

No Jobs on a Dead Planet

Workers' Direct Action Against Global Warming

Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group

February 26, 2010

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Even a government wanting to solve global warming can be defeated by the economic power of capitalists intent on protecting their own profits. Only through workplace organising and direct action can this power be removed. And only a federation of workplace and community councils can plan and implement a path to a sustainable future, in Australia and for the planet as a whole. We're talking about a workers' revolution, because nothing else will work.

The Copenhagen Conference has failed. Beneath a mass of lies, excuses and buck-passing, the reality is clearly visible. The United Nations Conference, which was supposed to produce a binding international treaty to stop dangerous global warming, has resulted in no such thing. Instead of even a "political agreement", the massed governments of the world have come up with an inadequate set of initiatives and a complete lack of commitment to making them legally binding.

Cynicism and Greed

The debacle was entirely predictable. The capitalist ruling classes of the world are full of cynical opportunists, whose greed and short-sightedness has fuelled a dangerously irrational and reactionary denial industry. Dishonest and avaricious political elites, visibly in the service of their own ruling classes at home, don't miraculously become courageous and far-sighted champions of truth and justice when they meet at an international conference. Rather, their double-dealing and special pleading are elevated to a new and higher plane. Since they couldn't agree on how to make workers and the Third World poor pay for a solution to global warming, they couldn't agree on anything meaningful at all.

The capitalists have already delayed the required action for 20 years, from the time it was first demonstrated that climate change was a real threat. The science is undeniable and action is required now to prevent global warming reaching dangerous levels. There is a real possibility that, unaddressed, climate change might begin a self-reinforcing cycle of runaway warming, leading to a barely habitable planet.

Market Solutions are No Solutions

All sorts of self-appointed experts advocate an emissions trading system, the Australian version of which is the Labor Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. The idea is to enable "the market" to find the lowest-cost path to safe levels of greenhouse emissions. There are many practical holes in this, not the least of which is that dodgy "emission-reduction" certificates that don't actually reduce emissions will be virtually impossible to stamp out.

More fundamentally, however, an emissions trading scheme rewards the capitalists in industrialised countries with obscene privileges to pollute, while workers in developed countries and almost everybody in underdeveloped countries will be compelled by market forces to make all the sacrifices. This approach also allows capitalists in obsolete, polluting industries to preserve their source of profits by hiding behind their employees and bleating about "saving jobs" that they'd happily destroy themselves to boost profits.

A carbon tax is less susceptible to rorting, but shares the other issues of an emissions trading system. It also minimises the number of capitalists forced to turn their minds to reducing green-

house emissions. It would still be a tax on workers and the poor, while giving the rich an easy way out.

Only Workers can Prevent Global Warming

Capitalist “solutions” to Global Warming will push the cost onto those least able to pay and generate splits in society which will prevent effective action. Only the working class can prevent global warming, by making the capitalists pay. Only the working class, by taking direct action to seize the means of production from the capitalists, can:

- Close down the fossil fuel power industry and convert to renewables without forcing miners and power workers into unemployment;
- Massively boost public transport and shift the emphasis of travel away from the private motor vehicle, without forcing workers in the vehicle industry into unemployment; and
- Change the pattern of urban development to end suburban sprawl and focus on sustainable communities and transport options.

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