

Build the environmental movement in opposition to both corporate parties...

Obama's pretty speeches against climate change are not enough!

The planet is rapidly heating up. This is mainly caused by burning fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas), but also by deforestation of peat lands, the release of the methane from fracking operations, and more. So there is no wonder why there is elation that Shell Oil decided to stop drilling exploratory wells in the Arctic Ocean. But that's just for now in one part of the Arctic. Shell is not going to give up oil drilling until it is made to. In fact, the company has announced it may still set up a base to support its offshore drilling operations at Seattle's Terminal 5. Meanwhile, there are proposals for twelve new or expanded oil terminals and refineries in Washington State, which means even longer oil trains will run through the Columbia Gorge and elsewhere—including through Seattle. Driven by the profit motive, this business-as-usual course is leading to eco-disaster.

Obama has begun talking a good fight...

In his September 1 speech at GLACIER conference in Anchorage, Obama said much that everyone with concern for the Earth and its inhabitants has long been saying. He said “the science is stark” regarding climate change, and the “once-distant threat is now very much in the present.” He went on at length describing what science shows is happening to our ecosystem, including about how this is affecting indigenous peoples. He talked about renewables. He said climate change was the issue “of all issues,” and he repeatedly said “we’re not moving fast enough.”

...but what is his real record?

Many environmentalists have pointed out the crying hypocrisy of Obama making this grand speech while a few hundred miles away Shell was drilling for oil in a pristine Arctic that *his* administration had opened to drilling! Indeed, Obama has also opened the Atlantic seaboard for oil drilling. He's boasted about gaining “energy independence” though more oil drilling and

more shale fracking—which also poisons the waters and releases methane. His BLM plans to issue 28 new coal leases, which could open up mining of billions of tons of coal over the next 20 years. And while radioactive waste piles up everywhere, he's licensed two more dangerous nuclear power plants in his “all of the above” approach to global warming.

...and what are his solutions?

Obama never once attacked the polluting corporations in his Anchorage speech. Instead, he shielded them with talk about *we* don't want our lifestyles disrupted (as if the people were the problem), *we* have to do some adaptation, etc. And protection of corporate profits is at the root of Obama's hypocrisy. Thus, while the Republican right denies that global warming is caused by human activity, the Democrats deny that they have to do more than tinker with market measures, market incentives and the like in order to seriously deal with it.

Thus, when the Democrats controlled both houses of Congress their proposed legislation was a “cap-and-trade” bill that died. But cap-and-trade is a complicated system many countries have used since the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. Under it the polluters buy and sell pollution permits which the governments gradually issue fewer of as years go by. And it has failed miserably in reducing carbon emissions the needed amount. Moreover, its provisions to give the polluting corporations “carbon offsets” for planting such things as palm-oil plantations for biodiesel and other products have been ecological and human disasters: people are driven from the land, rain forests (part of the Earth's lungs) are destroyed, and huge amounts of CO₂ are released from drying peat lands. This is a main reason why Indonesia jumped to being the third largest carbon emitter.

Now, years later, Obama has issued a number of executive orders. But these are drops in the bucket when compared to what's really needed to stem global warming. Moreover, while Obama says he wants to get binding commitments to reduce carbon emissions at the Nov. 30-Dec.11 COP21 meeting in Paris, the framework of the snail's-pace United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change remains cap-and-trade and other bankrupt market solutions!

This entire framework must be broken with and replaced with another. Yet right in the movement today we have another complicated market “solution” being promoted, the carbon tax. This is a regressive tax which is then dressed up as neutral *if* the polluters actually do all the things claimed it will make them do. It will tend to drive working and poor people away from the environmental movement by raising their cost of living, and still not do enough to curb carbon emissions.

Building a politically independent environmental movement

In opposition to vainly looking for better market methods with which to nudge the polluters while preserving their profits *a la* Obama, the movement must stand for direct regulations, and bans: Ban oil rigs in the Arctic, ban fracking, etc. But new laws enforced by inspector-short and corporation-captured government regulatory agencies will mean nothing

unless there is a large and active movement demanding enforcement, and itself enforcing. Moreover, we must fight hard against regulations which make the masses of people bear the burden while the earth-destroying capitalists are left off the hook (like Democratic Gov. Brown's water restrictions did with the oil-drilling and fracking companies in California).

Secondly, we must stand for economic planning. For example, leaving carbon fuels in the ground and converting to renewables would normally mean an unknown number of workers lost their jobs, at least in the transitional period. The free-market solution is that these workers then lose everything: essentially starve. Environmentalists must build a movement that says absolutely not! The government needs to provide jobs for these workers in public or private industry with the same or better wages, retraining them when necessary. And that requires prior planning. Moreover, in order that the majority of the people—the working-class, poor and national-minority communities—are not shafted by the rich in this planning there are again going to have to be mass demands, protests and struggles at every step: there is going to have to be class struggle.

By building up a working-class trend in the environmental movement with this orientation we ensure its growth and future.

Demonstrate: People's Climate March 2015!

Wednesday, October 14 at 5:00pm

Seattle City Hall, 600 4th Avenue

Read *Communist Voice!* at www.comunistvoice.org. Especially look at <http://communistvoice.org/00GlobalWarming.html> and <http://communistvoice.org/New.html>.
Email: mail@communistvoice.org. Or write: CV, Box 28536, Joyfield Sta., Detroit, MI 48228