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Global Warming: Get Rid of Capitalism!

Bangladesh Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation

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2020

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Contents

1. Catalyze immediate, urgent and drastic emission reductions	6
2. Provide adequate support to “developing nations” for transformation	7
3. Deliver justice for impacted people	7
4. Focus on genuine, effective action rather than false solutions	8

proved condition. The answer should be staring every environmentalist in the face: Get rid of capitalism!

Interestingly, a recent poll showed that concern about climate change reflects the global class structure. The poorer countries, with Africa and Latin America leading the pack, say climate change is of “grave concern.” By contrast, even though climate change is recognized as a real problem by international institutions of Empire, less than half of the people polled in the United States see climate change as a serious problem. ...

Revolution [is not] the [inevitable] consequence of class struggle. There is another possibility: our common ruin. This is the reality that humanity faces. Global capitalism is pushing our planet, our common home, to its limits. The First World culture of consumption and waste is pushing the environment to a breaking point. The majority of humanity, the global poor, the proletariat suffers. A minority, the global rich, the bourgeoisie consume more and more, waste more and more.

If we are to avoid our common ruin, if there is to be a future for our children and their children, we must awaken. We are the vast majority. We are the only ones who can stop this madness. Time is running out. Now is the time to raise the banner of the Global People’s Struggle for Anarcho-Syndicalism. Ruin or revolution?

The large capitalist powers are the biggest polluters but the idea that they should make a commensurate contribution to a solution has been watered down at the behest of the US and others. The Paris deal just says that “developed countries” should “take the lead” on providing finance, as part of a “shared effort” by all parties.

4. Focus on genuine, effective action rather than false solutions

The Paris agreement aims to reduce anthropogenic emissions by the second half of this century, yet a 1.5° target requires a definitive end to fossil fuel use by 2050! Plus, the deal allows for continued fossil-fuel burning “offset” by “removals” via dubious carbon capture, geo-engineering or forestry schemes. Regulations to rein in destructive industries, halt deforestation and stop mining fossil fuels are not even hinted at. And the agreement has no precedence over existing or new trade agreements, allowing firms to overturn environmental regulations when profits are threatened. In short, it is more a PR exercise than a serious plan to reduce emissions. When Trump withdrew the United States from the ‘deal’ just over a year ago, it was of little consequence. Its goals are far too little too late.

Capitalism is killing the planet. Even where a price might be put on it, the cost of cleaning up the environment is greater than the value of economic growth as measured by GDP. (Hence the agreement’s blurring over how to pay for its feeble recommendations.) The disappearance of species, toxins in food, water, air, land, indicate capitalism’s ravaging of the planet. The profits capitalism makes from exploiting the working class would be negated if they had to include environmental cost in their production. No amount of climate accords, spurious recycling schemes, or whatever can reconcile capitalism’s pursuit of profit with Marx’s insight on the need to hand the globe down to succeeding generations in an im-

As the climate warms, it changes the nature of global rainfall, evaporation, snow, stream flow and other factors that affect water supply and quality. Specific impacts include: Warmer water temperatures affect water quality and accelerate water pollution.

A World Bank report released a few months ago, “Shock Waves: Managing the Impact of Climate Change on Poverty,” predicts that global warming will push 100 million more people into extreme poverty over the next decade and a half. ... This would add a hundred million to the roughly 700 million people earning \$1.90 a day or less, or what the World Bank defines as “extreme poverty.”

The people of the poorest countries are the most threatened, especially the people of Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. According to the report, climate change will have terrible consequences for agriculture and health of the poor parts of the world. Crop yields will be reduced by 5 percent by 2030. This will cause food costs to rise for the poorest people. Natural disasters, like flooding, will become more frequent. And diseases will become more widespread among the poorest parts of the world.

In 2015, 195 countries signed up to the Paris Agreement, a non-binding treaty aiming to keep the global average temperature rise to “well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels.” The signatories commissioned the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to produce a report comparing the probable impacts of a 1.5°C global warming with 2°C and assessing what it would take to keep to the lower level. The report came out in October 2018 and synthesizes all published research to 15th May 2018. However, the official version is not as written by the scientists who authored it. The final wording is the outcome of political negotiations and is heavily redacted. We know from leaks that the US was one of the governments intent on watering it down.

The full report makes it clear that the consequences will be severe even if the 1.5°C target is met. It also states that, “there is a very high likelihood that under current emission trajectories and current national pledges the Earth will warm more than 1.5 degrees

above targets set in Paris...” This was cut from the final report. Also omitted was the verdict that if countries make the cuts they say they will then the world is on course for a 3°C warming by 2100. And if they don’t, global warming could go as high as 7°C!

This latest IPCC report only confirms the complete inadequacy of the Paris Agreement and the huge gap between words and necessary action if the planet is going to be able to sustain human civilization or any life at all. That Agreement fails on all four counts that scientists and environmental groups agree need to be met, namely:

1. Catalyze immediate, urgent and drastic emission reductions

These cuts, or “Intended Nationally Determined Contributions” (INDCs) were drawn up by governments, based on what they were prepared to deliver, not on what scientists think is needed. They go nowhere near far enough. For instance, aviation and shipping emissions, which are as large as the emissions of Britain and Germany combined, were not even included. Meanwhile, Australia’s blatant refusal to phase out coal by 2050 to keep emissions within the Paris target highlights the absurdity of expecting each capitalist power to put the survival of the globe before its own national (profit-making) interest. The world’s biggest coal exporter said it would be “irresponsible” to comply with the IPCC recommendation to stop using coal to generate electricity. Instead the government’s priority is to cut domestic electricity prices, not greenhouse gas emissions, which have risen for four consecutive years! Coal generates two-thirds of Australia’s electricity and earned it a record A\$61bn in exports in the 2017–18 financial year. In China, slowing ‘economic growth’ has led the government to withdraw emission curbs on heavy industries only recently introduced to reduce dis-

astrous levels of air pollution. Can’t let difficulty breathing affect profit-making.

2. Provide adequate support to “developing nations” for transformation

According to the International Energy Agency, transformation to a fossil-free world will require \$1,000bn per year by 2020. Around two-thirds of this, \$670bn, will need to be spent in “developing nations,” requiring a significant transfer of finance from North to South. The big capitalist countries hold just 10% of the world’s population but produce around 60% of the greenhouse gases currently in the atmosphere.

However, the Paris Agreement only commits to “mobilizing” \$100bn per year by 2020, to cover not just emission cuts but also adaptation. The definition of “mobilize” is deliberately broad, to include loans, private finance, grants with strings attached, and re-allocation of aid budgets. There is even talk of calling money sent home by migrants working in richer countries a form of climate finance, and counting it in the total “mobilized” by the US, France, Germany, etc. In short, the proposed funding is totally inadequate, when it’s not a complete fiction. It is totally dwarfed by the estimated \$5,300bn a year governments spend on direct and indirect subsidies to fossil fuels.

3. Deliver justice for impacted people

According to the UN Environment Programme, on top of an annual \$670bn needed for emissions cuts by 2020, vulnerable countries will need another \$150bn per year for adaptation measures to protect them from the worst impact of climate change. The UN’s \$100 billion put forward represents less than 15% of what is formally needed!