil Defense chief of staff, Ramón Pardo Guerra, said, “The country has a comprehensive infrastructure created for these events and so — if we use it properly — as has been reported in each territory, nobody is at risk.”

There were power outages, and some roofs were lost due to the wind. Flooding caused some damage and some towns were cut off for a time. But no one died, and those most at risk were evacuated. Fox News reported that a number of Cuban tourists were encouraged to go home.

The whole effort was designed to minimize the loss of life and damage to the economy. It succeeded.

### **United States: flooding and deaths**

Since Hurricane Katrina, the federal government has spent \$14 billion improving the levee system protecting New Orleans. Even though the system is not complete, New Orleans escaped relatively unscathed. Power was out for most of the city and as of Sept. 3 still has not been completely restored. By some measures, even though Isaac was much less powerful than Katrina in 2005, the storm surge was nearly equivalent. Some streets were flooded but no major flooding was reported — in New Orleans.

There were compelling economic reasons for the U.S. government to spend so much money. As a port, New Orleans ranks first in the

U.S. based on volume of cargo handled and 13th largest based on the value of cargo. Since it is served by six major railroads, it is a low-cost distribution hub.

Losing New Orleans as a port would be a major blow to the whole U.S. economy, especially to the parts, like agriculture, that depend on the cheap transport of bulk goods.

However, outside of New Orleans, there was major flooding. Even six days after the storm, Plaquemines Parish is flooded. Its east bank is cupped between federal levees along the Mississippi and local levees on the Gulf. Since the local levees were overtopped, a lot of water remains. Similar problems are occurring on its west bank.

While residents of Plaquemines were encouraged to evacuate, and buses were provided by the parish for the poor, there doesn't appear to have been any major mandatory evacuation. The cops organized some large convoys of cars going north out of the flood zone. A large number of people had to be rescued.

Ivy Parker, a militant in the Solidarity Coalition for Katrina & Rita Survivors, pointed out to Workers World: "Living close to the Mississippi River can never be completely safe. The river in a storm can do unexpected things — you have to be prepared."

Haiti is the poorest capitalist country in the Western Hemisphere and the U.S. is the richest. Both relied on voluntary action by individuals to avoid the dangers of Isaac. In the U.S., most individuals had the resources needed, though not all. In Haiti, most people didn't have the resources and many more died.

In Cuba, the response, could be more organized since Cuba's socialist society rests on solidarity.

## People win battle with Power Authority in Puerto Rico

*Berta Joubert-Ceci, October 20, 2012*

Puerto Rico's people won a vital environmental struggle when acting President of the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) Josué Colón publicly withdrew a request for a permit to allow the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to construct a 92-mile-long gas pipeline. Puerto Rico is barely 106 miles long and 37 wide.

Since right-wing, pro-business and pro-statehood Gov. Luis Fortuño raised the proposal two years ago, strong voices opposing the project immediately began organizing to defeat the project.

### The 'tube of death'

PREPA provides electricity, mainly generated by oil-fired units, for the whole island. One gas-producing plant owned by the foreign transnational, Ecoeléctrica, and located in the southern city of Peñuelas, provides 13 percent of Puerto Rico's gas.

In 2010, Gov. Fortuño declared an energy crisis in the island to pressure for his pipeline proposal, which he called the "Green Way". It would have taken gas from Peñuelas, crossing to the north through the Central Mountain range and end in three generating plants along the northern coast, ending in San Juan.

"Green Way" is an outrageous name considering the tremendous environmental destruction the pipeline would have provoked as it was to cross important aquifers that provide water to the south, rivers, protected forests areas with biodiversity, etc. It would have affected the climate and exacerbated risks from tsunamis, corrosion, floods, fires, earthquakes and landslides, affecting

directly more than 200,000 people. Additionally, it would have required the expropriation of at least 400 parcelas (plots of land). (See [casapueblo.org](http://casapueblo.org))

Studies also showed that the project, which was proposed as low-cost alternative green energy, would not lower utility bills to the consumer.

Some \$80 million of the \$800 million public-money budget have already been spent. Even before the project was approved, Fortuño had already spent several millions in advertising and consultants, paid to his business allies.

Since Puerto Rico is a U.S. colony, any struggle on the island is also for independence and self-determination. Washington's and U.S.-based corporations' role is all over this project, and USACE was an accomplice. In an article last June, Casa Pueblo — the environmental organization that initiated the struggle — said, "Gov. Luis Fortuño told a newspaper this week that his administration will not withdraw the application for a permit for the pipeline because USACE has recommended not to stop obtaining such approval." ([pr.indymedia.org](http://pr.indymedia.org))

The project has also underscored the corruption that has plagued the Fortuño administration since its beginning, including payments to lobbyists and contractors.

### **People's struggle**

In spite of the millions wasted by the government on publicity and consultants, however, the unity and perseverance of the people finally won. Casa Pueblo, a 25-year-old environmental activists' organization located in the center of Puerto Rico, did an outstanding

job in researching, exposing and organizing the people around the island.

With the help of local and foreign scientists, engineers and environmentalists, Casa Pueblo published thorough investigations and promoted popular participation. It mobilized throughout the country with full participation of all social progressive organizations and parties, unions, community, women and students groups. It reminded many of the people's struggle against the Navy bombing in Vieques.

This mobilization was a significant step forward for the class struggle. The militant UTIER union represents PREPA's workers and was an important part of the resistance; its public position on the energy crisis reflected a deep political understanding of the situation.

In his presentation during a pipeline hearing, UTIER President Ángel Figueroa Jaramillo placed the situation within the context of the global capitalist crisis and climate change. Stressing that in Puerto Rico, "The current government has decided to deal with the challenges posed by this crisis by implementing neoliberal measures that not only do not serve the fundamental problems but that put all the weight and cost of the solution on those who have the least, increasing the gap between the economic sectors of the country."

Both Casa Pueblo and UTIER call for the involvement of the people in the design of a new direction for the environmental policies and sustainable energy production.

## Will superstorm break the silence?

*Workers World Party statement, November 2, 2012*

As of Nov. 2, the toll from Hurricane Sandy, the huge storm that ravaged the Caribbean and then cut a swath from the mid-Atlantic states all the way up into Canada, is reported to be 67 people killed in the Caribbean and 95 people dead in the U.S., including 44 in the New York City area.

Millions are still without power, and the damage is reckoned at many tens of billions of dollars. No numbers have been put on personal losses of the masses of people in terms of their homes, cars, household possessions, lost wages, lost jobs, let alone irreplaceable personal items of precious, lifetime, sentimental value.

As bad as this storm has been, its devastation would have been immeasurably worse had it not been for the extraordinary accomplishments of modern meteorological science, which was able to warn public authorities and people about the timing, the path, the intensity and breadth of the storm with a remarkable degree of accuracy.

It is, however, a major contradiction that while the warnings of meteorological science about this extreme weather event saturated the media, not a word was said about the warnings made by climate scientists. Their voices, which grow ever more desperate, have been under attack by an array of the most powerful corporate polluters in the world.

## Profit motive and climate science

This seeming contradiction can only be explained by the profit motive.

On the one hand, meteorological science is needed by agribusiness, shipping, maritime, airlines, off-shore oil drillers, power companies, insurance companies, the commodities markets, the tourist industry, and numerous other capitalist interests. All these parties need to know about the weather in order to maximize their profits and minimize their losses. This list should include the Pentagon, which has a strong military interest in climate prediction.

On the other hand, the vast majority of climate scientists around the world concur and have proven that climate change is produced by global warming, which in turn is caused by the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The result is increasingly extreme weather events — like Hurricane Sandy.

Thus to deny the findings of climate science is in the interests of the oil and gas companies, the coal industry, the power-generating businesses, and other giant industrial polluters who profit from processes that spew carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. They refuse to take measures to curb these emissions because that would eat into their profits.

Both the advancement of meteorological science and the denial of climate science can be traced directly to the profit interests of the biggest and most powerful capitalists. This illuminates the complete irrationality of the capitalist system.

### **Industry and 'climate silence'**

The words "climate change" were not mentioned once during the presidential debates or the entire campaign. In fact, the terms "climate change" and "global warming" have been virtually banned from corporate mass media news broadcasts.

During the three-month drought in the Midwest this summer, which damaged three quarters of the U.S. corn and grain crop, report after report on this drastic situation failed to mention climate change or global warming. Nor was it mentioned during the epidemic of wild fires which ravaged the Western states. The same "climate silence" has prevailed during the round-the-clock coverage of Hurricane Sandy.

Such is the power over the media and the politicians by the giant polluters, who include the most powerful sections of the ruling class of the U.S. They have spent untold millions to finance anti-scientific lobbyists, fund politicians who will vote against any attempt to make the polluters fix the problem or pay the bills, and fund corrupt scientists who will swear that all the findings of their tens of thousands of colleagues around the world are false.

The U.S. government has gone to international environmental conferences year after year and used its financial and political power to block any global consensus that would bind the giant transnational corporations to concrete steps to significantly reduce carbon emissions. The U.S. has still not ratified the original Kyoto accords on climate change. One president after another, from Clinton to Bush to Obama, has sabotaged the efforts by governments representing billions of people in Asia, Africa, Latin

America and the Middle East to force the major polluters to stop pouring greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

### **Global environmental crisis**

The acute crisis caused by the dramatic wind and tidal events of Hurricane Sandy in the U.S. is only an intense manifestation of a much more widespread and gradually developing environmental crisis that is global in character. The same temperature rises that led to Sandy are melting glaciers and ice caps, raising the ocean levels and endangering island and coastal civilizations as well as inland rivers.

This, in turn, is part of an even more widespread process of environmental devastation poisoning the land, water and air caused by mining conglomerates, logging companies, agribusiness, oil corporations and so on, which are depleting or poisoning the aquifers, promoting the desertification of vast stretches of the earth's territories, destroying the rain forests which are the lungs of the earth, and much more.

Wall Street suffered directly as a result of Hurricane Sandy. And capitalist interests have also suffered losses from the dislocation caused by the storm. This may cause a lot of hand wringing and reevaluation by the bosses themselves. But don't count on them to combat climate change. There is too much profit involved. To paraphrase P.J. Dunning, quoted by Karl Marx in "Capital," for a sufficient profit a capitalist will risk even death.

### **Means of pollution, means of production**

The New York City capitalist government has files that contain reports written long ago warning of the imminence of just such a crisis as the one presently caused by Hurricane Sandy and calling for

measures to be taken before the crisis hits. These reports were ignored, just as warnings about Katrina were ignored for years. It is flagrant negligence on the part of the capitalist authorities, who knowingly failed to take preventive measures that could have kept this crisis from becoming so severe.

Progressive and revolutionary forces must help develop demands and on-the-ground struggles to reduce the suffering of the masses of people. They should include full restitution and compensation for both damage done and wages and jobs lost; jobs programs to rebuild; and making the insurance companies, the predatory polluters, the banks and the government pay the bills.

As one commentator said, referring to Sandy: We are having a once-in-a-hundred-year storm every two years now.

The only way to reduce disasters like hurricanes Sandy, Irene and Katrina is for the workers to take the means of pollution away from the polluters. But the means of pollution are actually the means of production under capitalism. It will take the destruction of the profit system itself to chart a new course that can save the environment by restructuring production to serve the people's needs rather than capitalists' profit greed.