

facts for working people

A Publication of Labors Militant Voice

Global Warming Issue \$1

Building a Democratic Socialist Alternative to the Dictatorship of Capitalism

Big Business: Destroying the Future



Imagine walking into your yard after a rainy day and with every squishy step a metallic sheen appeared in the puddles of your footprints--the tell-tale rainbow in the water reminding you of the neighborhood BP Amoco refinery that is contaminating your home and taking a toll on the health of your family.

BP Amoco had profits of \$22 billion in 2005. Despite this, they pushed a bill through the Indiana House shifting \$150 million of tax burden onto the working people of Lake County. This increased homeowner's taxes, in some cases, over 1,000%! The population of Lake County had put up with pollution for decades. Now they had to deal with losing their homes and financial and family stress in order to subsidize BP's profits.

This trend of corporations passing costs onto the shoulders of working people is rampant. Self-regulation intended to make corporations "socially responsible" is laughably ineffective. Millions in public tax dollars continue to pay for things like "Brownfield" development grants for cleaning and developing former corporate industrial sites. Also, between 2000 and 2005, the government paid over \$26 billion in subsidies to some of the top global polluters, namely, US oil, gas, coal and nuclear industries, according to the Green Scissors Campaign.

Corporations cause great harm to the global environment through the relentless pursuit of more resources, more markets

and even more money. We should not be left with the bill for their environmental damage - especially when it is hazardous to let our children play in the yard, as is the case in Lake County, Indiana.

To trigger a serious change in our environment, working people must take actions toward change. The people in Lake County effectively fought back against corporations by, identifying the issues and then forming demands. Residents thought that politicians were to blame until they took a step back and saw that the steel and oil corporations were actually pulling the strings. A demand was put forward to address the huge hike in taxes that became the mantra of the fight: "Can't Pay/Won't Pay."

The next step in the fight back required direct action. The local newspaper was alerted, and the protest became front page news. Hundreds of residents marched on the homes of Lake County politicians who passed the bill. A car caravan through the county drew another horde of residents. Many protests along these

Turning the Heat Up on Corporate America

lines occurred.

The result of the fight was the passage of a law relieving some of the financial burden on the people. Most importantly, many residents saw that regular, working people could fight back against corporate injustice.

When corporations try to pass the buck for environmental clean-up (or anything), working people can't pay and won't pay, and they will have the tools to fight back by having a plan and taking direct action in an effort to create qualitative change in the world.

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Stopping the Destruction of the Planet: You Can't Control what you Don't Own

Human society is at a threshold. Global warming and the exhaustion of fossil fuels pose a fundamental threat to the future of our species and our planet. According to a joint statement on climate change by the British and Dutch Prime Ministers, "we have a window of only 10-15 years to take the steps we need to avoid crossing catastrophic tipping points." Both the Wall Street Journal and the Financial Times have referenced the environmental crisis as the "greatest and widest ranging market failure ever seen."

In the last 10 years there has been an unprecedented doubling of Gross World Product (the total of all things and services produced). Capitalism has drawn in every human body that could be exploited to serve this growth, along with every element of nature available to it.

This orgy of growth also created an unprecedented polarization of wealth, vastly enriching those at the top. While the super wealthy live in their gated communities, over one billion people now live under cardboard roofs in urban shanty-towns. Worldwide, the richest 2% own more than 50% of all assets.

The blind logic of the market system forces every business to be competitive, to drive for the highest profit rate and to cut costs—all, increasingly, at the cost of humanity's future. Capitalism is incapable of resisting growth. And with capitalist growth comes ecological destruction. A major economic slump, similar to what occurred in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, where Gross National Product fell by 50%, could temporarily slow destruction. However, such an economic depression would also be accompanied by business demands to loosen environmental regulations, such as Bush's retreat from the Kyoto Emissions Reduction Accords after the decline in the stock market in March 2001. The Kyoto Protocols themselves are merely a shell game of buying and selling pollution credits and have not and will not seriously address global warming.

Earth Day, 1970, marked the beginning of a wider awareness that the planet's sustainability was at risk. In the subsequent 37 years business-friendly governments have refused to deal with the looming ecological crisis, protecting the rights of corporations over the future of society as a whole. More recently, a wing of the capitalist class has begun to recognize this error.

Shift in the mood

The Bush administration's popularity has been seriously eroded in large part due to their approach toward the global ecological crisis. The unpopular wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are driven by efforts to maintain control of depleting oil resources. Discontent sparked by the initial doubling of gas pump prices was related, in part, to peaking oil supplies. Additionally, Bush's aloof contempt for the plight of the victims of hurricane Katrina—widely considered a climate-change weather disaster—caused an outcry.

Working people are increasingly aware of the impact of the current ecological crisis on their lives and the future of their families. Fears of potential terror attacks have given way to anxieties over rising energy prices; E.coli outbreaks; childhood obesity and asthma; along with more hurricanes, tornadoes and flooding.

Some are beginning to link capitalism's inability to deal

with the environmental crisis and the stagnant living standards of US working people. It is the convergence of these two processes that has the ruling class concerned. However, capitalism will not take any measures or allow any regulations that will impede its right to expand.

Blaming Working People for the Crisis

Despite Pelosi's attempts to lower expectations for the new Democrat-led Congress, many working people will expect some action on the environment. If in 2008, the Democrats win the Presidency, measures will be taken to both partially curb emissions and to develop alternative fuels. However, Corporate America's "paid-for" politicians will not curb capitalism's addiction to growth, profit and exploitation.

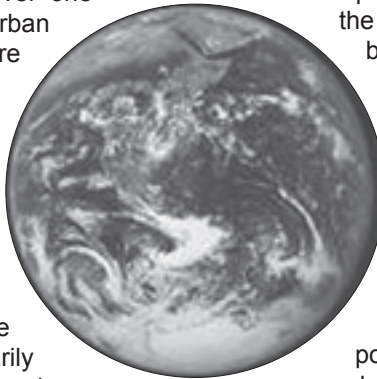
As awareness of global warming becomes more widespread, the corporate media will increasingly blame the consumer; that is, the working class. Their goal being to make the working class feel that individuals, are responsible for the ecological disaster. They will argue, correctly, that massive investment in alternative fuels is needed. They will also argue for subsidies to affected industries. However, while arguing that everyone needs to pay for environmental clean-up, they will attempt to make the working class pay for it. A Democratic President and Congress may move toward increased consumption taxes (which they will portray as "green taxes") to subsidize corporations and allow them to maintain their high levels of growth and profits.

Economically, increased taxes on the working class only further **undermines the** ability to buy products, in turn undermining profits. Politically, raising taxes on workers brings to light increasing inequality in society. Subsequent rising anger will be fuelled by capitalism's failure to seriously prevent eco-destruction and to curb its constant hunger to expand. Efforts to make profits from so-called "green products" will eventually back-fire and be seen as a green-washing of the problems.

Who can save the planet from destruction?

Capitalism as the current guardian of the planet will become increasingly discredited. Big business' willingness to destroy the planet and its private ownership of the land, sea, and air will become increasingly linked. Such a situation would force more regulations to curb the market's worst offenses. Economic struggles around declining pay and rising fuel prices may also begin to merge with anger over climate change disasters. More young people and serious minded older workers could then conclude that capitalism can no longer be trusted.

A widespread movement can emerge in the direction of overthrowing big business' dictatorship over society and the planet. A movement of the global working class will hold within it the necessary skills and talents to reorganize the economy, redirecting consumption towards social needs. With the world's resources under democratic and collective common ownership under working class management and control, then an ecologically sane world can begin to be restored. Poverty and blind eco-destruction can be ended.





corporate profits



gas pump prices



global temperatures



workers' wages

Editorial

Why the Environment Matters for Working People

The problem of the environment can no longer be the exclusive property of liberals, academics and social do-gooders. At every point along the issue working class people are affected more than any other segment of society by pollution, environmental destruction and climate change. Even something as simple as the food we eat can show this to be true. While yuppies roll into their nearest Whole Foods for the latest organically produced fruits and vegetables, it is us who are forced to consume the same things, only laden with pesticides and bio-engineered components. This is a simple matter of economics. Those who can afford a cleaner environment will always have it. Those who cannot are left with the consequences.

A lot of times we shy away from the environmental problem because it can seem just too large and too unsolvable. If we were talking about a local company polluting a lake or somebody illegally dumping in a forest preserve it might not be so tough. The problem is clear and local. But when we hear about things like global warming and holes in ozone layer the problem just becomes too big for one or two people to tackle. With all the other problems we face as working class people – declining wages, lack of health care and unemployment, worrying about the health of the entire planet may seem a little less than urgent - at least a little less than possible.

But corporate America relies on this. Wall Street will continue to dump pollution into our air and poison our land because it helps them to force the costs of their profits away from the ledgers and onto our backs. It is not our obligation, however, to make even more money for them at the cost of our health and the health and wellbeing of our children.

The problems of the environment we face today increasingly become a matter of our survival. In this case the question is not *if* we, as working class people, take possession of the environmental issue. It is *when* and *in what condition* do we find ourselves when we do? None of us are professional environmentalists but all of us have more reason than any to push forward into the environmental movement. When we do, we will not only reshape the campaigns of such a movement, we will reshape our world.

War enviro facts

Over 1 million people have died or suffered injury as a result of the 100,000 tons of herbicide dropped on Vietnam by the US government. War criminals Dow Chemicals have never been prosecuted.

Who's the big polluter in your backyard?

check out www.scorecard.org & enter your zipcode

6 reasons why Capitalism Cannot Save the Planet

#6 *The murderer conducts the homicide investigation*

The Auto Industry (responsible for more than 50% of damaging emissions) Decides Eco Policy: Chair of House Energy and Commerce Committee: Democrat John Dingell. John Dingell: campaigns funded by General Motors, Daimler Chrysler and Ford. John Dingell's wife: top Auto industry official. John Dingell's new staff director: former Daimler Chrysler official

#5 *Tigers can't become Vegetarians*

The President of the European Commission names the environment as a "serious and urgent issue" and a top priority (*Financial Times* 11.20.06) By Friday of the same week, the European Union Industry Commissioner, complained "our environmental leadership could significantly undermine (our) international competitiveness." (*Financial Times* 11.25.06)

#4 *Prolonged Denial*

In August 2000 it was reported that North Pole ice had melted for the first time in possibly 50 million years. The Wall Street Journal published an Op-Ed in response to the news entitled, "So What?"

#3 *Cutting financial costs more important than safety*

Exxon Corporation recently succeeded in finding a judge who cut their damages pay-out by half to victims of their Valdez, Alaska oil spill. This is 17 years after the ecological disaster. Similarly, the US Corporation, Union Carbide, responsible for 8,000 people killed in its Bhopal industrial disaster, also used its rich lawyers to lower damages costs. The average victim received \$300, less than the average cost of necessary medical help.

#2 *No changes unless there's a buck in it*

The Kyoto Protocols, created by democrat Steven Breyer and the liberal Environmental Defense Fund, introduced emission pollution credits. Sold as a greenhouse gas reduction accord, Kyoto allowed rich countries to buy credits from poor countries. These pollution credits are now traded on the Chicago Board of Trade. Steven Breyer was rewarded with a Supreme Court seat by Clinton-Gore.

#1 *Reason Capitalism cannot Save the Planet: it will always put its profits before all else*

*Are you Ready to take Action?
Join our fight against the profit system*

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Our Alternative for the Environment



End Capitalism's poverty and earth-destroying policies

Everybody in the world could have access to clean water, food, housing, health care and education for \$80 billion per year, according to the UN. The world's seven richest people have \$1.54 trillion between them. We believe in ending the private ownership of the world's biggest corporations and developing systems of energy and goods production, housing, and transportation to end worldwide poverty and global warming.

End poverty

A democratic socialist world could:

- Immediately end unemployment
- Immediately cut work week to 30 hours
- End world Hunger within 3 months
- Establish healthcare for all people of the world within 6 months
- Provide housing for all within 1 year

Energy

- Take complete public control of the energy industry to develop cleaner power resources and distribute energy to the public without profits.
- Investigate and further develop solar, wind, tidal and renewable alternative energy sources
- End the corporate-driven disposable culture that makes it more expensive to fix many things than to buy new ones.
- Focus on decreasing overall energy expenditure.

Water

- Emphasis on clean and renewable water sources.
- Develop infrastructure to provide a safe water supply where needed.
- Prohibit new development in areas without the water to support it.
- Eliminate unnecessary water uses and focus on recycling water as much as possible.
- Turn residential lawns into vegetable gardens and use household runoff water for watering
- Provide housing with the ability to catch and use rainwater.

Housing

- Base new housing development on society's needs and not on market speculation.
- Reshape existing communities for more collective living by adding shared public space including community kitchens and laundries.
- Provide good affordable housing for all.
- Increase housing density in areas near where people work,
- Provide access to well planned outdoor community space and community gardens.
- Develop a system of stores to distribute goods and services within communities and reclaim land currently used for shopping malls and parking lots for open space and other community resources.

Transport

- Create an efficient mass transit infrastructure of buses, trains, subways, and boats that provides people with a feasible alternative to driving.
- Give the public free access to this system, making private cars less desirable.

Agriculture and Food Production

- Promote local, organic food production to decrease wasteful cross-continent and cross-hemisphere shipping.
- End the environmentally damaging practices of factory farms, mass cattle production, genetically modified foods, and use of pesticides and hormones in food production.
- Increase wages and workforce on farms to offset the increased labor needed to produce healthy, organically grown food.
- Increase focus on organic community gardens to provide fresh, healthy, and local produce.

Pollution

- Making many of the discussed changes would significantly decrease overall ongoing pollution.
- Put resources into environmental cleanup.
- Focus on eliminating the need for landfills by using recyclable materials and implementing mass scale composting and recycling programs.
- Establish community-based libraries and circulation centers for things such as furniture, household items, tools, clothes and toys.

Socialism

A democratic socialist plan of production and conservation under the control of working people would immediately unleash the creative talents, energy and skills necessary for ecological repair and an end to poverty.

300 Channelsand nothing to watch!

The competition inherent within capitalism cannot help but create wasteful duplication. Your average grocery store may stock fifty breakfast cereals and dozens of shampoos, each one slightly different from the next. But each brand represents a different production facility, different packaging, and a different distribution network.

How often have we heard people complain about television: hundreds of channels and nothing to watch. Each program represents a huge amount of money and resources to produce, and yet most have little value. They

are produced to sell advertising: to sell other products. It is through these consumer choices that capitalism equates itself with freedom.

Genuine self-expression, personal development and self-awareness are not encouraged. Individuality boils down to your consumer choices, the shoes you wear, the shows you watch, or the color of your i-pod. This "individualism" is more valued than community or co-operation. Genuine freedom begins where this profit-addicted system ends.