



Climate Change: Reform or Revolution?

**WORKERS
PARTY**

Climate change: Reform or revolution?

This leaflet is for people who've figured out that climate change is happening, and that it's driven in large part by industrial greenhouse gas emissions. If you're here, you want to stop it in its tracks.

Despite the attempts of industrial capitalists to distort the flow of information, the findings of climatologists remain consistent. Since the Industrial Revolution of the 19th Century, greenhouse gas emissions have rapidly increased, driving a long-term process of global warming.

Resources were sucked out of the countryside and the developing world to fuel economic growth, while workers were packed into polluted and cramped living spaces. This transformation continues to this day, as capitalists seek new blood and soil to develop; from Iraq to Mount Aspiring.

This leaves one central question: *what is to be done?* It is possible to match human and environmental need. We just have to figure out how.



Living green?

At the end of Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*, intertitles list a series of eco-friendly lifestyle choices; recycling, cutting down plastic bag usage, shopping green. Many of these choices cost extra time and money, with the implied trade-off that we're saving the planet.

However, consumption is not the problem. In fact, over the last century production has detached from consumption, with an average yearly 2-3% increase in production not matched by an increase in real consumption. Sectors such as the military expend ever-increasing greenhouse gas emissions without serving the needs of working class consumers. Overproduction, not overconsumption, drives global warming.

Solutions that target consumers – such as petrol taxes and prices on plastic bags – shift the cost of global warming onto those least responsible. In a country where the buying power of the working class has fallen 25% since 1982, we don't need new

taxes and user pays schemes.

Ultimately green lifestyles do not challenge the violent inequality at the root of climate change, with resources taken from the many to benefit the few. To combat global warming at its root, we need to stop blaming ourselves and focus on those who run the system.

Voting Green?

In May 2009, the Green Party released a “Green New Deal,” designed to combat environmental destruction and job loss. The government would invest \$1 billion a year in insulated houses, public transport and waste minimisation. The name harks back to the New Deal of the mid 20th Century, which saw massive investment in public infrastructure; healthcare, housing, and job creation. In the words of Russell Norman:

“Just as the social democrats, labourists and new dealers of the 1930s and 1940s had to save capitalism from its own destructive tendencies, so now the Green Parties of the world find ourselves in possibly a similar position... We will quite possibly save the market system from its natural tendency to destroy or consume all resources leading to its own demise.”

New Deal governments only invested in working-class living standards because of a mass movement built from the ground up. Since 1984, when the Fourth Labour government first began to smash the working class movement, state investment in living standards has fallen. The promise once offered by public housing and public health has evaporated, leaving decaying buildings and incompetent management.

Revolutionary socialist Rosa Luxemburg once compared economic reform to the labour of Sisyphus, a mythical figure forced to push a rock up a steep hill. Each time he reached the top, it would roll back down. Green politicians must know the feeling, explaining Sue Bradford’s decision to leave parliament with the words: “Capitalism is not giving us the answers we need.”

Monopoly capital hinders environmental reform at every step. The National government recently excluded the New Zealand Refining Company, New Zealand’s biggest polluter, from its Emissions Trading Scheme. This is nothing new; the Refining Company had already signed a get-out clause, excluding them from Kyoto regulations, with the previous Labour government. Successive Labour and National governments serve the interests of industrial capital – at the expense of workers and the planet.

Environmentalists cannot look to parliament to offer solutions.

We must build a mass revolutionary movement

Power lies in the hands of capitalists and the state. The strong arm of the state; police, intelligence services and the army, guard this power and target progressives, from radical socialists to environmentalists. We must build united mass organizations ready to challenge the capitalist state.

In August 2008, Vestas wind farm was shut down, leaving 900 workers jobless. These workers occupied the factory, demanding it remain open. A coalition of anarchists, socialists and environmentalists supported the occupation by setting up a food bank. Ultimately however, the occupation was unsuccessful. In an economy democratically planned by the working class, there would be no reason to shut Vestas down.

Once we take our workplaces, our schools and our universities from the capitalist class, we can democratically plan production to meet human and environmental need. Right now, our existence is shaped and limited by the capitalist drive for profit. If we want to save the planet, we have to fight for it.

We have nothing to lose but our chains; we have a world to gain.



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