

AURORA



Only the Working Class Can Save the Planet

Even an entire society, a nation or all simultaneously existing societies taken together are not owners of the earth, they are simply its holders, its beneficiaries, and have to bequeath it in an improved state to succeeding generations.... (Marx)

Human beings cannot exist without disturbing the natural environment. It is also historical fact that some human communities destroyed the very basis of their own existence. Take the ancient city states of Mesopotamia with their great irrigation projects which diverted the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. This allowed a great increase in population and the first urban communities which, however, collapsed one by one as the waters became saline and the soil turned into desert. There must have been tremendous human suffering, not to mention class war between the haves and have-nots in the process.

But today's environmental crisis is of a very different order. For a start it is **global** and threatens the very existence of life on planet earth. It is also multi-pronged. From water pollution to plastic waste islands the size of Texas, from poisoned rivers and degraded soils to the over 80,000 chemicals now in existence, the quality and scope of life on planet earth is being reduced. But the fact of global warming due to carbon emissions is now undeniable (unless you are Donald Trump). The knock-on effects and likely consequences are so serious it's no wonder that the Green movement is becoming more radical and gaining momentum. Like a modern-day Joan of Arc, Greta Thunberg's warnings to the powers-that-be (from the Swedish

parliament to the G7 and now the United Nations) are sparking a wider protest movement. The outrage is palpable. The cause is admirable.

Unfortunately for those who believe this movement is everything, there is no way that it can force the "self-interested politicians" to "take immediate transformative action towards a society that can sustain us and the planet" [activists' invitation for people to join the 20th September protests]. It is not just about numbers of protesters. In places where the movement takes hold governments and politicians may well be pressured into adopting more radical environmental goals. Indeed they already are, although with questionable results. (As we know, China is now the world's largest carbon polluter and overall global carbon emissions are at an all-time high.) But as for any deeper "transformative action", the sort that could start to remedy the damage already done, that requires no less than revolutionary change. On a world scale. A revolution to overthrow capitalism.

More and more environmentalists agree with this. But ...

What does it mean to overthrow capitalism?

First we need to understand what capitalism is. In a world where the 26 richest people own as much as the

poorest 50%, [Oxfam report 2019] it's easy to focus on getting rid of 'elites' in order to create a more just world. But bringing in laws to tax the rich won't alter the system that spawns such gross unfairness.

The heart of the matter is that the entire political system exists to defend capitalist property and profits. Capitalism does not produce things to satisfy human needs. It produces "commodities" to be sold in order to make a profit for the capitalists. Or rather the people employed by the capitalists produce the goods. The more commodities that are produced and sold, the more profit. (Hence all the market research and advertising campaigns.) It is an infernal cycle of endless growth or, more precisely, accumulation of capital where human beings are reduced to instruments of production on the one hand and consumers of the products on the other.

As for the natural environment, capitalism still treats it as a source of free raw materials or a barrier to be broken down in the search for more profit and a dump for toxic trash. Now they talk of 'sustainable' solutions. What they mean is sustainable for capitalism.

Even carbon emissions have been turned into commodities to be traded on financial markets. And every company worth its salt has a comforting

sustainability statement to reassure its customers and investors. Some firms are so keen to present a green image that they are encouraging workers to take the day off and join in the September protests.

No matter how many people change their lifestyle, there is no way that a consumer rebellion can get rid of capitalism. At best it could accelerate the phasing out of the traditional carbon polluters but at what cost? Increased dependence on rare earths mined by children with their bare hands in Namibia or Rwanda. There is a comforting illusion that smoke-free digital technology is carbon-neutral. On the contrary, "digital technologies now emit 4 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions, which is more than civil aviation" [<https://theshiftproject.org/en/home>]. Life-style changing is a province confined to consumers who can afford to choose to pay more. This has absolutely nothing to do with overthrowing capitalism.

Only the working class can save the planet from capitalism

Capitalism will be abolished when the producers themselves — the world's working class — rise up against their position as wage slaves; when we organise production communally to directly provide for human needs. In such a world no individual can profit from the

work of others since 'who does what' will be a matter of how best to allocate our collective labour time. Money will be unnecessary and tales of financial crashes leading to trade wars, human misery and real wars will belong to the past. Only in such a world — a communist world without states and borders — will human beings be able to really tackle the damage that has been done to their natural surroundings. Only then will we be able to devote the necessary time and effort to devising ways of living without destroying the natural basis for human existence.

No matter how 'democratic' the set-up, no government would act to abolish capitalism. A new world cannot come about simply through demonstrations, civil disobedience or other actions to pressurise the representatives of the capitalist class to act against their own interests.

On the other hand, crisis-torn capitalism itself is creating the conditions for a working class upsurge. **Anyone who seriously wants to get rid of capitalism has no choice but to join with the internationalist communists and fight for the communist programme inside their school, university, workplace and local community as the battle between the haves and have-nots becomes a struggle for a new society.**



Climate change is not the only threat to humanity. A stagnant capitalist economy that survives on an increasing mountain of debt is intensifying imperialist rivalries. The slow death agony of the system is now manifest in so many ways. The post World War Two order that was imposed by the US in 1945 has been breaking down since the dollar ceased to be the world's gold standard in 1971. Today the increasing rivalry between China and the US stretches from South America via the Middle East to the South China Sea.

The US is determined at all costs to maintain dollar hegemony, the source of

... Capitalism's Other Threat to the Planet

its continued dominance of the planet. It was for this reason that they engineered the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and Gaddafi. It is for this reason that the US is undermining the very institutions and rules that it set up over 70 years ago. The trade and currency wars that the US has massively intensified since Trump took office are not only not "winnable" but are stoking international tensions. And trade wars have historically always been followed by shooting wars.

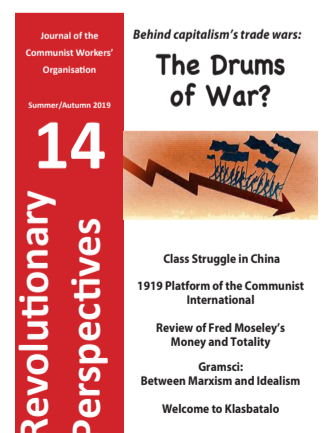
How should workers react to growing military conflict? First let's not fall into the game of supporting one imperialist camp against another. Under a decaying capitalist system there is no "progressive" faction. Calling for such things as support for Assad in Syria (because he is opposed by the US) or "hands off Iran" is simply supporting one set of anti-working class butchers against another.

It is playing the capitalist game. Iran may be the underdog in imperialist terms but it is also locking up and torturing our struggling class sisters and brothers for calling for "workers' councils".

And we should not be fooled by the fact some states claim to be "socialist" (Cuba, Venezuela etc) but are in fact just as exploitative. The only difference is that the state has replaced private owners as the exploiter of our labour. Until now, socialism has never been established anywhere on the planet. We have and will have no country to defend. Socialism can only come about through the independent actions of the working class, the only truly international force capable of creating a new way of living. In this sense things have not changed much since 1914. When the fake socialists back then all found various excuses to support their own imperialist

government it was only a small band who stood up for the working class. As the various imperialist powers prepared the working class to butcher each other in the name of national interest (i.e. the bosses' interest) Lenin called on workers everywhere to "turn the imperialist war into a civil war". This eventually sparked off an international class movement. Percy Goldsborough a socialist worker in 1916 wrote (on the wall of his cell in Richmond Castle) "The only war worth fighting is the class war". Such opposition led to a revolutionary wave which not only ended the war but nearly turned into a world working class revolution. Although it ultimately failed, its promise still resonates today. In fighting for our own interest, in fighting austerity and exploitation, in fighting for a better life, we can rebuild working class solidarity and cohesion.

For this we need to join in a new political movement, a new international to coordinate the fight against capitalism and its wars everywhere. Its slogan remains **"No war but the class war!"**.



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Beware False Friends!

Many working class people do not believe that their class has the potential to change the world. Indeed many do not even recognise the idea of class, let alone see themselves as part of the class of “women and men of no property”.

This is not surprising. The ruling capitalist class has powerful tools to confuse and distract the working class. A whole web of deceit is woven to disguise and justify the power of a tiny minority. This is what Marxists call ideology.

The political set-up, built on the myth of ‘democracy’ and supposedly offering choices, is key. In reality the bogus options are all about maintaining power, ownership and control for the class of parasitic bosses.

A particular role has developed for organisations that pretend to be friends and allies of the working class but really help to keep us trapped in the bosses’ system. Prominent in this villainy is the umbrella that takes in the Labour Party and trades unions, including the spectrum of front organisations including Momentum, People’s Assemblies and sham anti-cuts Campaigns which are all about drumming up support to elect Labour Party politicians.

The Labour Movement: Part of the Bosses’ System

There is a lot of confusion about the true nature of Labourist organisations. Particularly regarding

trades unions, militants are often told that they cannot be “against the unions” because they include millions of working people. There used to be a similar argument about the Labour Party although this is peddled less after decades of prominent Labour politicians having less and less connection with the working class.

The grain of truth in the argument is that the unions survive on the basis of subscriptions paid by their members, largely through bureaucratic arrangements with employers to take payments directly through the payroll system. But having working class people making payments does not mean that organisations are on the side of our class. Otherwise, religious organisations, loan sharks and even fascist groups would be our allies!

Once the trade unions have leeches the money from workers where does it go? A significant chunk goes to the “full-timers” at various levels. These are people whose chosen career is to be paid a wage by a union. Their way of life depends on maintaining or improving their position in the

bureaucracy, irrespective of the real conditions of the bulk of the members.

Over the years unions have increasingly turned to deals with other capitalist institutions. As workers have been hit by wave after wave of austerity, the unions have stepped up their offers of cut price health care, insurance and legal advice.



More fundamentally, the core role of mediating between workers and bosses around wages and conditions assumes that workers are permanently locked into their role as “wage slaves”. Many years ago revolutionaries recognised that the core union motto of “A fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work” is a slogan that ties workers into an endless cycle of exploitation. They saw that it has to be replaced with the revolutionary motto: “abolition of the wages system!”

Alongside their negotiating role, the unions carry out another important job for the bosses by restricting our ability to organise for ourselves in our own interest. They willingly accept legal restrictions, for example replacing the open and

transparent decision-making of mass meetings with prolonged and demoralising individual balloting.

The unions also do their best to prevent wider workers’ solidarity by refusing any decision-making involving workers from other unions, let alone workers who are not union members.

Of course, there is also the “living link” between the trades unions and the Labour Party. Having lined the pockets of the union careerists and wind-bags, a portion of the money paid by members is transferred to the Labour Party and its MPs. Here Labour shares the task of blinding workers to the fact that “A better world is possible” without bosses and their wages system. There should be no surprise that Corbyn’s pre-election “Build It in Britain Again” speech is taken right out of the Donald Trump handbook. The only difference is that Jeremy doesn’t want trade wars: but he does want to save capitalism and that agenda is not the way to a better world.

As the old saying goes, “If elections changed anything they would have abolished them years ago”.

Against these false friends, workers need to strengthen their own solidarity and self-organisation. We also need to start building a political organisation of the most clear-sighted who see the need to sweep away the rotten capitalist system that the “Labour Movement” depends on.

Workers’ Democracy is the Only Real Democracy



Ancient Greek Democracy

“Any city, however small, is in fact divided into two, one the city of the poor, the other of the rich; these are at war with one another.” Plato, Greek philosopher (427-347 B.C.)

The word ‘democracy’ comes from ancient Greek and Athenian democracy is often presented as the West’s great contribution to civilisation. But the society of the ancient Greeks depended on slaves to do most of the work, and they did not have the vote. Women were also excluded from voting in most of the Greek city states. Some civilisation, some democracy.

Modern Democracy

Despite the fact that it took over a hundred years for capitalism to grant ‘universal manhood suffrage’ (women always come later), it turns out that under parliamentary democracy the people who do the work are as excluded from key decision making as the slaves in ancient Athens.

Under capitalism we elect representatives as Members of Parliament (or equivalent.) Even today, when party lines are increasingly blurred, most people vote according to local candidates’ party membership. Once elected, we’re unlikely to see ‘our MP’ for the next 4 or 5 years when they come round asking for our vote once again.

Whilst in Parliament what do they do? Usually they vote for their own party, or occasionally they will rebel and vote how they see fit. Unusually a Prime Minister might take into his head to ‘prorogue’ the whole parliament. MPs have no obligation to vote according to the wishes of those who voted for them. This is what representation means. You entrust the MP to act for you and you certainly have no power to change them until the

next election. And of course there is absolutely no prospect of parliament broaching the kind of fundamental changes that would allow everyone to have a say: How to ensure that the community as a whole decides on what is produced. How to make sure everyone has the means to live. How to decide what is best for the community instead of calculating profit and loss. In short, the necessary steps to abolishing this iniquitous system called capitalism.

Workers’ Democracy: The Most Complete

By contrast, in the working class democracy that will emerge during the revolution to overthrow capitalism, every assembly elects **delegates**, not representatives. They are mandated to carry out the wishes of their collectivity. If they find that they cannot do this they return to the base community and either persuade them to change course, or are replaced by a different delegate. Each community will have a number of delegates in proportion to the number of people. In 1905 in Russia it was one delegate for every 500 workers. Local soviets/councils/bodies (call them what you want) then elect delegates to area soviets and from them to wider geographical areas like regions and so on until we reach the level of a global congress of soviets. Such a body can devise plans for issues which have to be treated globally (like environmental protection) whilst local soviets sort out local services and the allocation of resources.

One key difference is the absence of a class of professional politicians. We would not be just one-time voters but active participants in a whole host of grass roots organisations from housing cooperatives and workplace committees to sporting associations and arts councils.

This is not a dream. The Paris Commune of 1871 showed the possibilities of directly electing

delegates. The soviets that sprang up in the 1905 Russian Revolution proved that it could work. In Russia in 1917 soviets spread once again and delegatory democracy actually existed for a few months (November–March 1918). The working class throughout the world was inspired by news of how Russian workers ran everything from the ground up. Even train passengers would organise a committee to ensure that all passengers had their needs looked after on crowded trains!

It did not last: not because delegatory democracy did not work but because this first successful workers revolution was isolated to one country. After 4 years of war the workers faced an economic crisis equal to the Black Death. In addition Soviet Russia was invaded by the armies of 14 countries. The working class in Russia could not hold on in isolation. Soviet power withered under the weight of this impossible situation. Capitalists like to call the one party regime which marked the counter-revolution “communism”. This deliberately discredits not only the word but the whole idea that one day workers will run their own affairs.

Our rulers don’t want people to know this. They are well aware that more and more people are discontented with their system. After 40 years of declining incomes and living standards alongside the highest concentration of wealth ever seen under capitalism this is no surprise. The capitalist system and its “democracy” are in deep crisis.

They are slowly tearing up

their own rules on trade, diplomacy and finance. The debt mountain refuses to go away and inequality is rising so fast that some billionaires, fearful of revolution, are even asking to be taxed more. Others are playing the populist game. They pretend they are not part of “the élite”. They can thus pose as the “real alternative” to a self-serving class which has created wealth for the very few. But it is a pose. They are looking to save the capitalist order by fuelling nationalism and racism. They thus talk the language of war. When it is not a war on migrants, it is a tariff war, a currency war, or a war of sanctions. Behind them all there are already plenty of shooting wars going on around the planet. **In short the Trumps, the Bolsonaros, the Putins and the Xi Pings offer us capitalist barbarism and only the self-activity of the whole working class – the basis of working class democracy – can save humanity.**

What We Stand For

Aurora is published by the Communist Workers Organisation (CWO). We stand for a global society in which production is for need and not profit, where the state, national frontiers and money have been abolished, where power is exercised through class-wide organisations like workers councils. It is a society which can only be created through the activity of millions of human beings. Only such a society can rid us of the capitalist offspring of poverty, hunger, oppression and war: We call it communism but it has nothing in common with the Stalinist state capitalism of the old USSR. In order to get there we are working to create a world proletarian political organisation: a ‘party’ for want of a better word. This organisation is not a government in waiting. It does not rule but it does lead and guide the struggle for a new world. We by no means claim to be that party but only one of the elements which will need to come together in its formation.

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