

The struggle for the environment

Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group

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We anarchist communists know that capitalism is a socio-economic system over-producing products for a wealthy minority. Capitalism breeds destructive competition between private owners of production. An exploited workforce makes goods for private companies which are sold in pursuit of profit and perpetual growth.

The driving force of capitalism is profit. Companies produce goods to make profit, not to meet the needs of people. Under capitalism, profit comes before efficiency and sustainability. The State and government, on behalf of capitalists, is also responsible for today's extensive environmental destruction. Governments do not protect the environment if doing so will reduce company profits.

Various environmental movements, groups and coalitions are making important contributions to awareness about environmental issues. However, their initiatives often fail to involve the working class movement and its allies. They do not question the State, government or companies that exploit social inequality in the pursuit of profit and wreak ecological devastation without fear of consequences.

Anarchist communists link their struggles for the environment to the working class movement and the fight for social, political and economic freedom. Ecological destruction injures us all, especially the working poor. Only the working class can lead a revolution against social and economic domination and build a sustainable world. Anarchist communists envisage workers' revolutions in trade, in consumption, and in production.

1. A revolution in trade

Global warming is caused by human activities that emit greenhouse gases. The transportation sector is one of the largest sources of emissions. Today, the de-localisation of production means that manufacture and distribution require travel of tens of thousands of kilometres for each product and its components. Transportation plays a key part in capitalist globalisation, and the class struggles going on in this sector are very important. There will be no massive reduction of greenhouse gases until the wage differentials that force different parts of the production chain into different countries are abolished, the international division of labour is greatly reduced, production is largely relocalised, and the various regions of the world have economic independence.

2. A revolution in consumption

Capitalism has an inherent death-logic. The concept of degrowth, advanced by some radical environmentalists, cannot work without a break from capitalism. Healing the ecology of the earth requires a revolution in patterns of consumption so that:

- Production is organised to satisfy need
- Transportation (public transport, road, rail, air) is clean and efficient; and
- Packaging is minimised and advertising abolished.

We need to reconsider what is necessary and what is superfluous in the economic system. There must be a drastic reduction in the consumption of material resources and an enrichment of social and cultural life covering social relations, culture, art, and science.

3. A revolution in production

Anarchist communists demand economic development that takes both sustainability and human needs into account. The problem we face is not “excessive consumption”, since most people, especially the popular classes in developing countries, are short of housing, decent health, jobs, transport, education, and more. Wasteful production by and for the world’s ruling minority is what endangers us all. Capitalists, corporations and the State systematically under-invest in useful, necessary and ecologically sustainable technology in favour of “high pollution-high profit” technology, weapons of war and the machinery of social coercion.

The need both to reduce resource use and increase production to eliminate poverty can be satisfied in a libertarian communist society. Goods will be high quality and durable, not shoddy and breaking down quickly; manufacturing will use closed loop processes, with 100% recycling and zero waste; and modern technology (e.g. 3D printers) will be used for efficient short run production of many goods, eliminating long distance transport in the process.

Conclusion

The so-called “population crisis” is an illusion caused by the inefficient, unjust and unsustainable practices of capitalism. While there is a natural limit to the carrying capacity of the planet, this limit is impossible to determine until after capitalism has been abolished and its destructive practices eliminated. If population reduction is called for after the planet’s carrying capacity is established, it can be achieved gradually through social consensus.

Through libertarian communism we can reach a point of balance between the capacities to produce, the needs of populations, and the limits of the biosphere. We cannot build our future in opposition to the rest of life. The ideology of domination must be broken everywhere, so that humanity can find a safe future on its planet.

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