“Let the Bodies Pile up in their Thousands”

Coronavirus stems from capitalism’s delegates. It is common in all high-profit jobs. For our rulers, profits are more important than tens of thousands of deaths, as our prime minister has explained.

On “Freedom Day,” 19th July, our rulers allowed the full opening of the country. All businesses back to normal, no face masks, no social distancing etc. - back to work and full speed ahead with exploitation. In the face of the majority of the population being vaccinated, this has been criticised as utterly reckless. In the first week of the opening it was reported that in every 75 people now have the virus and the British Medical Association called for the opening to be reversed. A statement signed by over 1,000 researchers worldwide on public health, responding to the health secretary’s announcement that there will likely be 100,000 new daily cases, said: “Essential growth will probably continue until millions more people are infected, leaving hundreds of thousands of people with long-term illness and disability.” The three lockdowns imposed by the government were largely in response to a fear of hospitals becoming overrun but now that most vulnerable populations have been vaccinated, and the risk of bad press from patients being treated in hospital car parks is over, they are happy to condemn a generation of children to the poorly understood long-term effects of covid in order to get the profit back again.

From the start the government has put profits before deaths. In February 2020, Johnson explained this in a speech at the Old Naval College “When (…) Coronavirus will trigger a panic (…) that goes beyond what is possible to put a price on. There is an unnecessary economic damage (…) humanity needs some government that is willing to be a safe haven and a safe exchange”. A month later, Johnson appeared on “This Morning” to make the case for herd immunity, suggesting that “if you could take it on the chin and allow the disease […] to move through the population”.

While he’s eventually locked down the country, the economy has been allowed to slowly return to normal. And schools and businesses were given the green light to reopen despite being fully aware of the dangers of the virus spreading. The inconvenience and cuts to health care were justified by the fear of economic growth, which the government is willing to risk millions of deaths to protect.

The UK has the lowest statutory sick pay in Europe at £94.25 a week, amounting to 20% of the average wage, already an insufficient amount to live on for many. Given how widespread precarious employment is becoming, with more workers than ever working multiple jobs on zero-hours contracts, it should come as no surprise that many workers chose to ignore symptoms and refuse testing in order not to jeopardise their small income. Meanwhile, there is already a much higher mortality rate in more economically deprived areas, the rate of covid deaths in poorer areas was disproportionally worse. The Northwest of England, which had seen record high rates of poverty leading up to the pandemic, saw a drop in life expectancy 25% worse than the rest of the nation.

Both here and abroad, the main vector through which the virus has spread, mutability is a large part of the reason, with schools and workplaces where the cold logic of capital has taken its toll on the health of the populace, forcing us to go without seeing our friends and loved ones for months to offset the outbreaks caused by employment. In schools too, the government outright admitted that they needed to be kept open so that parents would still be able to work.

The catastrophic handling of the virus in the UK, where as of July 2021 over 129,000 people have died unnecessarily, is an omission of the government’s standard approach to healthcare. The NHS has been stretched to its limit each winter even under ordinary circumstances, and reforms to the DWP have led to unprecedented rates of starvation and suicide among those who were left to claim unemployment and debts. The war is over, and the cost has been the health of millions.

Large contracts today are broken up into many smaller, less profitable pieces. The NHS is not safe. The government’s response has been to pay workers to carry out dangerous electrical works on site. Not only did this go against health and safety, but it also undermined the skilled trade of the electricians. The workers organised a successful wildcat strike. Fellow workers refused to cross the picket line. The main contractors gave in and hired electricians to do the work. However, another contractor, CGI Systems, then fired 35 electricians who had all been involved in the strike action. But the workers were resolved, and after three more days of wildcat strike action, all the electricians who had lost their jobs were reinstated.

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Police Powers Bill – Preparing for Class War

The Police, Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill has been described as “the Bill of the parliamentary session” with protests and demonstrations across the country, and has been criticised for the wider powers it gives to the state in general and more specifically to the police.

The bill extends existing police powers to curb demonstrations, including static assemblies. The police will be able to impose conditions on a procession if they believe that the nature of the procession is likely to cause a serious disruption to the activities of an organisation which are carried out in the vicinity of the procession. The powers are significant and relevant impact on persons in the vicinity which could include ‘serious unease, alarm or distress’. In these circumstances the police can impose conditions ‘which they believe it is necessary to prevent’. The criteria are vague, and the Home Secretary will have discretion to define these terms. The bill will be a large rebuff to civil liberties groups and could be used to prosecute individuals for breaching those conditions. Currently it is only an offence if it can be shown that the individuals intentionally broke the conditions, but under the terms of the bill the prosecution will only need to show that the individual ‘knew or ought to have known’ about the condition. This effectively makes it a strict liability offence.

The bill also introduces new prison sentences at risk of prosecution, and to cap it all the maximum prison term will increase from 3 months to 51 weeks. Other measures include ‘abstircting the public in the exercise or enjoyment of a right’ and will carry a maximum sentence of 10 years. There will also be powers to curtail single person protests deemed to be too noisy. In short, the bill will make it much easier for the police to clamp down on any demonstration they or their political masters want to prevent or suppress.

The bill is not limited to measures to curb public protests. It will be an offence to reside or intend to reside on land without the owner’s consent where this is likely to cause ‘significant disruption, damage or distress’. Penalties include fines up to £5,000 or 3 months in prison as well as seizures of vehicles including cars and caravans. This is clearly aimed at Gypsies and Travellers and threatens those who are forced into using private land due to the limited availability of authorised sites in the UK. It has been criticised as a breach of human rights and a provocation of tension.

In July hundreds of lives were lost in heat domes across Europe and droughts, floods and Germany in France. Wildfires raged out of control from California to Greece, Turkey and Spain and are clearly the result of global warming disrupting weather patterns. If emissions of greenhouse gases continue on the present path, events will seem like a vicar’s tea party in comparison to what is to come. Millions upon millions will die.

Historically the human species has survived in a narrow range of mean average temperatures (MAT), the so-called climate niche. This range is approximately 11°C to 19°C and it also is the range for successful cultivation of crops and livestock. The average pre-industrial temperature was about 13.75°C and so far MATs have risen 1.1°C above pre-industrial temperatures so we are already at the point for mass extinction of all but the hardiest human beings. Since 2010 there has been an increase of 0.4°C in MAT which means we will reach the famous 1.5°C agreed at the Paris Climate Convention in 2015 by the end of this century. A rise of 2°C, possibly by 2050, will put the third human population outside the climate niche. Even at 1.9°C we already have evidence for the worst case scenario for the last 10 years. The 75% of our ice is produced, and at 2°C yields are estimated to halve in areas like the US Midwest and India.

The oceans will be forced to migrate as the climate niche moves to higher latitudes. This will lead to social breakdown and war.

A number of warming processes are already beyond the tipping points: the points where human action cannot reverse them. Three important tipping points now appear to have been crossed: one was the melting of the west Antarctic ice sheet and the melting of the coastal reefs. A further three processes appear to be close to tipping points: the melting of the east Antarctic ice sheet, the melting of the Gulf Stream. While we produce more greenhouse gases we are also descending into a new ice age. The Amazon, for example, has changed from a net absorber of carbon dioxide to a net emitter because of fires and forest clearance.

The Fifth Environmental Assessment (in its report for achieving net zero emissions by 2050, the Paris conference goal, concludes this can only be achieved if there are “No new oil and gas fields approved for development[and] no new coal mines.”

Of course our rules have not taken the slightest notice of this. The bulk of new energy investments is going into fossil fuels. The G7 as a whole spent $188bn to support oil, gas and coal in the year 2020 - 2021, 29% more than they spent on renewables, and in the 6 years of the Paris conference, the G7 have subsidised fossil fuels to the tune of $3.3tn. The IEA reports that just 2% of the $10tn allocated for the pandemic recovery is going to clean energy and notes that CO2 emissions are likely to surge to a new peak by 2023.

Why are our rulers doing the exact opposite of what their scientists tell them? The reason is they do what capitalism demands. Firstly the capitalist system only produces for profit, and fossil fuels are still very profitable, and secondly the system requires continual accumulation of social surplus. Power is wealth, and wealth translates into energy growth. While the capitalist system dominates the world the need for profits and growth will determine what our rulers do even if this is leading to future extinction of Homo sapiens.

Intimately connected with the production of greenhouse gases is the plight of the planet. Capitalism’s use of the renewable resources of nature is now annually 1.6 times what nature can replace. This is simply not sustainable. What can be done? Today we are presented with two alternatives: global warming and the collapse of the leaders of world capitalism agreeing to decarbonise, or direct action to disrupt the system forcing governments to decarbonise. Neither of these will work.

The first relies on the leaders of global capitalism agreeing to halt the way capitalism works. The COP conferences are supposed to avert global warming but the latest COP 26 is due in Glasgow in November. The COP conferences have met annually since 1995, yet all previous COP conferences have failed to achieve anything except a consensus that something needs to be done. Global warming has steadily increased. The Paris conference was supposed to produce legally binding commitments, yet so far none of them have been met. The Paris conference was supposed to be a turning point, yet we are still facing a catastrophe. Another fudge will be the outcome and the participants will, as usual, pat themselves on the back for making promises they have neither intention of fulfilling.

The second alternative imagines global capitalism can be forced to decarbonise the economy by disruption and mass disobedience. This is the strategy espoused by Extinction Rebellion (XR) and its offshoot Burning Pink. They propose a “peaceful revolution” via members elected to parliament and citizens’ assemblies in controlling decision-making. Decarbonisation costs are to be paid for by confiscation of 60% of the assets of the richest: 10% of the population. The real criticism of all this farce is that a capitalist system with its continual demand for profit and growth is, according to XR, to remain in place. In other words all the forces which are leading us to catastrophic warming are to remain.

The simple truth is that there can be no solution to the environmental crisis while capitalism remains the global system of production. The ending of wage labour and production for profit is absolutely necessary before the terrible damage capitalism has inflicted on the planet can be rolled back. A global socialist society in which the production for human need must be constructed before we can strike at the root of the environmental problem.

Save the Planet – Destroy Capitalism!

What We Stand For

Aurora is published by the Communist Workers’ Organisation (CWO). The CWO stands for a global society where production is for need and not profit (and is therefore sustainable), where the state, national frontiers and money have been abolished, where class conflict and class hatred has disappeared.

This has to mean the active, daily participation of the majority aiming for the interests of all. Only then can the world be rid of the capitalist offspring of poverty, hunger, oppression and war: we call it communism but this vision has nothing in common with Stalinist state capitalism and the old USSR.

In order to get there we are working to create a world working class political organisation – a ‘party’ for want of a better word – not a government in waiting but a guide in the struggle for a new world. We by no means claim to be that party but we do aim to be one of the elements which will need to come together to make the final break from the old class is more and more faced with the consequences of a crumbling capitalist system it will have to unite and confront capitalist power.

We are not in competition with other organisations but seek to unite on a clearly agreed political programme to prepare the way for the majority of the world’s population, the exploited of the earth, to overthrow the capitalist system and its bloody imperialist appetites.

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