

World Socialist Review

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Used up Planet FOR SALE!

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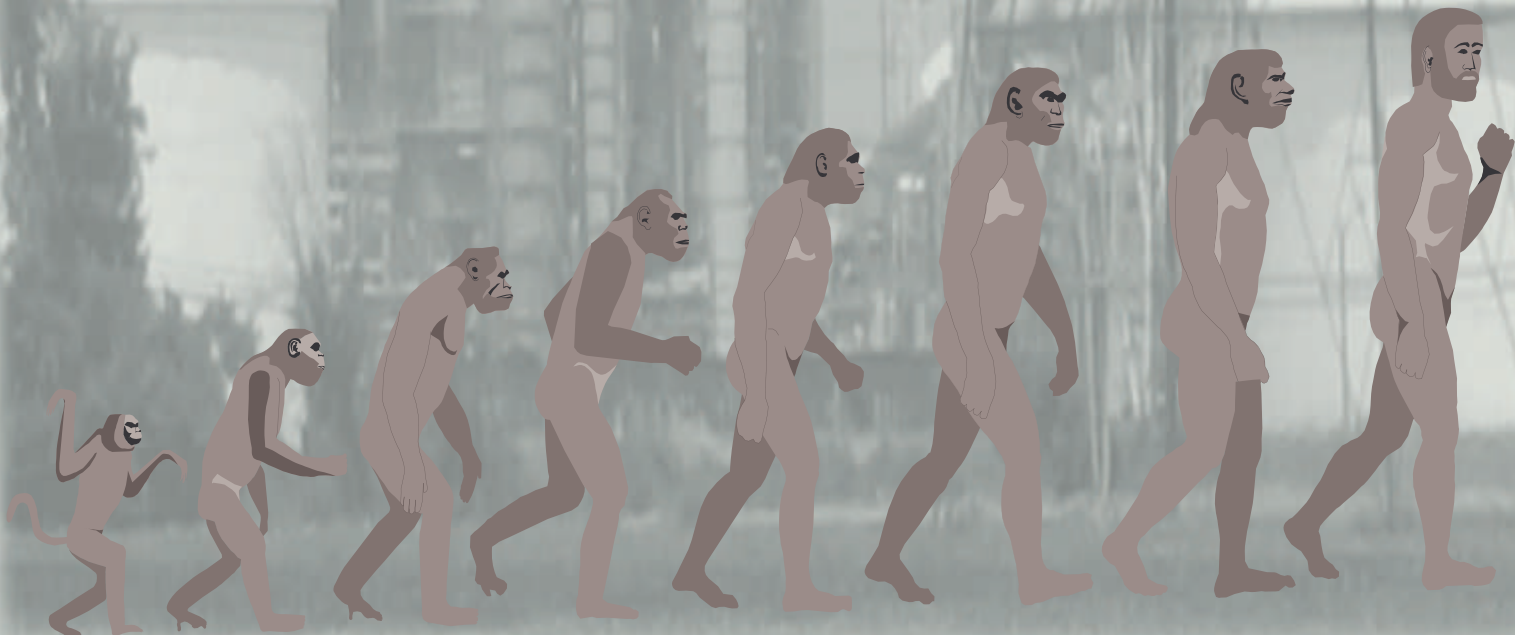
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Common ownership: Our last chance

A recent episode of the PBS program *Now*, broadcast nationwide in most states on 4/22/2005, announced gravely not only that “scientists are convinced our Earth is warming, and with scary consequences,” but also and even more gravely that “meanwhile industry funds a campaign to do nothing.” The program quoted Dr. Richard Alley, professor at Penn State University, a paleoclimatologist, one who studies the Earth utilizing data from glacier ice and ice sheets. According to Dr. Alley, our planet has on numerous occasions previously experienced a phenomenon known as “abrupt climate change.” His concern, and that of scientists whom the program referred to as “the best minds on the planet,” is that human society is so altering the atmosphere and the climate that it may trigger such an abrupt, indeed possibly catastrophic, transformation of the climate.

A visit to the Web site of the environmental think-tank EcoBridge lists hefty references suggesting indisputable recent changes in our atmosphere, including increases in carbon dioxide and methane, more frequent extreme weather, disappearing glaciers, melting arctic sea ice, Greenland’s ice sheet melting, tropical diseases spreading, and oceans warming with accompanying coral bleaching and disintegration. Paralleling such dire developments are other examples of human society’s significant transformation of the planet from its condition even a century ago, including enormous deforestation rates (discussed in impressive detail in the article “Destroying the World’s Forests” on the Web site of the World Socialist Movement [WSM]) and the introduction of vast quantities of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) that are contributing to ozone layer depletion (also discussed on the WSM Web site in an article entitled “Profit Enhancing Chemicals”). Vast research-based evidence thus appeared to support the hypothesis that the planet is warming and becoming increasingly less hospitable for humans and other animal life.

Does the future have a future?

What is presumably of greatest concern to those of us who work for a living is the total lack of apparent control that we may exert at present upon the corporations, media and governments whose practices exist to serve the interests of a small percentage of the population. The great historical question is going to be: are we just going to stand around amidst alternating storms of doomsday prophecies and media coverage minimizing the magnitude of the problem, and not take matters into our own hands, even at the risk that our and our children’s future may be horrendously bleak, even non-existent?

For example, according to the abovementioned *Now* television show, in Congress the House has just approved an energy bill which promises tax breaks and subsidies to coal, oil, and gas companies — the companies most responsible for the mess in the first place! Furthermore, those most opposed to theories of global warming are those such as Senator Inhofe who represent the economic interests of the magnates of his oil-producing Oklahoma. He is ironically the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works and the Committee’s biggest recipient of contributions from oil and gas companies. He says global warming is a hoax.

Ross Gelbspan, a former editor of the *Boston Globe*, was described in the *Now* program as having devoted many years to reporting the ways in which the energy industry has attempted

to cover up the scientific warnings about global warming. For example, in 1989 the disinformation campaign began when representatives of the petroleum, automotive and other industries formed the Global Climate Coalition, and later the Information Council on the Environment, which was funded by the Western Fuels Association, mostly representing coal interests. The strategy for that campaign, according to Mr. Gelbspan, suggested their drawing on several prominent global warming skeptics, scientists who argue that global warming is mired in unknowns. Mr. Gelbspan found that energy industry leaders had paid those scientists hefty fees and compensations amounting to more than half a million dollars between 1991 and 1995. Some of these scientists, who had engaged the media in interviews to suggest global warming was an unsupported theory rather than a strongly supported hypothesis, reemerged some years later in videos distributed by yet another group, the Greening Earth Society, a group also supported by the coal industry.

In 1997 the Global Climate Coalition appeared in a multi-million dollar campaign to persuade the public that the science behind the international Kyoto agreement to reduce greenhouse gases was shaky. One of those ads stated: “Countries responsible for almost half the world’s emissions won’t have to cut back. Check it out for yourself, it’s not global and it won’t work.”

Then President George Bush, former oil man himself, pulled the U.S. out of the Kyoto Treaty, claiming that “the targets



“Political Will to Stop Spreading Deserts is Missing.” <<http://www.desertification.net>> Photo: Dead Vegetation. <http://www.wateryear2003.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=5148&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html>. See p 12 for a brief discussion of concept.

themselves were arbitrary and not based upon science.” According to the *Now* program, a 2001 memo by Frank Luntz, a well-known Republican consultant, may have played its part in affecting Mr. Bush’s decision, when it advised the White House that the best way to “address the global warming” problem is to “continue to make the lack of scientific certainty a primary issue in the debate.”

The May/June 2005 edition of *Mother Jones* suggested that Exxon Mobil alone contributes to more than 40 policy groups that seek to undermine the scientific consensus on climate change.

Welcome to Hell

According to a citation in a January 13, 2000 CNN Web site article about scientific experts discussing the overwhelmingly strong evidence for global warming, a conference of the United Nations-sponsored Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change (IPCC) comprising over 2,500 scientists, was quoted as having reached a near-unanimous conclusion that global warming was at least partially the result of human activity — primarily the burning of fossil fuels, which release carbon dioxide, methane, and others gases into the atmosphere, forming a global “blanket” that traps heat near the Earth’s surface. The IPCC predicted an increase in global temperatures of between 2 and 6.3 degrees Fahrenheit by the year 2100. The panel also predicted the expansion of warming oceans and calculated that the melting of land-based ice formations would combine to add between one and three feet to the existing sea level. The IPCC projected sharp increases in the frequency and intensity of storms and droughts, in the spread of tropical diseases, in coastal flooding and in accelerated waves of extinctions of plant and animal species which fail to adapt to the changing climate.

As suggested earlier in this article, large countries such as the United States may choose to put profits before people in refusing to cooperate with Kyoto Accord limits to greenhouse gas emissions, while other developing nations such as China, a coal-based economy, are likely to vastly surpass the greenhouse emissions of the United States by 2025.

Such is the anarchic nature of the capitalist system. It is comprised in part of vast corporations with vested economic interests to broadcast disinformation to the public and to influence governments to steer policy away from potential threats not to our well-being but to their profit-making. It is also made up of rival nation-states each attempting to care for the economic interests of their own internal capitalist class. Finally, it is characterized by billions of workers whose receipt of information is heavily influenced by the capitalist media over which they have no control.

In other words, even rational decisions by governments, such as those pronounced in the Kyoto Accords, may be thwarted and never realized because of the needs of the few rather than the needs of us many. While some or even many capitalists

may share the same concerns about the future of the planet as do the rest of us, there is nothing quite like economic interests to silence opinion, to brush off even their own staunch yet hypocritical morality, to freeze vital action, and to keep their heads buried in the sand — behaviors that may seem at least understandable for the poor dears but that are sure to be deadly for the rest of us.

This is a supremely criminal example of how sophisticated modern productive technology is at odds with the mode of production that still exists, with the need for profits calling the shots, even if it might cause our cities to lie flooded under three feet of water one day or lead to the deaths of millions of us irreplaceable and ultimately trivial historical players, the workers (at least thus far, until we abolish history as we know it). Even if the skeptics are correct, and the change in weather is a relatively natural but unpredictable phenomenon not caused by the negative side effects of industrial society, humans may still need to find a solution to keep themselves and future generations from destruction in droughts, floods, or plagues.

Such complex solutions are not likely to be effectively realized in an intrinsically competitive and undemocratic society, in which the resources we will desperately require are owned by the planet’s private owners or by rival nation-states. In such a preliminary social order as we presently live under, the economic costs of dollars and cents will likely play a major part of any such grandiose scheme, as there is only so much money to go around. Furthermore, in this hierarchical, class-based society, the major decisions will be made by those with power and privilege, and not by those of us who must work to live and who remain relatively powerless players in the machinations of national or global politics.

Good Decisions Will Require Common Ownership

Or we could decide to take matters into our own hands. By democratically taking over the means of production, to be thereafter considered subject to the common ownership of the whole human species, any drastic solutions that may need to be made by and in the interest of even the entire human race could more readily be achieved, as decision-making over the use of resources will be entirely ours. Whatever we decide, such decisions will be made in harmony with the findings of the scientific community, and we will be able to act upon our decisions immediately, without the endless walls of bureaucracy, finance, politics or power murderously standing in the way of our lives as they are at pres-

Continued on next page

A tale of two futures

As the name implies, socialism is based on what is social. More particularly, it is based on democratic social interaction of people collectively creating the kind of world they envision. It is the antithesis of the anti-social economic system of capitalism based solely on the cold acquisition of profits. Social needs that are met under capitalism are either highly profitable or incidental by-products. Unfortunately, the quest for the almighty dollar knows no bounds and is seriously taxing our ecological systems. Capitalism puts the cart before the horse, making everything subservient to profit acquisition. With respect to our community green-space, from an aesthetic as well as a biological perspective, this has taken on absurdly rapacious proportions.

Silt, Spaniards & Mosquitoes

The Texas Gulf Coast, where I grew up, does not rest on the continental shelf along with about half of the state itself. Rather, the land mass is the result of billions of years of oceanic inundations of silt. When the Spaniards first explored the Texas Gulf Coast, it was inhabited by the Karankawa Indians, who were known to be semi-cannibalistic and to smear their bodies down with alligator brains as a method of mosquito repellent. Anyone who has ever spent the night in Galveston during one of those rare times when there was no wind would wholly understand the Karankawa's resort to such drastic mosquito repellents.

I grew up in Houston, but spent a considerable part of my youth as a beach bum in Galveston, Freeport, and Matagorda. Texas beaches have always held a special charm for this writer. They have a special uniqueness in comparison to other beaches I've visited. As a hippie youth in the 70's, a group of us would frequently camp out all night on the coast, build bonfires at night and enjoy the wind, sun, and warm surf during the day. The few trinket shops, stores, and eating establishments were ancient Mom 'n Pop businesses or seafood restaurants with historical associations.

The beaches remained fairly free of commercialization. As well, the drive between Houston and Galveston's beautiful skyline was once a trek fairly bereft of commercial clutter or palpable habitation of any sort, save the wildlife in the region.

Texas Chain Store Massacre

Sadly, this is no longer so. Most of the once pristine and free beaches are now filled with chain stores and commercial establishments, beaches that require payment for use, and the ever-present police. In short, the beaches have become commodified and regulated, no longer the free-access areas they once were. If driving between Houston and Galveston was once a trip through the country, it is now barely discernible where Houston ends and Galveston begins. Endless miles of asphalt, strip-malls, service stations and Wal-Mart's make for monotonous eyespace. In other parts of Texas, capitalist developers have ruined age-old parks and community spaces, including many of the wooded areas near Austin. Expensive condos and housing subdivisions are now commonplace. Even within cities such as Houston where old neighborhoods once had beautiful old houses at modest rent rates, and huge oak trees canopied the streets, now stand only monstrous condominiums. Obliterated are the unique old homes, the ancient live oaks and the tangible charm of the neighborhood: all sacrificed to the profit initiative.

From an aesthetic standpoint, this trend sucks blatantly. Add to this the impact on biological species other than our own. Growing up on the outskirts of Houston, there were still cow pastures, huge open fields in which we flew kites and played ball. There was a ubiquitous species of frog that was found nowhere in the world except that part of Texas. Now, due to mindless capitalist expansion, few open fields or cow-pastures exist. Even sadder, the species of frog indigenous to that region is almost extinct. I recall seeing hundreds of them hopping around after a fresh rain.

It saddens this writer to know such wonders are falling to the unfeeling blade of profiteering. To ruin a beautiful patch of land, that took billions of years of oceanic inundations to create, with the construction of a Wal-Mart or a McDonald's is symptomatic of Capitalist values. No reverence is paid to nature's wonders: the magic of a sunrise on the beach, the sound of the wind and the waves, nor the discovery of sand dollars and starfish strewn along the shores. Its vision is limited to the quest for profit.

Only the social organization of the world based on true human values can protect and preserve these ecological treasures. Capitalism can never preserve the natural state of the earth when doing so would stand in the way of profit. We must create a social system that will stem the capitalist trajectory toward ecocide. The establishment of socialism is the only solution to this critical problem.

— **KG**

Common Ownership — Cont.

ent with regards to an issue such as global warming that could potentially alter the course of human history.

At what point do humans decide that sustaining the interests of a small gang of owners — whom working-class humans have thus far decided have every right to own the planet and enjoy the fruits and luxuries that workers provide — is not worth the imminent threat of an Earth no longer able to sustain human life? Scientists are warning us that the point of no return is close by or has already been passed. Do we pretend the problem is not really that bad? Do we passively resign ourselves to a pessimism that announces it is too late to act so why not just embrace a selfish consumerist individualism? Do we continue to trust our politicians to represent our interests even though they have always failed to do so since they are unable to alter and control the laws of the capitalist economy in the interests of us hard working folk?

The barrel of the gun is pointed right now between your eyes. What are you going to do?

— **Dr. Who**



In a discussion of overpopulation in *Capital* vol. 1, Marx cites the opinion of economists in his day who preached that a large surplus working-class population was actually a condition of flexibility required by capital to allow employers to move quickly when hiring and firing and thus keep ahead of the competition.¹ Malthus's explanation of the allegedly "geometrical" tendency of population to increase, as against the supposedly "arithmetical" increase of land under cultivation, Marx dismisses as "narrow." For the most part, Marx treats overpopulation as a by-product of the capitalist mode of production, not as yet another devilish horror from capitalism's catalogue of social evils.² "Population is an abstraction," he says, "if one disregards the classes of which it is composed."³

As if to challenge this idea, a recent "call for action" appearing on the Internet by activist, structural geologist, science writer, journalist and novelist Dale Allen Pfeiffer invites us to consider a special, terminal case of overpopulation. Pfeiffer, writing about population in relation to energy production, foresees as an imminent material possibility the end of civilization as we know it and a catastrophic decline in human numbers, barring immediate recognition of the unsustainability of capitalist production, the population levels that have become

¹ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol 1, Book One, The Process of Production of Capital, pp. 908 and 910, London: ElecBook (1998). (All references to Marx's writings are from the 1998 ElecBook CD-ROM edition.)

² *Capital*, Vol 3, Book Three, The Process of Capitalist Production as a Whole, pp. 289, 295, 337, inter alia.

³ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, p. 193.

dependent on it and the redesign of our entire civilization. He calls for input from both specialists and "people of limited means" into a projected socioeconomic and ecological redesign of present-day communities "to ease their transition into a post-technological world."⁴

A Nation of Oil Junkies

Capital, he argues, has become an oil junky sucking hydrocarbons out of the earth so voraciously that within the next few years it will reach the point of diminishing returns: past the "break-evenpoint," it will require more energy to extract oil and natural gas than is available for consumption, forcing world hydrocarbon production to gradually shut down.

No form of society, capitalist or socialist, can rationally plan to use more energy than it produces, since it will eventually consume all its own energy supplies in the process. But since the experts he cites indicate that none of the alternatives to fuel production even comes close "separately or in combination" to duplicating oil's "bang for the buck," this crisis of oil will generate rapidly escalating prices and struggles over dwindling oil resources, followed by a forced and sudden drop in energy supplies on a planet that at this juncture has largely tied up most of its energy options.

⁴ Dale Allen Pfeiffer, "Eating Fossil Fuels," 2004, retrieved May 23, 2005 from http://www.fromthewilderness.com/free/ww3/100303_eating_oil.html; originally published in *From The Wilderness*, 30 Oct 2003, Vol. 6 issue 7. "A Call for Action," retrieved May 23, 2005 from http://www.fromthewilderness.com/free/ww3/061504_call_action.html; originally published in *From The Wilderness*, 30 June 2004, Vol. 7 issue 3. Pfeiffer is FTW's Contributing Energy Editor.

Unraveling Systems

Once oil production shuts down, what happens? Ultimately, the world we know begins to unravel. Nothing new directly or indirectly requiring the use of oil or gas in its production will be available any longer — machinery, buildings, factories, houses, food, heating and cooling technology, plastics, maintenance services dependent on oil and so on. Electricity on the scale that we know it today will be out the question. Jet travel, computer technology, global communications — all will face the axe. As a consequence of and closely following this vast contraction of markets, an unprecedented "die-off" of human beings will commence on a scale ultimately surpassing that of the Black Death, which killed 40 percent of Europe's population between 1347 and 1350.⁵

Pfeiffer's prediction is as laconic as it is dramatic:

Within the next five to ten years [i.e., 2009-2014], our energy base will begin to contract irreversibly ... We currently live in the opulence of the oil age. Each of us has the energy equivalent of some 50 slaves to do our work for us and to pamper us with all of the latest technological comforts ... virtually all of our industrial processes are run by the energy of hydrocarbons.⁶

The link making the above catastrophe possible is twofold: agriculture was humanity's original misstep, allowing human numbers to grow to the limits of agricultural technology rather than to those imposed by the physical and mental abilities of hunters and gatherers; the second, compounding error — introduced in the 19th Century — was making all sectors of agricultural and industrial production dependent on oil. Oil's limitless extractability in turn gave rise to the comforting misperception that world population can also expand without limits, whereas Pfeiffer contends that all energy sources combined, *apart from oil*, will not support more than 2.5 billion people. The world's population will approach seven billion in a few years and has yet to level off.

⁵ Susan Scott & Christopher J. Duncan, *Return of the Black Death: The World's Greatest Serial Killer*, John Wiley & Sons Ltd. (2004). Online: "The History of the Black Death," retrieved 28 Aug 2005 from <http://www.firstscience.com/SITE/ARTICLES/history-of-the-black-death.asp>.

⁶ Pfeiffer, "A Call for Action."

This may sound alarmist, but Pfeiffer does confer the immediate blame for the projected disaster on capitalism and its profit-driven psychosis — which implies that it can be averted with the elimination of capitalism. In the final analysis, however, even where his conclusions are arguable, his “call for action” raises disquieting questions. If he is even only partly on track, the future is not bright. The end of the Garden Path is one way or the other looming before us. Certainly, “neoconservatives” in Washington steering the U.S. toward a policy of disguised regional subjugation in the Middle East strongly suggests that Pfeiffer’s fears about rising levels of conflict ensuing from a tightening “peak oil” situation might have some grounds. Add the assumption (validated by most scientists) that we are on the brink of potentially drastic climate changes, and a putative breakdown of human civilization by the mid-point of this century could place *homo sapiens* in an unenviable and precarious position, exposed to extinction-level events whose danger we have only recently begun to grasp.⁷

Capitalism Cannot Be Reformed

This sort of analysis falls into the category of “barbarism” scenarios. Pfeiffer himself acknowledges the hypothetical character of his predictions; he also grants that efforts to save capitalism from itself, while futile, might alter his timeline somewhat. But these will not be enough: “Capitalism cannot be reformed,” he says, “due to [its] basic unalterable nature.” Not only that, but it is “antithetical to democracy” and cannot yield the necessary rethinking to avert disaster. What is not hypothetical is capitalism’s obvious capacity for undermining the basis of society. But Pfeiffer’s focus on energy and technol-

⁷ Runaway global warming, for instance, dovetails with triggers of another, not inconceivable, environmental catastrophe: it could lead to massive methane venting from beneath the Earth’s surface, speeding up our present-day mass extinction event (already the third largest in the planet’s 4.5-billion year history) to the point where most life on Earth becomes extinct. (Pfeiffer, “A Call for Action”)

ogy rather than economic class causes him to underestimate both the political nature of the problem and its solution.⁸ Then again, if he is even remotely correct, the Left is certain to be catapulted to power as the crisis grows, becoming the new status quo at the expense of failed corporate oligarchs. (The job of the Left, generally, is to muddy the waters trying to save capitalism.)

We humans, with our rather complicated brains, have proven ourselves master survivors, even if at the expense of other life-forms. Our upbringing under capitalism has conditioned us to attribute this success to technology, but a factor that explains it much better is the centrality of the human community — up, that is, till the advent of civilization (markets and the division of society into economic classes), which historically displaced communities as the drivers of progress. Over the course of several millennia, ruling-class reliance on markets has reduced the world’s communities to marginal outposts, substituting state authority for that of the community whenever possible; and in this sense, the capitalist revolution has finally devoured its parents. The more doctrinaire economists would now like to flatten out the state entirely, so that capitalist entities might govern directly.

The survival of the human species, however, will not be guaranteed by limiting population or prescribing technological cures, but by allowing our natural sense of community to work out its own solutions. One of the dubious trade-offs of intellectual progress has unfortunately

⁸ Reading *World Hunger: Twelve Myths* by Francis Moore Lappé, Joseph Collins and Peter Rosset (with Luis Esparza), to take one instance, you come away with the sense that conventional estimates of the carrying capacity of the world’s farmlands are heavily padded with congratulatory homage lavished on agribusiness investors and other large landowners. The authors persuasively document, among other things, numerous cases of agricultural land being kept idle by large landowners — even, in some cases, during famines. (New York: Grove Press, 1998; 2nd ed.)

been a millennial-long transfer of storytelling as a vehicle of community survival to experts in numerous fields and the institutions they serve. This point was made rather poignantly, if unintentionally, by a *60 Minutes* segment on the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami: it detailed how a seafaring culture, the Moken, split between Thailand and Burma, in one of the region’s hardest hit areas, escaped the tsunami’s wrath down to the last child. While the Moken lost all their standing structures along the coast and have to rebuild everything, they owe their lives to an old man who reminded them of stories passed down through the generations as dance narratives, told around the fire, of a mythical “wave that eats people” called “the Laboon.” At length the old man galvanized the people, and they all evacuated in short order. In contrast, Burmese locals out fishing the same waters as the nearby Moken did not know enough to follow the Moken fishermen farther out to sea and were caught up in the tsunami. Only the storytelling “sea gypsies,” who remembered the past, survived.⁹

Science — Our Social Memory

This same contrast extends all the way up the ladder of modern-day scientific expertise to the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in the Hawaiian Islands.¹⁰ With all their training and preparation for combating tsunamis in the Pacific Ocean, they, along with the poorly educated Burmese fishermen, lacked the simple continuity of community memory that the even less educated Moken had kept intact. Had civilized society retained its stock of ancient collective memories to that same degree, most of the 250,000 lives lost in the disaster could have been saved.¹¹

⁹ *60 Minutes*, “Sea Gypsies See Signs in the Waves,” air date 20 March 2005. Retrieved 23 May 2005 from <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/03/18/60minutes/main681558.shtml>.

¹⁰ NOVA, “Wave that Shook the World,” air date 29 March 2005. Retrieved 23 May 2005 from http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/transcripts/3208_tsunami.html.

¹¹ NOVA, “Inquiry: Wave of the Future,” Peter Tyson. Retrieved 23 May 2005 from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/tsunami/wave.html>.

Perhaps the most debilitating drawback of civilization, as the division of communities into arenas of class conflict, is its asphyxiating effect on the transmission of social memory. Class-divided societies inhibit or even actively discourage the transmission of community-based survival knowledge by steeping the majority at the bottom of the socioeconomic pyramid in ignorance and confining access to heightened levels of intellectual exploration to the small élites known as ruling classes. Naturally, these tiny minorities cannot handle the monumental task imposed on them, but then civilization itself began as the work of self-assured élites anchored in the privileged convergence of inter-community trade and private property in agriculture. Civilizations start to lose their memories at birth: the invention of writing, which accompanied the emergence of class conflict, paradoxically sealed the majority's denial of access to community memories of the distant past.

On the other hand, we cannot rationally propose to go back to a vanished world of isolated, technologically primitive communities, even though capitalism could be setting us up for the implosion of civilization. What to do, then? The answer is both elegant and simple: we must now (*re*)think our way out of our economic-class mentality. Communities that can control the wealth they produce for the benefit of their members will by the same token be able to enhance their own ability to retain the lessons of the past — but with the forward-looking edge conferred by science.

Capital Undermines Community

Agriculture, which may have unhinged human society from its narrow subjection to the limits of nature, also served, ultimately, as humanity's bridge to global community. Capitalism is merely the last phase of community self-destruction — a demolition that has been thousands of years in the making. We do not even have to *want* world community anymore, because it is all we have left. Clinging to capitalism is about to lead us down a slippery slope of decline, and if the process should go as far as Pfeiffer believes, the

very best we could hope for would be a regression of *homo sapiens* to the level of the barbarian kingdoms predating the slave empires of antiquity — no future to wish on our descendants, and possibly even a kind of atherosclerotic portent.

Abolishing agriculture and technology would in the final analysis amount to giving up on the possibility of laying the foundations of a worldwide community of communities. Socialism — common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interests of society as a whole — *is* that worldwide community, and only it can save the planet from capitalism. Capital, however kind and gentle, remains an unmanageable beast indifferent to human needs and human survival. Its own supporters appeal to the arbitration of the marketplace, binding human intelligence itself to the consequences of its own creation: perhaps the ultimate failure of human instincts.

By one of history's quaint ironies, just when one might pardonably have been persuaded that those ringing phrases of Karl Marx's in the *Communist Manifesto* and elsewhere really were just rhetorical trumpets, we find that the possibility of "the integument bursting asunder" is now a very material one indeed.¹² Socialists, who put their trust in a robust conception of humanity's social nature and the ability of all human beings to exercise their native intelligence, sincerely hope it will not take some kind of population disaster to serve as a wake-up call.

— ROEL

¹² Another that comes to mind is the celebrated last paragraph of the Introduction to *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in which Marx poetically envisions the working class rising to ever greater challenges, finally facing the leap out of capitalism it can no longer avoid. "Hic Rhodus, hic salta!" ("Here is Rhodes: leap here!") — a skeptical challenge issued to a traveler in one of Aesop's fables to make good on his boasts.

SURVIVING CAPITALISM

If you and your family, friends and neighbors were the last people left on Earth, would you be able to survive, assuming access to fresh water, plants and animal life? As humans we have come a long way, but if we are to go much further we must reassess the direction we are taking in terms of survival and the quality of our lives. Few of us are unaware of the AIDS crisis in Africa, famines and wars worldwide, melting ice caps and ozone holes, yet we continue to follow the same well-trodden path which brought us these disasters.

Millennia ago, our ancestors lived crude and superstitious lives, but they were cooperative and self-sufficient. Over time a few learned to make implements out of metal rather than wood or bone and became highly respected for their skills. Indeed, they were sometimes regarded as magicians and treated like demigods. When some took their show on the road and traded with distant communities, they became the prototypes for the international capitalist. For the first time, farmers became dependent for their livelihood on implements made from materials from faraway places not accessible to them and by techniques of which they were totally ignorant.

Nowadays, we are all expected to hang by our individual own tails and have

become entirely dependent on the finite resource which lies beneath the sands of Iraq. The farmers rely on it to grow and harvest our food; the shippers to transport it great distances; we use it to power our heat, light and entertainment sources and to provide the energy for the manufacture of our consumer goods; it illuminates our supermarkets, takes us to and from work and keeps us on-line. Now that it is about to be depleted, we are threatened with the increased use of nuclear power and even coal! Meanwhile, we are all subjected to the degradation of our air, the privatization of urban water supplies and the genetic modification of food without our permission.

Why do we continue to worship the pantheon of thieves and profiteers which is responsible for this mess when we can all share the Earth's considerable resources without creating waste and pollution in the process? After all these eons, isn't it about time we chose a more equitable and practical alternative — socialism? Clean energy is a realistic possibility and conspicuous consumption a worthless exercise in a society of free access for all. Such a society will not come without cooperation and encouragement, but if we work together and avoid exploitation, we may yet survive capitalism.

— Betty Pagnani



Very likely only one of these rootless cosmopolitans would have advised you to vote "World Socialism"!

Capitalism's Weak Link

The Left is too busy being "practical" to have any time for ditching capitalism; but no matter whom you listen to, they will one and all have you chasing endlessly round and round on a nightmarish treadmill of short-term issues. Get the Socialist perspective on today's problems, and see for yourself why eliminating the employment system *FIRST* remains the only option that makes any real sense.

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THE WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES

OBJECT:

The establishment of a system of society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

The Companion Parties of Socialism hold that:

1. Society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labor alone wealth is produced.
2. In society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
3. This antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. As in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
5. This emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. As the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
7. As political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. THE COMPANION PARTIES OF SOCIALISM, THEREFORE, enter the field of political action determined to stand against all other political parties, whether alleged labor or avowedly capitalist, and call upon all members of the working class of these countries to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

the world socialist movement

**THE FOLLOWING COMPANION PARTIES ADHERE TO THE SAME
OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES:**

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SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA/PARTI SOCIALISTE DU CANADA, Box 4280, Station A, Victoria, BC V8X 3X8 • SPC@iname.com; <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spc>. JOURNAL: *Imagine* (\$1)

SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN. JOURNAL: *Socialist Standard* (\$1.50). [TEL. 020 7622 3811; FAX 020 7622 3665] • spgb@worldsocialism.org; <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb>

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All party meetings are open to the public.



This issue printed at Boston, MA by the World Socialist Party of the United States. Send correspondence to WSP(US), Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 (email: wspus@mindspring.com) or to one of the regional addresses listed above. Address submissions to the Editorial Committee. You can also visit us on the Web at <http://www.worldsocialism.org/usa>.

We are committed to one overriding goal: the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a truly democratic, socialist form of society. Accordingly, membership in the World Socialist Party requires a general understanding of the basic principles of scientific socialism and agreement with the Declaration of Principles. It is our view that a worldwide system of production for the satisfaction of human needs, individual and social, rather than for private profit requires a majority that is socialist in attitude and commitment. Events since the beginning of the World Socialist Movement have demonstrated the validity of this judgment.



Since our fundamental goal is quite firmly defined as the attainment of socialism it is important that members understand and accept our principles. To dilute the principles with reformist tendencies or advocacy of the undemocratic idea of "leadership," for example, would be to subvert the Party's reason for being.

That said, we recognize there is room for differences of opinion in a socialist party. In contrast to principles, relatively few in number, there are a multiplicity of matters upon which socialists may have all kinds of conflicting views. If you agree with the following statements, you are a socialist and you belong with us.

• Control of State Power

To establish socialism, the working class throughout the world must gain control of the powers of government through political organization. It is by virtue of its control of state power that the capitalist class is able to perpetuate its system. In a modern, highly developed capitalist society, the only way to oust the capitalist class from ownership and control of the means of production is to first strip it of its control over the state, as a precondition for converting it from a coercive power to an administrative arm of the community. The World Socialist Party, therefore, advocates the ballot as the means of abolishing capitalism and establishing socialism, since socialism can only be established democratically; means cannot be separated from ends.

• Reforms and Reformism

The present, capitalist, society, even with "repair" and reform, by its very nature cannot function in the interests of the working class, who make up the majority of the population in most of the world today. Reforms can never alter the basic exploitative relationship of wage-labor and capital, or production for profit. Capitalism could never get by without them. Whatever the intentions of reformers, socialists recognize the futility of their attempts and direct their efforts only to the complete abolishment of capitalism. The World Socialist Party does not advocate reforms of capitalism — only socialism.

• The Parties of Reform

The World Socialist Party opposes all parties or organizations that do not desire the

achievement of World Socialism. We can only stand against those parties that one way or another support the present system. Our main purpose is to make socialists, not to advocate the use of the ballot for anything short of socialism.

• State Capitalism

The various forms of so-called "communist" government (such as the old Soviet Union, China, Cuba, etc.) were not and are not socialism or communism. "Socialist government" is an oxymoron of the first order. All states past and present calling themselves socialist are nothing more than systems in which the state holds varying degrees of control over the means of production. They justify their existence with the misguided notion that the state is somehow an extension of working-class power. In those countries, as in the United States, goods and services were and are not primarily produced for use. In addition, nationalization and government "ownership" of industry in no way alter the basic relationship of wage labor and capital. The bureaucratic class that controls this form of the state remains a parasitical, surplus-value-eating class.

• Organized Labor

Trade unionism is the institution by which wage and salary workers attempt by various means to sell their working abilities at the best possible price and to improve their working conditions. It is not a satisfactory tool to end class conflict. Unions must work within the framework of capitalism and therefore are useful only to a limited extent. They cannot alter the fundamental relationship between

wage-labor and capital. Better that workers strive to abolish employment altogether.

• Leadership

The World Socialist Party rejects the political theory of leadership. Neither "great" individuals nor self-appointed "vanguards" can bring the world one day closer to socialism. The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself. Educators to explain socialism, yes! Administration to carry out the will of the majority of the membership, yes! But leaders or "vanguards," never!

• Historical Materialism

The socialist point of view rests solidly on the materialist conception of history, a way of looking at things that focuses on how human communities meet their actual survival needs by producing what they need to live (their economic systems, in other words). Out of this process the human brain weaves its ideas, which eventually exert their own influence on the cycle, causing it to become more and more complex as society evolves.

This approach, known as historical materialism, is a scientific method for helping us understand how and why capitalism does what it does. Armed with this understanding, socialists realize that capitalism can never deliver the goods for the vast majority of people. Other approaches, lacking this focus and overlooking the basis of capitalist society, can easily miss this point, so that their advocates get bogged down in vain efforts to make capitalism work for the majority.

• Supernatural Explanations

Socialists hold that materialist explanations of human society and the rest of nature supersede supernatural ones. A religious perspective won't necessarily prevent anyone from striving to abolish capitalism and its evils, and the ethical elements of religious teachings may even be what first make many people aware of the injustices of a class-divided society. But they don't in themselves lead to an understanding of the causes of such injustices. (More often than not, religious institutions themselves justify and commit them.) The world socialist perspective is in any case essentially post-religious, because the case for socialism hinges on the scientific use of evidence. Socialists therefore look on supernatural explanations as obsolete. Ø

WHAT'S GOOD FOR GENERAL MOTORS IS GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME

General Motors Corporation, long one of the working class's biggest rooters, has discovered to its chagrin that it has somehow — inadvertently — become a Deviationist Wrecker:

...Burdened by high healthcare costs, perceptions of poor quality and bland design in its vehicles, and a confusing array of brands, [General Motors Corp.] said yesterday it will cut 25,000 manufacturing jobs over the next three years. [*Boston Globe*, 8 June 2005]

In its displeasure over such deplorable lapses as allowing healthcare costs to remain “high,” the Wall Street Politburo has inflicted the penalty of loss of market share: “health costs need to be trimmed.” While trimming off 25,000 “excess” jobs may seem like an excellent way to reduce “health costs,” the Politburo already judges this too little too late:

The company, which has the capacity to build far more cars than it can sell, said it will close an undisclosed number [sic] of assembly and parts plants in a bid to save \$2.5 billion a year ... the range of cars from brands such as Buick and Pontiac would be cut back.

We will skip over the little hitch that although most economists are trained to wrinkle their noses at such quaint, unfashionable notions as “crises of overproduction,” General Motors seems (ahem) to have incurred in one.

Generally speaking, capitalists have always bet (on our behalf) that numbers will save us in the end. Note that in the above items, no one is talking about people, just various kinds of numbers: markets, jobs, customers, costs. Capital has no use for people because it can only extract value from such parts of them as it can fit, squeeze, or punch into marketplace roles. Human beings don't populate capital's landscape, and that is exactly why businessmen usually forget to figure in the “social costs” of their investments. As if to bang the point into our skulls, *Metro* (“the world's largest global newspaper”) 1-4 July announces in its Business section, “Bank of America to buy MBNA: \$35 billion deal will make bank one of world's largest; 6,000 jobs to be lost.”

The world's working class could go on its merry way as it has for a very long time

YOU SAID IT!



condoning this blindness, and this would suffice to keep the system afloat for some time longer. The only catch, unfortunately, is that in trusting all our brains to the obsessive delusions of a small élite of capitalist wreckers, we risk betraying the planet's “human experiment” altogether.

THE SPECTER OF TERRORISM

Terrorism is not a new concept, but it is not an old one, either. Although the tyrants of antiquity practiced it along with their many other atrocities, the Jacobins truly invented the notion, launching the Reign of Terror during the Great French Revolution. Many savvy dictators, democrats, republicans and now “freedom fighters” have been among its adepts. It has been enlisted since the fall of the Soviet Union in a vast campaign to prevent the military-industrial complex from running aground, once the disappearance of the International Communist Conspiracy made it clear that people might start wondering if the military piece of the complex was needed anymore.

Gone are the days of refreshingly brutal candor, when spokesmen for the interests of capital made no bones about which side their bread was buttered on. Noah André Trudeau, in *Like Men of War*, cites “a writer for *DeBow's Review* of 1849” quoted in Kenneth Stamp's seminal work on slavery, *The Peculiar Institution*:

We have to rely more and more on the power of fear ... We are determined to continue [as] masters, and to do so we have to draw the rein tighter and tighter day by day to be assured that we hold them in complete check.

“Terror,” observes Trudeau, “was the glue that bound together the Southern slave system.”¹ The *DeBow's Review* writer

¹ *Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War 1862-1865*, Noah Andre Trudeau, Little Brown & Co.: Lebanon, IN (1998), p 60.

was referring as much to plantation slaves as to the “free whites” who kept breaking down and helping slaves escape to freedom. The governments of the antebellum slave states, much like modern states, saw terrorism as a means of political control. Yet it suits today's media, a club of bloated capitalist giants, to reverse-engineer the term, styling as terrorist any organization that opposes capital's global sway — provided it can be suitably construed as advocating or practicing violent methods, of course. Thus, given the chameleon-like versatility of the concept, there is no clear distinction between war and terrorism.

The reason “terror” was invented to begin with was to put opponents in their place, and it remains an affair of the capitalist class. Whichever side uses it, its purpose can never transcend the logic of class struggle, which socialists are committed to ending along with the whole bloody reign of capital. The problem now is to put the capitalist class in its place: and a simple walk to the ballot box by a conscious, political majority who understand and want socialism will fix *that*.

CAPITALISM WORKS! (UNLESS YOU DO!)

“The ... increase of competition,” Adam Smith told us once upon a time in *Wealth of Nations*, “would reduce the profits of the masters, as well as the wages of workmen. The trades, the crafts, the mysteries, would all be losers. But the public would be a gainer, the work of all artificers coming in this way much cheaper to market.”²

But Smith's cheery theoretical balancing act, applied dogmatically for over two centuries by the economic theologians, has become a sinister exercise. Robert Went, writing in *Science and Society*, observes that present-day “reality contrasts sharply with the beliefs and expectations of many economists, policymakers and opinion leaders about the effects of globalization. According to mainstream economic theory, more economic integration is supposed to ‘lift

² Chapter X. Of Wages and Profit in the Different Employments of Labour and Stock: Part II, Inequalities Occasioned by the Policy of Europe.

Continued on next page

YSI - Cont. from previous page

all boats' and to lead to convergence of growth, productivity and income levels." More concretely: "the assets of the top three billionaires in the world are more than the combined GDP [gross domestic product] of all least developed countries and their 600 million people."³

By no stretch can we describe "the public" as a gainer in this scenario, or the top three billionaires as subject to "reduced profits." Has something gone wrong with the way businessmen do business? As socialists have long pointed out, it is futile to expect capitalism to deal justly with its underdogs, even when these only happen to be the vast majority of people. Repeated reality checks have confirmed that economics truly is the "dismal science." Capitalism is designed to favor its top dogs (the capitalist class) at the expense of their victims and if the need arises, even of its own internal logic.



**A GIFT TO US FROM OUR GOD
AND EMPEROR, CAPITAL**

**NOW BACK TO WORK,
SLAVES!!!**

Capitalism is a story with no happy ending. The following rather bloodless summary, for instance, conceals a grisly tale of social, economic and political horrors:

World Bank economist Milanovic calculated, in a study covering 85 percent of the world's population from 91 countries, that the richest 50 million people in the world earn as much as the poorest 2.7 billion (Elliott and Denny, 2002). And to give another example, Weller, Scott and Hersh ... conclude that the "distribution of world income between countries grew unambiguously in the 1980s and 1990s," with the effect that the rich countries have gotten richer and the poor countries have gotten poorer: "The median per-capita income of the world's richest ten percent of countries was 76.8 times greater than that of the poorest ten percent of countries in 1980, 119.6 times greater in 1990, and 121.8 times greater in 1999. The ratio of the average per capita income shows a similar, yet more dramatic, increase."⁴

Let those dry statistics sink in for a minute. Was there ever a time when the rich weren't getting richer and the poor getting poorer? How much more slack do we have to cut it before we concede that capitalism is indeed broken, so broken we can never hope to fix it — only replace it?

— Ron Elbert

³ "Globalization: Waiting — In Vain — for the New Long Boom," Robert Went, *Science and Society*, Vol. 69, No. 3, July 2005, p 367.

⁴ Went, p 371.

Photo, p 2: "Desertification is often defined in dynamic terms such as: 'the expansion of desert-like conditions and landscapes to areas where they should not occur climatically,' e.g. the 'desertization' concept of Le Houerou and Gillet (1986). While the word desertification implies a process, this term has largely been used to describe the endpoint, i.e. the desertified or degraded landscape.

"A simpler and more useful definition is that of Dregne (1983): 'desertification is the impoverishment of terrestrial ecosystems under the impact of man! Thus desertification is just one form of land degradation that is associated with semi-arid or arid landscapes. Implicit in the above definition is a continuum of ecosystem modification, from slight to severe as the result of the degradation process, and that is the direct result of human activity."

SOURCE: <<http://www.icsu-scope.org/downloadpubs/scope45/ch04-4.1.3.html>>



On Second Thought

From the *Western Socialist*

The outstanding and most powerful section of Goldwater support is among the oil interests...

The establishment of National Parks covered by various Wilderness Bills has attracted many others to the Goldwater camp. Livestock grazers, mineral prospectors, miners and loggers seek this valuable land for their exploitation. They have no compunction in destroying the lovely redwood forests and the thousand-year-old sequoias. Such entrepreneurs look with scorn upon what they consider are fuzzy dogooder liberals who seek to retain for present and future generations areas of pristine wilderness unspoiled by roads, buildings and autos. Present laws empower the Secretary of Agriculture to remove all or part of these parks from what protection they now enjoy.

More Goldwater supporters are found among the farmers and ranchers of the west and southwest. They seek the abolition of present laws which have set 90 cents per hour as a minimum wage for the Braceros. They favor unlimited entry of these Mexican farm workers so that competition will regulate the "munificent" wages downward...

The change in military technology creating new weapons, nuclear disarmament legislation, a let-up on the Cold War, talk of China's entry into the U.N., have all cut heavily into the defense business of Lockheed, Douglas, Boeing, Northrup, Hunt, Kaiser and the Giannini banking interests. A President who will talk tough, end the "nonsense" of nuclear disarmament propaganda and curb the U.N. with its starry-eyed view of peace among nations would stimulate the business of the whole armaments industry. The new financial and industrial tycoons of the west and southwest generally seek the security of a government controlled by them instead of by the older concerns of the northeast, Wall Street, the Boston financial groups and the Pennsylvania industrial complex.

...Furthermore, the master class can only rule when it rules with the consent of the vast majority, and as long as the important capitalists control the means of communication, the schools, the press, radio, TV and the churches, they have little to fear. These head-fixing institutions can generally be relied upon, in highly developed nations, to mold an acquiescent electorate not only willing to vote for capitalism but even to fight and die for their exploiters.

"Forces Behind Goldwater," S.O. [Sam Orner], No. 5, 1964.

Better
living
through
chemistry?

Pharmaceuticals & personal care products in the environment

All chemicals ingested or applied externally have the potential to be introduced into sewage systems and from there to aquatic or terrestrial environments. When those chemicals are components of personal care products such as suntan lotions, makeup, and toiletries, or human and veterinary pharmaceuticals, they represent a particular class of pollutants now being investigated by the Environmental Protection Agency, water and sewage treatment services and academia. These chemicals are given the acronym PPCP to facilitate communication and research on what can be a mind-boggling array of substances.¹

At present no research has determined the effects of constant exposure to current levels, which are known not to be at hazardous levels at any given time (in fact those measured are found in the single digit parts per trillion, or one-millionth of a gram per liter of water). However, scientists are anticipating a future problem due to the presence of a constant low background level that is constantly replenished, the possible but unknown effects of long term exposure and the unknown reactions with substances in the environment.

This issue is getting a lot of attention because most of the development in detection techniques has taken place in the last five to ten years. As an example of some of the work going on in this area, one recent researcher has detected the presence of antibiotics, particularly fluoroquinolones, sulfonamides, and tetracyclines in several water bodies in North Carolina.² The con-

¹ PPCPs as environmental pollutants and Origins and Fate of PPCPs in the Environment. <http://epa.gov/nerlesd1/chemistry/pharma>.

² Occurrence of Antibiotics in Drinking Water. Ye, Zhengqi and Weinberg, Howard. University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill.

cern for the presence of these substances in the environment reflects not so much their suddenly burgeoning number, but rather the development of techniques that can actually detect the extremely small concentrations they exist in. While considering a single pharmaceutical or household chemical in small concentrations may not seem a threat, one must remember that there are tens of thousands of such chemicals, many of which have been used for decades. Fifty of these have already been identified in most places they were looked for, up to 1999, but most classes of PPCP have yet to even be searched out.

PPCPs Are Everywhere

PPCP entry into the environment occurs from many sources. Individuals use these products externally or ingest them, later excreting them in their original or derivative forms. Hospitals, pharmacies, and physicians are also significant sources. The factories that manufacture these products are also responsible for their introduction. Also of note is the use of some PPCPs as pest control, particularly

warfarin, caffeine, and acetaminophen. PPCPs not released into sewage streams can also be disposed of in landfills, where the danger of leaching into the soil is present. Lastly, the use of sewage biosolids as fertilizer is yet another way these substances can find their way into the environment. Once there, they primarily impact the organisms living there:

plants, amphibians, mollusks and fish are all particularly vulnerable to PPCPs introduced into their habitat.

Unfortunately, no single treatment can remove them all; presently no treatment in any water system is designed to address the presence of these chemicals.³ Sewage (and drinking water) treatment processes focus on a specific set of contaminants as defined by the EPA despite the fact that waste streams and some drinking water sources are known to contain numerous other chemicals. It would be virtually impossible for any regulatory body to study the effects of, monitor the environmental levels of, and design and implement treatment techniques for the ever-expanding menu of artificial substances introduced into the aquatic environment, anywhere near as fast as they are being produced. Not only the active chemicals contained in PPCPs but also the inert or non-functional chemicals a source of concern. These include propellants, solvents, stabilizers,

³ On Point: PPCPs. http://www.awwa.org/Advocacy/YourWater/Issues/OnPoint_PPCPs.cfm

INTRODUCING:



excipients in prescription drugs, and preservatives. Some of these pose an additional danger as air pollution as well.

Present concerns about the presence of PPCPs in aquatic environments center around the disruption of hormones in fish by estrogens and the overuse of antibiotics causing the release of resistant pathogens which can then be naturally selected for. The effects of the continual presence of all PPCPs on life (both aquatic and human) are also an area of concern and study. Of the myriad substances possibly present, the effects of serotonin reuptake inhibitors (antidepressants), calcium channel blockers (blood pressure), and proton pump inhibitors (acid reflux) seem to have the greatest potential for undesired effects. In addition, the known presence of antiepileptics and chemotherapy agents, which have known human toxicities, can also be worrisome. In 2000, the top drug markets included cardiovascular, digestive, antidepressant, anti-infective and respiratory medicines, with

total sales of \$92 billion, which is almost half of worldwide sales. Considering the quantity of drugs this represents, one has to wonder how much actual chemical product is reaching the environment!

So how are PPCPs relevant to the achievement of socialism? A second look at the top-selling drugs mentioned makes one wonder how much the existence and prevalence of these drugs are a result of the unhealthy lifestyles we are trapped in as a result of capitalist consumer society. Just why is there such a demand for these drugs, or rather, why are people so sick? Or are they? How much prescribing is done nowadays to avoid future responsibility or culpability if a patient dies, or as the result of favors and kickbacks from the pharmaceutical industry? Perhaps these problems are symptoms of a society that always looks for a quick fix, without regards to the consequences. People generally consider the existence of modern pharmaceuticals and personal care prod-

ucts as one of the benefits of progress and technological advancement.

Quick Fixes Are \$\$\$uper!

But rarely the do true believers in capitalist and consumerist culture ever stop to consider the costs borne in producing the modern marvels they just can't do without. Once it goes down the drain it becomes someone else's problem or simply disappears. This kind of mindset cannot exist in socialism — the emphasis on sustainability and the principle of production for use and not profit will cause society to carefully consider how to provide a standard of living that produces the best quality of life for everyone while using the least possible labor and producing the least amount of waste. Hopefully, instead of makeup, sunscreen, Vasotec and Viagra being washed down the pipes, we can instead watch greed, vanity, and toxic lifestyles follow the same swirly path into oblivion.

— Tony Pink

I'M A NURSE...

...and one of the things I do for a living is facilitate groups for mothers of babies from two to twelve weeks old. The goal is to empower the mothers to trust their own judgment, as well as to teach them about infant development and the needs of new babies.

When I'm working with this group, I wear a somewhat different hat than the one I wear doing my socialist work.

The other day, one of the new moms wondered if it was safe to put baby sunblock on her two-month-old, because the tube was marked "Warning: not for infants under six months." Another mom responded that her pediatrician had told her it was OK, as long as you didn't put any on the face or hands. Someone else said *her* doctor insisted it was absolutely contraindicated to put sunblock on a baby under six months of age.

It became clear that there was no consensus among the different providers these women were using, although all the tubes and jars of

sunblock stated clearly not to use them on very young babies. One of the mothers (who is a doctor herself, though not a pediatrician) offered that when there is so much difference of opinion among health professionals, it generally means there isn't enough science to make a definite judgment.

I listened to all of this, and then I said, "Two generations ago, children played at the beach all day and no one worried much if they got sunburn. One generation ago, parents were urged to put sunblock on children, but not on young babies. Now in this present generation, we see the beginning of a tendency for even parents of very young babies to be advised to apply sunblock.

"Two things are happening here: they're trying to make sunblock less toxic, and exposure to UV rays is getting riskier because our current system of society has been making holes in the ozone layer. In other words, the risk of exposure to our own sun is becoming (or maybe has already become) greater than the

risk of exposure to the chemicals in sunblock.

"The reality is that the UV rays are more dangerous now than they were 50 years ago, because of lack of concern about protecting our environment."

Later, I was chastised by my boss for "not maintaining an upbeat atmosphere." Some of the mothers had been disturbed by what I said. But I couldn't help it — my RN hat had fallen off and been replaced by my Socialist hat!

I wish it was possible to connect the desire of mothers to protect their babies to the desire to protect humanity itself. What good does it do to maintain an upbeat attitude, feeling good as we apply the toxic sunblock, ignoring the relationship between skin cancer risk and capitalist disregard for the environment? I wish I could help these new moms recognize that the best way to protect their babies is by working for socialism.

— RN

You can have your veggies and eat them too!

The practice of vegetarianism — or non-practice of animarianism* — is not new to humanity. However, one could argue that it has never been more important. World hunger, inhumane and filthy methods of meat production, and the spread of livestock diseases both new and old are forcing many who would never consider abandoning sinking their teeth into a steaming hunk of flesh to give the idea a second thought. There are many kinds of vegetarians, ranging from impos- tors to the almost monastic avoiders of any food product of animal origin. This lifestyle is admittedly difficult; from meat- lover's restaurant menus to relatives who have to cook me something extra (and have my eternal gratitude), to the usually absurdly high-priced products offered in the supermarkets.

I will try to show how vegetarianism in socialism makes sense and pass along some of the general benefits of the lifestyle, without attempting to convert you. There are people and organizations out there that can help you if you have questions or want more details on the nutritional aspects of meat-free lifestyles.

One of the concerns about meatless diets is protein. Actually, a balanced Western diet includes four times the recommended amount of protein for an average healthy adult, so leaving out the meat isn't going to kill you. In fact, I don't track where my protein comes from, and I sort of don't care, because I know that there are sufficient quantities in many plant-based foods, the chief being the soybean. This is exactly where the herbivores get it and they do just fine.

Incidentally, this introduces an area where I think vegetarianism and socialism cross — at the cessation of the waste of matter and energy involved in transform- ing plants into meat. A good rule of thumb to estimate this waste is the “ten percent pyramid,” with humans on the top and the little greenies on the bottom. Only ten percent of each pound of “eaten” is

successfully converted into “eater.” The rest is waste in the form of uneatable or indigestible matter and heat energy lost during chemical conversion. Therefore, it takes about ten pounds of plants to produce one pound of animal, and ten pounds of animal to produce one pound of human or other carnivore.

A Happy and Livable Planet

A little math tells me that if I was a carnivore, it would take $250 \times 10 \times 10 = 25,000$ pounds of vegetable matter to produce a meat-eating version of me, but only 2,500 pounds to produce me as an herbivore. Abandoning meat as a food source can optimally increase the nutri- tive capacity of agriculture ten times, thus reducing our dependence on it! When socialism rolls around, the elimination of waste and hunger will surely be both primary goals for the creation of a happy and livable planet.

A socialist future like the one I dream about will also have a lot less pain and suffering than the current offering. I've done my homework, and without getting into details, I can say that there is a lot of that going on in the meat industries. Plants, in contrast, don't feel pain. They cannot for the obvious reason that they do not have brains, or any nervous systems at all. And no, the cows and pigs are not going to reproduce out of control if we stop using them for food.

There are environmental impacts as well, the most serious of which is the pollution caused by the wastes of animals grown for food. This has to go somewhere — and usually, untreated livestock waste is dumped into the nearest body of water, unlike human waste, which is in most cases required by law to be treated before release into the environment. The impacts of farm animal waste are significant — I'm not going to quote statistics, so you can research this if you want.

The impact of fertilizer is even greater; however, this problem

does not completely go away if meaty diets eventually disappear. Fertilizer will still be necessary to grow crops, but mindful socialists will not be forced by the pressure of the market to produce the most, the biggest, and the best — only that which is needed. They can take care that the effects of the fertilizer they do use are reduced and monitored by careful farming practices, efforts made easier by a cooperative agricultural model and not a competitive one. Meat processing facilities have environmental impacts as well. Since it seems impossible for capitalism to maintain clean and efficient slaugh- terhouses, those places remain vectors for disease and contamination. Shoc- kumentaries still pop on the tube every once in awhile, reminding us, however ineffectively, how filthy meat processing actually is.

In sum, the benefits of a vegetarian soci- ety can go hand in hand with the desires of a socialist society. A widespread vegetarian lifestyle can play a significant role in reduc- ing energy demands, pain and suffering, and the negative effects of agriculture on the environment. The environmental and medical impacts of a meat-centered culture are well documented even if they are generally ignored; and even though the psychological impacts may be harder to measure, they still contribute, in my opinion, to making the world a little more violent than it needs to be.

— TP



* This is not an actual scientific term, but then neither am I.



OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE

Over the years we have discovered that the earth is not flat after all, and the sun no longer circles the earth. Since we're not perfect, it should not be surprising that our senses fail us from time to time. Magicians and con-artists can fool us too, if we're not careful. I can think of many more. How about our "leaders" in government, our schooling, all the media, radio and TV — all designed to make a model slave of you. We "wage-slaves" are all taught to regard all "leaders" and "great men" in awe and admiration. Evidently they are supposed to have superior reasoning powers and we are expected to follow their advice.

When people started to till the soil and domesticate animals, they were able to produce far in excess of their own requirements. Since that time humans have made possible a parasite class who have contrived to let someone else do all the work. The modern "wage-slave," with the aid of modern equipment, has outstripped the former slaves in their ability to produce. We have filled the world with commodities, but alas, only those folks with money can partake. Many must starve in a world bursting at its seams.

Much of the world's production is not consumed except in time of war or preparation for war. The consumption of these items means death and destruction, misery and despair. Where there are "leaders" there are led, where there are led there are bled. Obviously, there would be no leaders without "gullible followers."

All forms of life propagate their species and human beings are no exception. Methinks we humans have forgotten the purpose of life: we now live to eat, rather than eat to live. In support of the mad quest for profits, we have let the earth be turned into a battleground. The slaves do the fighting, and the parasites direct the action. Under their direction we pollute the air and water, ruin the ozone, use the lakes and oceans for dump sites and strip the forests. We produce germs and viruses (perhaps Aids), clones and robots, computers and hackers, dangerous combinations of unruly and unconscionable behaviors.

There is a way out, however. The Socialist suggests that we eliminate the cause of this mad rush to oblivion. Let us establish a new lifestyle. In a word: Socialism. "From each according to our abilities, to each according to our needs." No buying or selling, no wages, no countries or borders. Just free access to all we produce, worldwide.

ALAS, POOR CARL!

Carl Sagan was a Pulitzer prize winner. He was also the author of the book, *Cosmos*, and largely responsible for the TV program of the same name. I urge you to drop by your favorite book store and check out his video, *Cosmos* #13.

Cosmology, for me, is a fascinating subject, perhaps because I know very little about it. When told that mankind has existed for just a few seconds on the Cosmic calendar and Dinosaurs preceded us by millions of years, I feel rather insignificant. I feel that our demise would be of no importance in the Cosmic scheme of things.

The astronomer speaks of billions of light-years and a billion trillion stars and that our world is a speck of dust in a vast ocean of space. What happens on this minuscule mote of matter is of no importance. Good grief, what am I saying? I live on this globe. My life span may be a blink of an eye in Cosmic time, but to me it's three score and ten.

There has been some concern about the possibility of a nuclear exchange in the not too distant future. Sagan spoke of the necessity for us to come to grips with the problem. I second the motion. The Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB) warned us years ago by inscribing on their monthly paper, the choice we have in the matter, to wit: "Socialism or Social Extinction."

We, like the SPGB, advocate the overthrow of Capitalism and the establishment of Socialism, a society without wars or poverty, no governments, nations or boundaries, no money, profits or wages. Just free access to all our needs. It can be achieved through the ballot-box only — by a majority of socialists.

The two-megaton bomb is not the largest nuclear bomb, but it is equivalent to all the bombs dropped in World War II. It took six or seven years to drop two million blockbusters. Just think, with our missiles

today we could have a hundred World War II's in a few hours. We could follow the dinosaurs into oblivion. The planet Earth would continue its orbit around the Sun for many more millions of years, unaffected by the antics of puny earthlings.

Ergo, if you were cast into a raging river, you would fight till you could fight no more. You would start grasping at straws, as they say. Let us not wait for the bombs to fall around us before we take action. This fight requires intelligence to forestall this event. I repeat the alternative: "Socialism or Social Extinction."

THE CLAY'S THE THING

For me, Astronomy is likewise a very fascinating subject, perhaps because I know very little about it. When one is told that the Earth is traveling at 18 miles per second in its orbit around the sun and that the temperature of Mars is -67° F, Venus is a hot one at 850° F and our Earth is a balmy 59° F (if it was any different we would not be here), it makes one feel, as I said, very insignificant. All this trivia may be interesting, but what does it have to do with the price of tomatoes? I don't know, but my philosopher tells me that for every cause there are a million effects and for every effect, a million causes.

Humankind has evolved, in a few seconds on the Cosmic calendar, into a so-called intelligent creature, by our own standards, of course. We must not forget that we are also gifted with a dash of ignorance. Everything is relative to every other thing. Nothing is perfect, except the Cosmos.

I ask you what is large? What is small? What is hot, and what is cold? Who is intelligent, and who is ignorant? Let us face it, everything is relative.

The Earth is a speck of dust in a vast ocean of space. The dinosaurs have come and gone, millions of years ago. We are the late-comers. Our demise would matter little in the Cosmic scheme of things.

During our tenure on this Earth we have been subjected to many types of societies. Each one brought about by the constant changes in the methods of producing and distributing our needs. The present system of economics is called Capitalism, and it too must change because it can no longer be tolerated. It is responsible for poverty, wars and exploitation. The next war may very well be nuclear, in which case we are well equipped. There isn't a government in the world that doesn't play with bombs.

We socialists are convinced that the only choice we have for a safe and productive future is the introduction of Socialism. "Socialism or Social Extinction": repeat that one thousand times. When the atmosphere is filled with radioactive dust from 100 WW2s, that will be a mite late to take action.

The socialist objective is the establishment of a system based on the common ownership of the means for producing and distributing our needs in a true democracy. A classless, moneyless society devoid of wars, poverty and exploitation. "From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs."

Free access to our needs, and that includes tomatoes.

— W. Hewitson

Song Sung Twice

the prince of clowns from his towering height
comes plummeting downward with diminishing fright
I found out the truth and did not bring it to light
I knew what was wrong and did not do what was right
I found out the truth and did not know what to say
I started a panic and ran the wrong way
GOOD BYE Oh No Hello its LBJ
Who needs a great society to hell with LBJ
we are taking all his helicopters and flying them away
RICHARD NIXON out of bounds
IKE went to Korea like a thousand other clowns
I will go over ho chi minh's head and then back down
winning hearts and minds while burying our dead
try and be a little bit more yellow and more red
I like Ike call it more wrong than reich
a dog with a bark that is worse than its bite
after the fall of the great China wall
oh Henry K to Dr. Dick
detente kills children quick
I am no quitter I quit

THE CHORUS ALAS it can't happen here
make no mistake about thats perfectly clear
they hate it when I sing this song
they get annoyed
they were jumping for joy in Hanoi

and where was your local congressman
I started a panic and ran
short little eyes open wide in disbelief,
I have prepared a legal brief
I call you all assistant chiefs
Superman and the Atomic bomb

I survived without a scratch
No declaration of war powers do not attach

— Edward M. Giannattasio

Impossible Maybe

A gift I lift,
to raise in praise
Socialism now
the question is how?
Think People Skills

—Edward M. Giannattasio



Pass this copy
on to a friend!



¿Lost in the translation?

The President is always the last to know... U.S. strongman G.W. Bush appears to be the only person in the country who believes no one anticipated the strength of Katrina's uppercut to a city long known to be at risk. "New Orleans," wrote Mark Fischetti in the October 2001 *Scientific American*, "is a disaster waiting to happen" ("Drowning New Orleans"). The Nature we have been taught religiously it is our human destiny to conquer appears to have other ideas. Below are two additional contrasting views — from *U.S. News & World Report* (9/1/05) and *Left Turn* #17 (updated 9/4/05) — of what may yet prove to be only an introduction to a century of "natural" catastrophes.

Note the sharper sense of the *problem* the *Scientific American* brings and the clearer sense of its *context* provided by *Left Turn*, while the *U.S. News* writers stick ploddingly to coverage of the *details*. This "challenged" sense of the big picture, in the last case, is no accident. The capitalist media, a group of corporate employers forming both the propaganda wing of the profiteer class and the One True Apostolic Church imbued with a mission of keeping working-class eyes focused on salvation in a cup of tea, already work from a single inviolable premise: no profit, no production. Only one larger picture can actually fit into this premise — the rights and concerns of the profit-makers. Both of these aspects are sacrosanct and therefore merely implicit. Ø



Scientific American 2001

A year from now another 25 to 30 square miles of delta marsh — an area the size of Manhattan — will have vanished. An acre disappears every 24 minutes.

To bring in the goods, the fossil fuel companies have dredged hundreds of miles of navigation channels and pipeline canals throughout the coastal and interior marshes. Each cut removes land, and boat traffic and tides steadily erode the banks. The average U.S. beach erodes about two feet a year, Penland says, but Port Fourchon loses 40 to 50 feet a year — the fastest rate in the country. The network of canals also gives saltwater easy access to interior marshes, raising their salinity and killing the grasses and bottomwood forests from the roots up. No vegetation is left to prevent wind and water from wearing the marshes away. In a study funded by the oil and gas industry, [geologist Sean] Penland documented that the industry has caused one third of the delta's land loss.

No group is bound by [Coast 2050, a blueprint for restoring coastal Louisiana], however, and if all the projects were pursued, the price tag would be \$14 billion. ("Drowning New Orleans," Mark Fischetti, a Contributing Editor.)

U.S. News & World Report 2005

In the mid 1990s, a few years after Florida launched its campaign to rescue the Everglades, Louisiana's congressional delegation began fighting for the region's wetlands. But the lawmakers failed to persuade Congress to authorize money — other than a small annual appropriation called the Breaux Amendment, named for recently

retired Sen. John Breaux — until this year, when Louisiana Sen. Mary Landrieu marked the opening of hurricane season by standing in the French Quarter with a giant blue tarp strung up 18 feet high, where she predicted water would rise in the event a hurricane hit, partly because of wetlands elimination. While the House of Representatives' version of the recent energy bill would have provided long-term help — \$350 million over the next 10 years and \$1 billion yearly starting in 2016 — the Senate balked after Democrats and the White House resisted transferring some of the royalties from oil drilling off Louisiana's coast back to the state. What finally emerged from Congress provided Louisiana with \$540 million for coastal restoration over the next four years.

But partly because New Orleans is home to a large poor population — more than 20 percent of its 480,000 residents live below the poverty line, according to a 2003 U.S. Census report — 100,000 households report having no car. And though free busing was provided to the city's famed Superdome, itself evacuated late last week, there appears to have been no attempt to provide public transportation out of town for the poor. In an interview before Katrina struck, New Orleans Director of Emergency Preparedness Joseph Matthews told U.S. News that plans to use buses or Amtrak trains to get people out of town were in their infancy. "Our official policy is that everybody should take it upon themselves to find their own means of evacuation," he said. "As far as evacuating 50,000 or 100,000 people [is concerned], we don't have the resources."

"We really don't have a lot of planning experience

with dealing with this many displaced people for a really extended amount of time," says GWU's Harrauld. "Where are you going to build temporary housing? What do you do with a city that's uninhabitable?" ("Understanding Katrina," Dan Gilgoff.)

Florida utility companies, which rely heavily on Gulf of Mexico natural gas, have warned that they might resort to targeted brownouts. ("The [Big] Ripple Effect," Marianne Lavelle.)

Left Turn 2005

While the rich escaped New Orleans, those with nowhere to go and no way to get there were left behind. Adding salt to the wound, the local and national media have spent the last week demonizing those left behind.

No sane person should classify someone who takes food from indefinitely closed stores in a desperate, starving city as a "looter," but that's just what the media did over and over again. Sheriffs and politicians talked of having troops protect stores instead of perform rescue operations.

Images of New Orleans' hurricane-ravaged population were transformed into black, out-of-control criminals. As if taking a stereo from a store that will clearly be insured against loss is a greater crime than the governmental neglect and incompetence that did billions of dollars of damage and destroyed a city. This media focus is a tactic; just as the eighties focus on "welfare queens" and "super-predators" obscured the simultaneous and much larger crimes of the Savings and Loan scams and mass layoffs, the hyper-exploited people of New Orleans are being used as a scapegoat to cover up much larger crimes. ("Notes from Inside New Orleans," Jordan Flaherty, a *Left Turn* editor and a union organizer.)

Katrina – Cont. from back cover
weather will no longer be avoidable, even if pollution were stopped after such a date.

While it is difficult to be certain if the damage to the planet caused by capitalist production has been responsible for recent changes for the worse in weather, one thing is clear, judging by responses from presidents and politicians and the almost absent coverage of such topics in the major media — such dire warnings from the scientific community are not going to be taken seriously.

Critical Decision-Making

This leaves us rightly concerned whether we are heading into an era in which such similarly devastating phenomena as Hurricane Katrina will not be the exceptions, but the rule. The big question is, what are we all going to do about it? Until enough people appreciate the hopeless, even the grim, existence that the future of capital-

ism represents for the human species and stop leaving critical decision-making to blind leaders of all parties (led by the supremacy of corporate interests), all of us will be increasingly at risk — purely from business as usual. Global awareness begins at home: What are you personally going to do to render this planet a joy to share, to create a society for yourself and your children that meets our needs? Employment isn't just our badge of slavery; it's a millstone hung around the whole world's neck. Human survival demands we now put it behind us, like our childhood toys.

The World Socialist Party of the United States is a companion party of the world socialist movement. It aims to bring about a nonviolent revolution in the ownership of the means of production from private or

state to common. In such a society, money will no longer be necessary, as the things and services we require to live fully (food, clothes, medical services, homes, transportation, and other modern human needs) will be freely available to all. This is because the means of production will be owned in common by the entire community and democratically controlled by it, with today's leaders and elites replaced by truly democratic decision-making on the part of all members of the community.

In a society of interdependent communities based on common ownership, war in a nationless world will be immediately abolished for lack of interest or need, while all degrees of starvation and poverty will quickly follow suit. Without the barrier of economic cost holding back human progress, sustainable ways to provide energy and production for ourselves will be immediately planned and created on a global basis. Our world will become for the first time in its history a truly human family looking after itself.

— Dr. Who

New Orleans ain't gone yet ... yet

Opinions will differ over whether global warming bears direct responsibility for the Big Easy's brush with oblivion. But quite apart from the horror stories Katrina has generated, worse probably *is* coming down the pike. A *New Scientist* article (6/25/2005) tells us that, yes, "the natural decadal swings in the number of storms and hurricanes are so large that climate change cannot be blamed for the increases, according to Kevin Trenberth of the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado (*Science*, vol 308, p 1753)." However:

hurricane intensity and rainfall have been increasing consistently ... This is because the sea-surface temperature and atmospheric moisture content have been increasing as the world warms, and both provide the energy to fuel hurricanes...

So although the Weather Channel's often obsessive coverage gave the impression we were about to witness live the Last Days of New Orleans, still, we just might. "Global warming is pumping up the destructive power of hurricanes and typhoons," suggests a new MIT study ("Global warming will bring fiercer hurricanes," *Insurance Journal* 8/1/2005). ☉



Katrina: an act of Kapital?

The recent sickening ravages of property and life wrought by Hurricane Katrina have been extensively covered in the media, except for two rather glaring omissions.

The first was that a society based upon the rights of property over human life had a great deal to do with exacerbating an already traumatic situation. What we witnessed on television the most were stark and pathetic scenes of poor people huddled in a sports stadium, homes lost forever, awaiting supplies and aid that took endless days to arrive, during which time more people died, the ill were uncared for, and conditions of existence plummeted to unsanitary levels often associated with the shanty towns of South America or Turkish prisons, but not with the United States of America.

While these already traumatized souls had to endure an additional trauma of abandonment and lack of the basic wherewithal to survive, millions of homes and offices unused and awaiting buyers sat empty around this country, but were not available to the million homeless of New Orleans whose life savings had been lost in homes rendered rubble, or who simply never had the savings to invest in their own house.

Needs of the dire and desperate kind

Nobody on television asked the most salient question of all: Should people struck by terrible tragedy be victims of charity at all, or should they instead be automatically entitled to society's wealth simply by demonstrating clear-cut needs for homes, hygiene, food, clothes, and comfort? Since our society as presently constituted is not geared toward the satisfaction of our needs, but rather toward the sale of goods and services to yield profits, it has proved itself demonstrably incapable of meeting needs of the dire and desperate kind, needs that materialized hard on the heels of Katrina. But hey, there are already millions of homeless and poor people in the United States who are not entitled to those vast numbers of empty homes awaiting purchase, so why are these victims of extreme weather any more fortunate?

Had you or I decided to by-pass the sleeping government and simply pick up a couple of homeless individuals and drop them off in another town, we would have had to do so only by taking time off work. Most of us, as workers, have commit-



ments to our employers that may not be so casually by-passed. And in capitalism, even relief efforts are subject to the welfare agencies' budgetary constraints. Ever heard of the tens of millions of starving and ill children who die each and every year around the world for whom there is simply not enough money to go around?

While relief for those left in New Orleans was certainly offered by the Red Cross and eventually by the state, nobody on television asked the pertinent question of whether it is sane or even effective to meet critical human needs depending upon

how much money or how many volunteers may be assembled. What if those of you donating a few dollars at supermarkets for Katrina victims simply don't raise enough? Does that mean that the plight of those struck by disaster is entirely the result of your personal failures, or of a society in which wealth is produced only to be sold, and not to meet our needs? Socialists think the latter.

Nobody on television asked whether by rights the wealth of society should not be automatically due to all individuals. Thus, the million New Orleaners with homes tragically destroyed suddenly enter into that category of "homeless," those without the monetary means to buy or rent housing. Nobody on the idiot box asked the most obvious question of all: Why shouldn't homes be available to anybody who needs them?

Was Katrina a "Catastrophic Alteration"?

A second glaring omission concerns the severity of the storm itself. Many scientists around the world are now convinced that the ecological devastation wrought by modern society has played its part in altering global weather patterns, even while conservative politicians and owners of polluting industry deny such hypotheses and try hard to keep them from being discussed in the media (another good reason for a democratic society with the means of information in the hands of the people).

Tropical forests are vanishing at the rate of city sizes per day, ice is melting at the polar caps, storms are increasing and worsening, temperatures are rising, ozone levels are diminishing. Quite a few scientists have made calculations that if present levels of ecological destruction continue unabated for the next ten, twenty or thirty years, then catastrophic alterations in

Continued on p 19