UN Climate Conferences have been going on for 25 years. They have achieved precisely nothing. The participants at Paris in 2015 agreed to decrease production of oil, gas and coal by 6 per cent in the next ten years. Instead, according to the UN itself, they are planning increases of 2 per cent annually, even as carbon emissions continue to mount.

It is now undeniable that the continual rise in carbon emissions threatens life on earth through the process of global warming. Governments and Greens alike talk of ‘we’, of ‘human beings’, or at the very least ‘primarily human activities’, as being responsible for the 48% increase in “the global average concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide” over pre-industrial levels. (NASA’s October 2021 Newsletter.) Now, just before the Glasgow jamboree the latest IPCC study confirms that “it is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land.” Increases in greenhouse gas concentrations have been “observed since around 1750 [they] are unequivocally caused by human activities.” It is true that around 250 years ago homo sapiens, who have been on Planet Earth for almost 300 thousand years, changed their ‘activities’ and began polluting the atmosphere and destroying the natural environment as never before. But this does not explain why.

The Climate Crisis is a Capitalist Crisis

Today’s ‘climate emergency’ cannot simply be attributed to general ‘human activity’. The IPCC evidence says it all: the massive increase in emissions of greenhouse gases since the 18th century coincides with the rise of capitalist industrial society, and has intensified as capitalism has become the undisputed mode of production over the entire planet.

Those who blame “human nature” point to the consumption habits of the general population. They claim that this is at least equally responsible for the threatening production process in exchange for wages which they then use to buy the commodities that the process created. Anybody who chooses to produce goods through more ‘ethical’ means will be out-paced and out-priced by those who don’t. Capitalists compete for profit. To do so they expand production, ravage the earth’s ‘free’ natural resources and invest in machines that increase productivity. This incessant growth of capital is a means to an end that never ends. Climate change is not the result of a general human nature that can be traced back to hunter-gatherers; rather it is specific to capitalism, where profit and capital determine action. Capitalist states, which exist to protect their own (capitalist) economies, cannot stop the damaging consequences. No amount of climate summits or window dressing government pronouncements can protect the world’s working class from the increasing number of catastrophes.

Who Pays the Highest Price?

States, for their part, have obscured their true intentions. In Glasgow much will be said about carbon taxes and promises of “net-zero emissions no later than 2050”, as Biden promised in his presidential campaign. However, millions of acres have just been leased by the Biden administration for the exploitation of oil and gas. More tellingly, a recent US federal statute set up a Climate SecurityAdvisory Council

and maintaining the climate crisis.

The capitalist class owns the means of production and uses them to produce products solely for the purpose of exchange, so as to generate profit. The result for the working class is an absolute lack of alternatives. They have no means to produce the things they need themselves, and so must give their labour to an increasingly life-

universally responsible for the nature” point to the consumption processes for their very same products. Others repeat the Malthusian stance that over-population is the cause. These myths, the latter of which implicitly advocates mass genocide, both treat society as a collection of individuals, rather than a set of social relations. As such they fail to consider how class differences within capitalist society created and maintain the climate crisis. The capitalist class owns the means of production and uses them to produce products solely for the purpose of exchange, so as to generate profit. The result for the working class is an absolute lack of alternatives. They have no means to produce the things they need themselves, and so must give their labour to an increasingly life-

as a disastrous possibility that must be stopped at all costs, but an inevitability whose costs must be accounted for and its consequences to be prepared for. And there will be much to prepare for since the result of global warming will be devastating and the world’s poorest, including the working class, will feel the worst of it. We are already beginning to see its effects, as wildfires in the Amazon rainforest, Australia and California burned down over 50 million acres of land, destroyed thousands of homes and killed over 300 people in 2019-2020. In July 2021, in India, Europe and China, flooding killed over 700 people and over 1 million people had to be evacuated from the flooded areas. Rising sea levels will continue to exacerbate flooding and will submerge large sections of coastlines making them uninhabitable, destroying homes and displacing millions. The increase in heat will dry out crops, leading to starvation and deadly famines, especially for those living near the ‘lone’ Migrants seeking refuge elsewhere, where they might find food, work or peace, will be turned away, detained, or will die travelling across dangerous terrain. This mass of misery is undeniable inevitable. The Syrian refugee crisis showed us just how capable the world’s richest states are at allowing millions of desperate people, fleeing a civil war, to die.

And the more the planet heats up, the more impossible it will be to reverse it, if at all. The melting of the ice caps will reduce the amount of reflected sun rays which will further increase global temperatures; the melting of permafrost will release huge stores of previously trapped greenhouse gases; the acidification of the oceans will kill most of the ocean’s plankton, the basis for the majority of the oceanic food chain; continuing deforestation will increase levels of CO2 in the atmosphere as fewer trees will be able to absorb it; rising temperatures will further exacerbate water scarcity, a problem that already affects over two-thirds of the global population. Moreover, states’ humanitarian response to these tragedies will decline as they focus their efforts on maintaining civil obedience through the police and warning over dwindling resources with their armies.

Our hope for the future doesn’t lie with politicians or CEOs. No international agreement will be able to reverse capitalism’s effects on the climate; no such agreement could even be enforced. The United States’ brief exit from the Paris Climate Accords [from November 2020 to February 2021] shows the ease with which a powerful state can suspend any supposed “commitment” to stopping climate change. With imperialist tensions mounting the cost of combating climate change will increasingly become an unnecessary expenditure.

The truth is clear: so long as capitalism survives, the habitable land on this planet will shrink and hundreds of millions will die prematurely. It is clear we need a new social model. We need a society which can take and adapt the technology that has been built, and use it for the satisfaction of human needs rather than the accumulation of wealth for a few. A society where decisions can be made by all for the benefit of all, and where the survival of human life on the planet is not under constant threat.

Only One Solution: Revolution!

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Working Class Revolution is the Only Solution

Debate all the talk about ‘humanity’ as a whole being responsible for the climate change. The world is class-divided. Inevitably, the ‘carbon footprint’ of the rich folk at the top of each national pyramid is far larger than the rest of the population. In the United States emissions from the richest 10% of households are more than five times bigger than the whole of the bottom 50% (it’s the same ratio for the UK even though the richest 1% account for ‘only’ half the amount of CO2 emissions as their US cousins. It’s the same the world over. The richest people in the world don’t need to think to themselves about paying higher energy bills, frequent flyer supplements, fuel price hikes, heating more for nothing, or anything else.

This is what makes the strategies of those like Greta Thunberg or Extinction Rebellion, who think that they can ‘lobby’ the existing power structure into adopting a ‘greener agenda’, so futile. Their programs are not new. They begin to scratch the surface of the issue, since governments answer to far richer and more powerful capitalist lobbies. This has led one into the environmental movement, like George Monbiot, to recognise that the real problem is capitalism itself. What they fail to tell us is how a new social model can come about.

This is the key. In order to save the planet it must be saved from capitalism, first and foremost. After that, fuel taxes etc. can come about. The point is to create a world proletarian political organisation: a world of freely contracted divisions, electing their own spokesmen and issuing regular struggle bulletins. All the time they are coming up with ideas, plans to move forward, how to organise, how to have power in their hands. They are organising into small groups, into their own workers’ councils. The only way to end imperialist rivalry is for the world over to have a socialist state.

Global War: The Other Existential Threat

Climate change is only one of many threats to our future. Life is already hell for millions trying to survive on low wages or no wages at all; who face both environmental degradation and wars over dwindling basic resources. Imperialist powers stoke these into devastating conflicts which force millions to become refugees, kicked from pillar to post, often dying in their search for a secure existence.

Nowhere on the planet is immune from danger. A stagnant capitalist economy that survives on an increasing mountain of debt (like Evergrande in China, currently under threat of defaulting) is intensifying imperialist rivalry. The slow death of the capitalist system is now manifest in so many ways. The post-World War Two order that was imposed by the US in 1945 has been breaking down since the post-war boom ended, which forced the dollar off the gold standard in 1971. Today the increasing rivalry between China and the US stretches from South America, via the Middle East and Africa, to the South China Sea.

The US is determined at all costs to maintain dollar hegemony, the source of its continued dominance of the planet. It was for this reason that they engineered the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and Gaddafi. It is for this reason that the US and China have been fighting a proxy cold war for years. It does not help that China has only announced it will replace the US by 2049 as the ‘global leader’. Trade wars have historically always been followed by shooting wars.

And imperialist war plans don’t take medical time out. Even during the pandemic an arms race in the South China Sea was intensifying. The recent AUKUS security pact of China’s neighbours Taiwan only underline this growing struggle between the world’s most powerful states for influence in the South China Sea. The possibility of these tensions boiling over with each passing day, and proxy wars, civil or national, will act as training grounds for the next world war breaks out. And not just for the two main rivals, the alliance systems that are building up will draw more and more states into choosing sides.

There Are No Lesser Evils

The position of the working class in these imperialist conflicts is not about choosing one side or another by comparing who is “better” or who “does the least harm”, much less who is most ‘Green’. When Josechka Fischer (former student radical turned Green politician) was Foreign Minister of Germany in 1999 his Green credentials didn’t prevent him from intervening in Afghanistan and Kosovo (thus reviving the German military presence in the world). There is no “lesser evil” here. Workers have no country. The working class worldwide has nothing to gain by throwing their lives away to line the pockets of this or that capitalist class. The only way to end the misery will be to oppose the conflict altogether, to oppose the capitalist class, whether from China, the US or any other state, and bring about the abolition of capitalist society itself.

No War but the Class War!