

Workers of the World Unite! We Have a Planet to Save!



Photo by Mike Newbry on Unsplash

The gradual intensification of the climate crisis seems to have escalated over the past two years, with every natural disaster and act of environmental destruction bringing us closer to total environmental collapse. In February 2021, a series of ‘once-in-a-lifetime’ blizzards hit Texas, causing a power outage that affected millions. The winter storm had destroyed the power grid, which was already in a very deteriorated state after decades of cuts. Lacking access to power, millions of people were left without heat during the historic freeze, resulting in the deaths of at least 210 people according to conservative estimates, although some studies place the death toll at three or four times that number. This leaves the implication that the state under-reported the death toll, likely intended in part to downplay the severity and immediacy of the climate crisis. It was also an attempt to avoid liability, as the state had failed to repair or replace the deteriorating power grid following previous malfunctions. Most of the victims had died from hypothermia, although other leading causes of death were vehicle crashes, carbon monoxide poisoning, and chronic medical conditions exacerbated by the storm. This is but only one example of the escalation of the climate catastrophe in 2021 alone. In the late summer, Hurricane Ida killed almost 100 people from Louisiana to the Northeast, flooding cities and destroying homes. Although the extreme multi-day heat waves were not as outwardly disastrous as Hurricane Ida or the wildfires on the West Coast, they are the most alarming, as they indicate that there is worse to come if global warming persists. Thousands of heat-related deaths in North America have occurred over the past year due to the acute rise in the Earth’s temperature; among the most disproportionately affected are homeless people, the elderly, outdoor workers, and working class people who cannot afford air conditioning or relief from the searing heat.

On a world scale, the effects and trends of the crisis are only magnified. Scientific studies have linked climate change with industrialization – the rise in carbon emissions and greenhouse gasses have been a result of unlimited burning of fossil fuels to achieve capitalist accumulation and profit. Climate scientists have attributed the rise primarily to “human activity”, though what their studies quite clearly show is that it is human activity under capitalist relations of production which is the cause of climate change not human activity as such. The problem is systemic – namely the capitalist system and so cannot be solved within capitalist production relations. The concentration of CO₂ in Earth’s atmosphere has risen from just a bit over 300 ppm (parts per million) in the 1950s, to more than 410 ppm today. This is caused by emissions from capitalist production and accumulation, and is made seriously worse by the destruction of the natural environment especially the destruction of the natural absorbers of CO₂ on the land and in the oceans; prime examples of this are deforestation, removing trees from the ecosystem, and the acidification of the ocean, caused by increased CO₂ dissolving in the water, which has reduced its plankton population, which is critical for absorbing and storing CO₂.

Back in June, the sixth Assessment Report (AR6) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was leaked by a group of scientists affiliated with Scientist Rebellion. IPCC AR6 informs us of the gravest picture yet of Earth’s future. It warns of “increasingly extreme heatwaves, droughts and flooding,” increases in global socioeconomic inequality and possibilities for wars and conflicts. Also listed are various “tipping points” for the world ecosystem, which if crossed in terms of carbon emissions, would see the Amazon turned into a savannah and ocean levels rise 40 feet.

The report states that what is needed are immediate and extensive changes to the global economy and world energy systems, stating that “incremental change is not a viable option”. In urging these changes it created five different emissions scenarios depending on how much emissions are cut now and in the future, ranging from the best-case scenario, SSP1-1.9, to the worst-case, SSP5-8.5. We are likely on one of the worst two pathways, SSP3-7.0 or SSP5-8.5, due to current emissions increases and the lack of any real change in course by the ruling class. The consequences are dire. Even if we are on the middle pathway, SSP2-4.5, we are going to see mass death on the scale of billions of people, along with critical shortages of water, crop failures, waves of climate refugees, and an even higher likelihood of a global imperialist nuclear holocaust. As an ICT member has already remarked, “None of these pathways achieve the Paris goal of zero emissions by 2050.”

Bourgeois Solutions

One would think that with the future existence of humanity at stake, our rulers would take the crisis seriously. Yet the capitalist class can’t help itself but to continue down its path of environmental destruction in the name of profit. The recent COP26 summit held in Glasgow revealed the true nature of the bourgeoisie’s interests; despite the world leaders’ pledge to combat climate change, the capitalist class they represent will stop at nothing to make a profit, prioritizing capital accumulation at the risk of human extinction. Calling it a repeat of Paris 2015 would be inaccurate because the Paris summit at least had the goal of limiting global warming to at most 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, since rising above 1.5°C would result in severe consequences for the environment and the course of climate change. In contrast, Glasgow has the goal of 2.1°C above pre-industrial levels by 2100 – according to some climate scientists, maybe 50 years too late. We are slowly being conditioned to accept the deaths of billions of people and the permanent destruction of our planet. Scientists theorize that climate change will result in disastrous consequences for the environment and economy, leading to the migration of billions of people. These migration patterns are predicted to destabilize society, eventually resulting in its collapse. Our alternatives are socialism or barbarism; if we do not abolish capitalism, we may not be able to prevent full total societal and ecological collapse, or worse: human extinction. Given current bourgeois policies, we are predicted to surpass 2.7°C above pre-industrial levels by 2100.

The pledges are not only insufficient to stop climate change, they are also unenforceable. The capitalist class has no reason to go against their own interests to cut emissions; their main priority is profit, even at the risk of environmental annihilation. This reality is demonstrated when the president’s promises to combat climate change are followed by a business deal to facilitate the extraction of non-renewable resources, despite the disastrous consequences for the environment that will result. Just days after Biden spoke at COP26, his administration “[launched] an auction of more than 80m acres of the gulf [of Mexico] for fossil fuel extraction, a record sell-off that will lock in . . . decades of planet-heating emissions.” Anyone who would seriously put the life of the planet into the hands of Biden, Modi, Bolsonaro, Jinping, or any other ruling class criminal who have had their pockets fattened through ecological destruction is kidding themselves and has found a desperate way to cope with the utter helplessness that we are all inevitably conditioned to feel.

In response to this feeling of helplessness, many across the world, especially young people, feel it necessary to take to the streets and demand serious action from their leaders to safeguard their future. In the US these climate-activist youth formations take the form of environmentalist groups like Sunrise or Extinction Rebellion. Although the anger and motivations of these young climate activists are noble, the groups who absorb their rage are not. Since its conception in 2017, the primary goal of Sunrise has been to reduce carbon emissions in the US to net-zero by 2030 through their intensive “Green New Deal.” They claim this program will help put “millions of people back to work in good paying jobs building a sustainable, just and people-centered economy.” Despite their “radical” language, Sunrise only acts as a body for funneling disillusioned youth back into the Democratic Party machine. After giving Joe Biden an F climate rating in the 2020 Democratic primaries, the organization endorsed him and directed practically all of their 2020 organizing efforts to electing him. The fruits of their labors have simply resulted in more of the same ecological destruction, except now it is under the false pretense of combating climate change. Furthermore, Sunrise’s Green New Deal is another project of capitalist accumulation and mass resource extraction in capitalism’s peripheries in the Global South. The lithium for their electric cars will be harvested in mines in Bolivia, Argentina, Chile and cobalt in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), with the labor carried out by child wage-slaves. The DRC is estimated to have 40 000 children working in lethal artisanal mines. This is what the ‘progressives’ in Sunrise call building a “just economy.”

The Working Class is Key

The problem with Sunrise, Extinction Rebellion, and other “radical” environmentalist groups is their failure to explicitly recognize the fact that capitalism itself is responsible

for climate change, not just one variant of capitalism, or a few evil billionaires who are choosing to hoard their assets. Capitalism is an economic system premised on infinite growth on a planet of finite resources. This is clearly unsustainable and can only lead us towards a path of complete ecological destruction, destroying the means for our continued existence. Even in a 'green capitalist' scenario in which we transition from fossil fuels to green energy, this future would entail huge emissions and extractions in itself, further digging our own graves. This scenario would also only be possible if a profit could be realized; a profit made off of the backs of workers, our class. The working class is left to suffer and pay for the consequences of the climate crisis, exacerbated by the callous greed of the bourgeoisie. While the left in the Democratic Party envisions a 'cleaner' energy grid in the US, they shield the increased exploitation of workers in Asia, Africa, and Latin America from our eyes because it counters their rosy narrative. They are nationalists in radical clothing and have to be fought uncompromisingly in the quest to ensure a happy future for humanity.

In reality, only the working class can save the planet. We will do this not through delegating our power to politicians or unaccountable activist groups, serving as their foot soldiers in their fruitless political campaigns. Instead the only way that we will save our species and all life on Earth is through a hard, crystal-clear break with the capitalists and all of their parties and hangers-on. Instead of relying on states to fix the mess that they created, the world working class has to create its own organs of struggle and power, like workers' councils. These will be the bodies through which our class can exercise total control across the world. This self-organization of the working class is necessary for the transition to a sustainable planet. We need working class political independence to achieve this world, which can be achieved through the creation of an internationalist revolutionary party of the proletariat and internationalist communist revolution. This political organization of the working class would serve as a guide in the struggles of the working class to build this world, a political reference point that the whole class could look to and use to truly conquer global political power. Of course, the party is nothing without the class; the workers must self-organize in order to abolish capitalism.

The old slogan of the world communist movement was, "We have a world to win!" But Marxism is a living and breathing science. So a more appropriate slogan for our time would be, "**Workers of the world unite! We have a world to save!**"

-- Internationalist Workers' Group

Who We Are

The Internationalist Workers' Group is the US affiliate of the Internationalist Communist Tendency.

"We are called internationalists because we believe that the interests of the exploited are the same all over the world, and that communism cannot be achieved in a single geographic area, a myth peddled as the truth by Stalinism. We, are therefore, bitterly opposed to Stalinism in all its varieties, for too long taken to be communism, both by the bourgeoisie and many generations of workers who looked to it in good faith when the ownership of industries, distribution, land, etc ... went from private to state hands, leaving capitalism's relations and all its parts (commodities, money, wages, profits, borders etc.) largely intact. This was not communism but a particular form of capitalism, state capitalism. After 1917 the economic blockade of the Soviet Union and the failure of the world revolution in the West meant that the revolution was transformed into its opposite, eventually becoming an imperialist bloc that would collapse after only seventy years."

For more information about our organization and answers to frequently answered questions: <https://www.leftcom.org/en/about-us>

ICT Publications

Russia: Revolution and Counter-Revolution, 1905-1924 - A View from the Communist Left by Jock Dominie

"The Russian Revolution remains a landmark event in history. For the bourgeois historians, the October Revolution is thought to be a tragedy that set back the achievements of the "democratic" February Revolution, and allowed the Bolsheviks to wreak havoc on their citizens and the world. For the Stalinists, the events of 1917 paved the way for the birth of the USSR, which they point to as a prototypical example of "socialism in one country". In reality, the February and October Revolutions were both part of the same proletarian revolution."

If interested in purchasing a physical copy of this book or any ICT publication, please contact uk@leftcom.org. Other books include ***Bordiga Beyond the Myth*** and ***Gramsci: Between Marxism and Idealism*** by Onorato Damen.

The Virus is Capitalism, the Revolutionary Proletariat is the Cure



The following leaflet was given out in various cities across Italy on June 6, 2020 on the occasion of demonstrations by the various rank and file (Cobas) unions against the imposed return to work whilst the coronavirus pandemic continues to rage.

The coronavirus pandemic has thrown a spanner into the capitalist works but not completely prevented it from squeezing out **profits**.

Hardly deterred by the contagion, even in its most acute phase, the capitalist class has commanded thousands of workers to return to their place of production.

For our class, the health risk has been and continues to be constant, even more so in the face of the ferocity with which the bosses have ordered that we either continue to work or go back to work as soon as possible. Quarantine, "social distancing", have been revealed as empty words in the face of their rush back to the exploitative process of creation and appropriation of profit.

The list of dead and infected workers hides behind a veil of hypocrisy like the mask covering our mouths.

Never before have life and profit entered into such dramatic contradiction as they have during times of crisis, and in particular this crisis exacerbated by the pandemic.

While the working class struggles here and now in defence of its existence, the bourgeoisie is playing its cards, certainly for today, but more especially for tomorrow.

The **war economy** has become its survival perspective: everything to do with the economy, society and the workplace will have to bow to this imperative.

The bourgeoisie is gearing up for a new phase of **austerity and sacrifices**, even worse than those that came before.

If today, the workers are given nothing but a few drops from the river of money reserved for banks and businesses, as tomorrow dawns, there will be nothing but **"blood and tears"**.

Struggling over our specific working and living conditions means understanding, now more than ever, that this crisis is not just a health crisis, but a crisis of the whole system. It is a crisis of a capitalism that guarantees nothing, but has only its own predatory and parasitic instinct towards humanity and the environment. In periods of crisis, our struggle requires us to acknowledge that capital has no room to give us anything, but can only keep taking everything from us. Hence every struggle must take on, with greater force than ever before, the political perspective that the system must be overthrown: not because the result of the immediate struggle is guaranteed, but because it is the only way that our determination to free ourselves forever from capitalist slavery can mature.

- **The virus is capitalism!**
- **Capitalism can only recover by marching over the bones of the dead!**
- **We must organise ourselves and struggle to resist and defend ourselves on the basis of our needs, which are incompatible with those of capitalism.**
- **We must organise ourselves to build the revolutionary alternative to this decadent society.**

-- Battaglia Comunista

Publication and Contact Info

Internationalist Notes, Volume 1, Number 3, Winter 2022

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