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Approaches to Climate Change:

GOVERNMENT HYPOCRISY, PRIVATE INDUSTRY NEGLIGENCE, "CONSUMER SOLUTIONS" AND DIRECT ACTION.

BY LIZ TURNER

It is estimated that the changes we make to reduce greenhouse emissions on a personal level in our everyday lives could only account for a maximum of 20% reduction in overall emissions. A minimum emissions reduction of 80% is required to prevent dangerous levels of climatic change.

According to the Earth Policy Institute, residential and commercial uses only produce 14% of overall greenhouse emissions. Electricity generation is responsible for the largest share – 42%. Transportation generates 24% of global emissions. Industrial processes account for 20%¹

Three quarters of the carbon emissions from human activities are due to the combustion of fossil fuels; the rest is caused by changes in land use, principally deforestation.²

Governments contradict themselves by insisting that we "do our bit" at home, while they continue to support the heavily emitting industries of coal and forestry. Communities are now taking matters into their own hands by engaging in direct action that directly targets these industries. Activists have recently shut down supplies of coal in Christchurch, NZ; West Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee, USA; Boxburg, Germany; Kent, Nottingham and South Wales in the UK; and Newcastle, Wyong, Kooragang Island and La Trobe Valley in Australia.³

By targeting big emitters at their industrial base, we get the results that "doing our little bit" at home simply can't achieve. And right now, we need results! These initiatives demonstrate that we can in fact achieve the necessary transformation of these industries through direct action and community empowerment.

Government Hypocrisy

The government gives subsidies to householders who install solar hot water systems or water tanks or convert their cars to LPG. At the same time, fossil fuels receive 28 times more public funding than renewable energy.⁴ Australia is the world's biggest coal exporter, so we can't expect governments or industry to voluntarily give up coal. Of course governments talk about increasing the production of "clean coal", but that's kind of like talking about clean cigarettes or polished effluent.

The technology behind so-called clean coal lies in the potential success of the as-yet proven Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technology. Based on the idea of "carbon sinks", proponents of CCS assert that we can simply bury emissions. Even if scientific tests prove successful, clean coal wouldn't be commercially available

until 2020 at the earliest. The National Generators Forum (NGF) has essentially taken CCS off the table as a viable option. Despite the NGF's refusal to support clean coal, a powerful coalition including the Australian Coal Association, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Australia and the Climate Institute all have their hopes up that CCS can be up and running by 2020.⁵ It makes little sense to put faith in a scientific theory that is not yet proven to be viable when the associated risks of failure are so high. The science of carbon sinks, based on a similar fantasy that technology will save us, has already been discredited.⁶

Industry Negligence

Industry negligence is perhaps best illustrated by BHP Billiton, which produces 50 million tonnes of greenhouse pollution annually, equivalent to about 10% of Australia's entire emissions! This multinational giant to this day has failed to set any targets for gross reductions to its greenhouse emissions. Instead BHP Billiton has set a target to reduce "energy intensity" by 13% by 2010. This would allow the company's emissions to continue to increase, so long as the company also continues to grow.

The logging industry and "doing our bit" for water

While forest activists have been talking about the links between logging and climate change for years, the science behind these links is now becoming more widely known. Old growth forests store, lock and increasingly soak up carbon over time. Carbon is released upon logging, burning or destruction of forests. In a study published in *Science Magazine*⁷, scientists measured carbon in the soil of southern China's forests collected between 1979 and 2003. They found that organic carbon concentrations in the top 20 centimeters of the soil were much higher than expected and increased in that period from about 1.4% to 2.35%⁸

Logging, aside from releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and thereby contributing to climate change, also threatens water supplies. Five water catchments in Victoria's Central Highlands, which supply 28% of Melbourne's drinking water, are open to clearfell logging. Figures from the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) have revealed that 81% of native forest logged in the Central Highlands is ending up as woodchips.⁹ Established research has demonstrated that logging reduces flows into the Central Highland's Thomson catchment by the equivalent consumption of 250,000 households. The cumulative negative effect of logging the Central Highlands water catchments is between 40,000 and 60,000 megalitres of water per year.¹⁰

The same governments who sign contracts and provide corporate subsidies to woodchip our native forests,¹¹ have been particularly keen to pass the buck of responsibility to consumers for reducing Melbourne's overall water consumption. The State Government funds giant digital signs in the city telling us that our water catchments are well below 50%. When this information is drummed into our heads, we accept the burden of responsibility. We take three-minute long showers and fight with our neighbours if they water their gardens on the wrong day. But short showers and arguments with our own neighbours will not stop the logging that threatens the water supply of 250,000 households. If logging in the Thomson Catchment were to stop, this would provide a much more efficient solution to Melbourne's water problems.

This is not an argument for wasteful water use at home! "Doing our bit" is better than not "doing our bit". We would be hypocrites to say that we are concerned for the environment and yet fail to walk the talk and potentially forego emissions reductions. But we

must consider how we channel our environmental concerns: will we reduce more greenhouse emissions if we convince individuals to reduce their own emissions at home? Or will the real results come from our engagement in direct action that threatens the industrial base of coal? The maths speaks for itself. Changes to overall household consumption could only ever amount to a maximum 20% reduction. BHP Billiton is responsible for 10% of Australia's entire emissions. I propose that a workers' take over of BHP Billiton to transform the system of energy production to a de-centralised, solar-based system, would get better results than asking our neighbours nicely to reduce their carbon footprint.

The links between the coal industry and personal use of energy must be acknowledged. Of course personal consumption and carbon emissions are intrinsically linked to industry because industry produces precisely for our consumption. While we can reduce our energy use, we can't do away with our need for energy. But right now people all over the world are calling for a stop to wasteful industries that fail to acknowledge responsibility for reducing emissions. So the solution lies in the transformation of these industries.

Direct Action Gets Results!

On September 3 2007, environmental activists halted operations at the Loy Yang Power Station, Victoria's main power plant in the LaTrobe Valley, Gippsland. This forced the shutdown of the 600 megawatt generator, halving production from Victoria's biggest coal fired power station that supplies 30% of the state's power, the dirtiest power supply in the developed world.¹² This action demonstrated how easy it is for people to stop the industrial production of brown coal. These activists simply walked into the power plant and locked on to a conveyer belt.

So far, the scale of community opposition to coal exports in Newcastle has led the Newcastle Council to pass a motion to cap coal exports and introduce a ban on new coal mines in the Hunter Valley. While this clearly does not go far enough to solve the problem, it indicates that the council and industry are vulnerable to the kind of direct action that has taken place. It is obvious that more direct action is the right track for getting results.

Governments try to pull the wool over our eyes when they tell us to reduce our household emissions and water consumption. The fossil fuel industry tries to pull the wool over our eyes when they create dubious emissions targets. Activists have had huge successes in blockading and shutting down coal production and export all over the world. The people demonstrating at the Newcastle Climate Camp in July 2008 deserve support and recognition that their methods of addressing climate change are as effective as such methods get! However, workers in the industry must be brought inside to realise the power in their potential role in transforming the industry. 🐦

See page 15 for all endnotes and references.

The sea is rising

...so let's use the rich as sandbags!

This paper was born out of a convergence of anarchists from across the region in Melbourne over Easter. In one of the discussions, there was a clear understanding that, for all that's written about climate change and the environment, a truly radical perspective is mostly absent.

Consequently, some of us wanted to produce a paper that articulated an analysis of why there is a climate crisis, who pays and who will profit from it. We wanted it to not just be reflective, but rather be one that provides resources for and taps into potential for resistance in the rising climate movement.

We wanted to communicate a particular vision of a movement as well-drawing inspiration from the best examples of the past. We hope for it to be self-organised, autonomous and radical in nature, without the need to rely on appeals to those in positions of authority. We've included a series of history lessons-environmental direct actions and rebellions from around the world-to help express this.

We wanted the paper, and the movement, to put forward a strong anti-capitalist politics. We understand that true solutions to climate change are beyond capitalism's ability to adapt. Government's push to promote carbon trading, to privatize electricity, their refusal to accept climate refugees are all clear instances of this. Corporate advertising campaigns like Earth Hour are greenwash at its most banal.

To start talking about what fixing the environmental crisis will really take, we aimed to project an analysis beyond a narrowly-defined, single-issue politics. Avoiding apocalyptic visions or individualist, consumption-based solutions, we hoped that climate change and environment politics would be revealed as global issues that cut across and tie together social, political and economic factors.

To this end, we particularly focused on issues of class, and highlighted instances where environmentalists, radicals and labor movements have worked together against common foes. We saw it as important that we could be able to just as easily give this paper to coal industry workers as to those protesting against that industry.

We've seen enough academic rhetoric and activist jargon. We believe that the climate crisis could be the catalyst for a mass transformation of society, towards radical democracy and the just distribution of clean, free energy sources.

Anarchists and anti-authoritarian revolutionaries have much to contribute to this process. We want to push beyond lies, beyond fear and into hope that a common undertaking to overthrow the unsustainable economic, political and social relations of capitalism will not be an upheaval to be scared of but one that offers the chance to redress some of the damage done to our environment.

We hope these ambitions are reflected throughout.

The Sea is Rising-so let's use the rich as sandbags!

In solidarity,

THE EDITORS.

Resources & Contacts

JOURNALS & ARTICLES

Do or Die Journal

Now extinct British anarchist journal about radical environmentalism. Also features extensive reportage around anti-capitalist summit protests. A complete archive is available.

eco-action.org/dod/

Shift Magazine UK

shiftnag.co.uk/

Aufheben

Auto-Struggles: the developing war against the Road Monster

A look at the UK anti-roads movement by the libertarian communist journal Aufheben, seen by many as a key precursor to today's direct action movement against climate change.

geocities.com/kk.abacus/aufanitroad.html

The Free Association

All at C: climate change, crisis, catastrophe, capital, class, commons, communism...

freelyassociating.org/2007/08/all-at-c/

Alternative Libertaire

The Ecological Challenge: Three Revolutions are Necessary

nefac.net/en/theecologicalchallenge

GROUPS

Network for Climate Action UK

networkforclimateaction.org.uk/index.html

Rising Tide UK

UK based network committed to direct action against the root causes of climate change.

risingtide.org.uk/

Now or Never

A source of radical thought on climate change and direct action

now-or-never.org.uk/

Institute of Social Ecology

Vermont-based group that promotes the philosophy of social ecology. This views the global penetration of systems of domination into daily life, the centralization of political and economic power, the homogenization of culture, and the strengthening of hierarchy and social control as impediments to human freedom and the root causes of the current ecological crisis.

social-ecology.org/

Social Ecology London

socialecologylondon.wordpress.com

AFFINITY GROUPS & COLLECTIVES

A selection of anarchistic groups active throughout the region

Sydney

Mutiny mutineers@graffiti.net

Sydney Anarchist Communist Trajectory sact@riseup.net

Melbourne

Anarchist Direct Action non-specialist.net/ada/

Melbourne Anarchist Club mac@anarchy.org.au

ANARCHIST INFOSHOPS: SYDNEY

Both of these shops are run by friendly volunteers. They have a wide range of radical literature & hold film screenings & other events.

Black Rose Anarchist Library & Bookshop.

22 Enmore Road (near Newtown station)

Open Thursday & Friday 11-7, Saturday & Sunday 11-5

P: 0424 490 792 E: blackrosebooks@yahoo.com.au

Jura Books

440 Paramatta Rd, Petersham

Open Thursday 10-7, Friday 2-7, Saturday & Sunday 12-5

P: 02 9550 9931

jura.org.au

ANARCHIST INFOSHOPS: MELBOURNE

Barricade

Re-opening soon (2008)!

62 St Georges Rd, Northcote

barricade.org.au

Loophole Community Centre

834a High St, Thornbury

Open Thursday-Sunday, 10-6pm

loophole.shiftingspace.coop

ANARCHIST INFOSHOPS: BRISBANE

Black & Green Infoshop

80 Ryan St, West End

Open Friday-Sunday 11-7

beatingheartspress.com/infoshop.html

As representatives of people's movements and independent organisations, we reject the claim that carbon trading will halt the climate crisis. This crisis has been caused more than anything else by the mining of fossil fuels and the release of their carbon to the oceans, air, soil and living things. This excessive burning of fossil fuels is now jeopardising Earth's ability to maintain a liveable climate.

Governments, export credit agencies, corporations and international financial institutions continue to support and finance fossil fuel exploration, extraction and other activities that worsen global warming, such as forest degradation and destruction on a massive scale, while dedicating only token sums to renewable energy. It is particularly disturbing that the World Bank has recently defied the recommendation of its own Extractive Industries Review which calls for the phasing out of World Bank financing for coal, oil and gas extraction.

We denounce the further delays in ending fossil fuel extraction that are being caused by corporate, government and United Nations' attempts to construct a "carbon market", including a market trading in "carbon sinks".

History has seen attempts to commodify land, food, labour, forests, water, genes and ideas. Carbon trading follows in the footsteps of this history and turns the earth's carbon-cycling capacity into property to be bought or sold in a global market. Through this process of creating a new commodity – carbon – the Earth's ability and capacity to support a climate conducive to life and human societies is now passing into the same corporate hands that are destroying the climate.

People around the world need to be made aware of this commodification and privatization and actively intervene to ensure the protection of the Earth's climate.

Carbon trading will not contribute to achieving this protection of the Earth's climate. It is a false solution which entrenches and magnifies social inequalities in many ways:

- ⊗ The carbon market creates transferable rights to dump carbon in the air, oceans, soil and vegetation far in excess of the capacity of these systems to hold it. Billions of dollars worth of these rights are to be awarded free of charge to the biggest corporate emitters of greenhouse gases in the electric power, iron and steel, cement, pulp and paper, and other sectors in industrialised nations who have caused the climate crisis and already exploit these systems the most. Costs of future reductions in fossil fuel use are likely to fall disproportionately on the public sector, communities, indigenous peoples and individual taxpayers.
- ⊗ The Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), as well as many private sector trading schemes, encourage industrialised countries and their corporations to finance or create cheap carbon dumps such as large-scale tree plantations in the South as a lucrative alternative to reducing emissions in the North. Other CDM projects, such as hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFC) -reduction schemes, focus on end-of pipe technologies and thus do nothing to reduce the impact of fossil fuel industries' impacts on local communities. In addition, these projects dwarf the tiny volume of renewable energy projects which constitute the CDM's sustainable development window-dressing.

⊗ Impacts from fossil-fuel industries and other greenhouse-gas producing industries such as displacement, pollution, or climate change, are already disproportionately felt by small island states, coastal peoples, indigenous peoples, local communities, fisherfolk, women, youth, poor people, elderly and marginalized communities. CDM projects intensify these impacts in several ways. First, they sanction continued exploration for, and extraction, refining and burning of fossil fuels. Second, by providing finance for private sector projects such as industrial tree plantations, they appropriate land, water and air already supporting the lives and livelihoods of local communities for new carbon dumps for Northern industries.

⊗ The refusal to phase out the use of coal, oil and gas, which is further entrenched by carbon trading, is also causing more and more military conflicts around the world, magnifying social and environmental injustice. This in turn diverts vast resources to military budgets which could otherwise be utilized to support economies based on renewable energies and energy efficiency.

In addition to these injustices, the internal weaknesses and contradictions of carbon trading are in fact likely to make global warming worse rather than "mitigate" it. CDM projects, for instance, cannot be verified to be "neutralizing" any given quantity of fossil fuel extraction and burning. Their claim to be able to do so is increasingly dangerous because it creates the illusion that consumption and production patterns, particularly in the North, can be maintained without harming the climate.

In addition, because of the verification problem, as well as a lack of credible regulation, no one in the CDM market is likely to be sure what they are buying. Without a viable commodity to trade, the CDM market and similar private sector trading schemes are a total waste of time when the world has a critical climate crisis to address.


In an absurd contradiction the World Bank facilitates these false, market-based approaches to climate change through its Prototype Carbon Fund, the BioCarbon Fund and the Community Development Carbon Fund at the same time it is promoting, on a far greater scale, the continued exploration for, and extraction and burning of fossil fuels– many of which are to ensure increased emissions of the North.

In conclusion, 'giving carbon a price' will not prove to be any more effective, democratic, or conducive to human welfare, than giving genes, forests, biodiversity or clean rivers a price.

We reaffirm that drastic reductions in emissions from fossil fuel use are a pre-requisite if we are to avert the climate crisis. We affirm our responsibility to coming generations to seek real solutions that are viable and truly sustainable and that do not sacrifice marginalized communities.

We therefore commit ourselves to help build a global grassroots movement for climate justice, mobilize communities around the world and pledge our solidarity with people opposing carbon trading on the ground.

Signed 10 October 2004

Glenmore Centre, Durban, South Africa 

“HISTORY HAS SEEN ATTEMPTS TO COMMODIFY LAND, FOOD, LABOUR, FORESTS, WATER, GENES AND IDEAS. CARBON TRADING FOLLOWS IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THIS HISTORY AND TURNS THE EARTH'S CARBON-CYCLING CAPACITY INTO PROPERTY TO BE BOUGHT OR SOLD IN A GLOBAL MARKET.”

Climate Justice Now!

THE DURBAN DECLARATION ON CARBON TRADING

“ WE HAVE TO REALISE THAT CAPITALISM MAY NOT HAVE TO SORT CLIMATE CHANGE OUT IN ORDER TO SURVIVE. OR AT LEAST IT MIGHT NEED TO AVOID ONLY THE VERY HIGHEST OF THE PROJECTED TEMPERATURE RISES. ”

A New Weather Front

BY PAUL SUMBURN

After years of drawing attention to the facts of climate change, suddenly the issue is everywhere, and everyone, it seems, is calling for action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In some senses this is a rare victory, a response both to the pressure of activists and the scientific consensus channelled powerfully by the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. But, of course, some see the potential to expand the sphere of capital's influence: most mainstream talk is of market-friendly technological solutions, 'carbon trading' and oil companies dabbling in renewable energy.

This new situation raises important questions about strategy. It's no longer about making a noise and raising the issue: it's about getting to grips with the fundamental problem. In the UK the growing movement against the fossil fuel economy has attempted to find a way out of this rhetorical labyrinth by taking action that stops or reduces carbon dioxide emissions whilst promoting workable ecological solutions and challenging dominant power structures. First we describe what we did, and second we describe how climate change, capitalism and resistance to both, all fit together.

The Camp For Climate Action

In August 2006 around 600 people worried about climate change, and looking for something beyond the empty rhetoric of the politicians and corporations, got together for a two week camp next to the UK's largest power station and tried to shut it down. The focus of the camp was power. Drax coal-fired power station provides around 7% of the UK's electricity and produces over 20 million tons of CO₂ each year. Its existence and continued use is incompatible with any kind of ecological or equitable future. Our attempts to shut it down were an audacious strike both at a source of CO₂ emissions and a lynchpin of 21st century capitalism.

The camp embodied three key ideas. First, a commitment to direct action: a belief that solutions to the problem of climate change lie not with governments and corporations but with grassroots movements for change. On the day of action the camp attempted to breach the power station perimeter with the aim of occupying the site and closing it down. On this occasion we didn't achieve our objectives (due in part to the massive security operation involving 4,000 police) although the role of coal, the dirtiest fossil fuel, was exposed for the first time. Second, a commitment to popular education. The camp was a site for over 100 meetings and workshops, on climate and related issues. Finally we experimented with alternatives to the social relations of capitalism. The camp was organised as an autonomous space, from eating to entertainment to satellite-linked internet connections, with decisions made via non-hierarchical methods of consensus and a strong commitment to limiting our environmental impact. Many of the ideas for the camp's organisation came from a re-creation of the 'neighbourhood' or barrio system of organisation as used in 2002 at the Strasbourg no border camp and continued in 2005 at the G8

camp in Stirling, Scotland. This commitment to autonomy, non-hierarchy and low impact living inspired many for whom the camp was their first experience of political activity.

The camp was in many ways a great success but any temporary gathering of people has its limitations and important strategic questions remain. Many of us organising the camp recognised how the summit gatherings met our crucial need for convergence, for coming together and acting in unison. We also rejected the over-emphasis on individual responsibility and wanted to take on the corporate interests which cause large emissions and which can only be tackled through collective effort. It's important that, where they can, people make individual changes but switching light bulbs doesn't connect a person with real causes of climate change, the political and economic system. We felt that the climate camp could

(or any similar place) is capitalism and not just a large machine animated by capitalist process.

Finally, the camp was also an attempt to challenge the pessimism around this issue. Faced with the full facts about climate change and the massive reduction in emissions necessary over a very short period of time, it's all too easy to either deny the problem or conclude that it's too late, that it's an issue so large and entrenched that it's without solution. We found it remarkable that scientists' predictions of global catastrophe under business-as-usual had hardly animated radicals. We wanted to move away from denial. We wanted to say that the future is, literally, in our hands.

The Ostrich Has Left The Building

Ostriches were a recurring motif of the camp. Publicity posters showed people with heads in the sand and at one point during the

as usual with some attempts to ameliorate conditions for a much smaller guaranteed core, alongside a huge increase in securitisation against the rest of the world. The only check on this nightmare is what we, as local and world population, will put up with. We could even say that the temperature of the earth will be a measure of our ability to self-organise. Literally keeping the earth within liveable temperatures will be the definition of the success or failure of class struggle in the 21st century.

There is a fundamental difference between the levels of climate change that those who make the rules, make investment decisions, and the like are happy to accept, and the levels that peasant farmers, slum-dwellers and factory workers can tolerate. What's 'dangerous' for the former are changes in the weather that cause international security problems (as the UK government made clear in its presentation to the UN Security Council made clear) and changes in the weather that, domino-like, cause a massive contraction of the economy (as the UK government's Stern report sets out). What's 'dangerous' to the latter are crop failure and hunger, destroyed houses from extreme rains and storms, and everywhere across the Third World, heatstrokes and exhaustion, primarily affecting the young, old, and ill.

Biological Precarity And Class-Based Weather Fronts

Climate change takes many of the major problems, tragedies and dilemmas we currently face and acts as a multiplier. People are dying of starvation now; climate change will add many millions more. There are refugees now, and environmental refugees already outnumber those displaced by armed conflict, according to the Red Cross, yet climate change will change rainfall patterns, causing mass ecological dislocation and migration as some places become agriculturally dead. At the beginning of the 21st century weather is the frontline in the conflict between rich and poor, between west and south, between one class and another.

Remember Katrina? Remember the gridlocked highways as the wealthy escaped the city leaving the poor behind to face the hurricane? Credible scientific predictions suggest that unless emissions are drastically reduced, the synthesis of global temperature rise and precarity (or precariousness) will cause the mass-migrations of hundreds of millions of people and food shortages in rich countries. Given our socially interconnected world this could be the making of a revolution, or make the tragedies of the twentieth century appear mild. Again, this will be down to people's choices. Climate change is the vicious end result of an international class war that started with slavery and imperialism and is now manifest as neo-liberal globalisation. The question to us is where will it end?

There is no such thing as a 'natural disaster'. The impacts of extreme natural events form a tragic map of inequality, disadvantage and class division. The wealthy have better housing and live in safer places. When things go wrong they have access to better health care and the finances to start again. On looking at who is



learn from summit convergences, but also had the potential to move beyond them in a number of ways. First, the camp was at a time and place of our choosing. One of the dangers of the G8 gatherings is that we become an institutionalised symbolic mirror. They have their summit; we try to stop it. The climate camp, for some, was an attempt to break out of that cycle.

Second, the camp was a direct attempt to stop something real, in this case a power station and CO₂ emissions. Symbolic action can be, and has been, profoundly important but there is a danger that summit gatherings are increasingly lost in a hall of mirrors. Over time the symbolism of our protest is drained of its power. There is, of course, a risk that the climate camp could itself create new false targets as people imagine that Drax

demonstrations the police confiscated a giant puppet of an ostrich, suspecting it contained equipment for direct action. But the figure of the ostrich no longer captures the problem before us. Climate change is no longer being ignored but that doesn't mean that we can move on.

We have to realise that capitalism may not have to sort climate change out in order to survive. Or at least it might need to avoid only the very highest of the projected temperature rises. It's important to remember that capitalism operates by breaking down and collapsing. It contracts through war, depression or restructuring in order to allow for a new round of growth. In fact it has already written off large parts of the world as surplus populations. The most likely scenario is a version of business

affected worst by earthquakes in the south, some geographers now describe them as ‘class quakes’. Climate change is no different, except in terms of scale. It’s the poor who live on the banks of rivers and estuaries that might flood, whose housing is most vulnerable to storms, who are the first to starve when food prices rise and who have limited means to rebuild when things go wrong. On top of this existing economic and social precarity, the exhaust fumes of neo-liberalism, in the form of climate change, are ushering in a new era of biological precarity.

There Is Only Environment

To get to grips with this mess we need to move beyond the green movement’s tendency to construct the environment as a separate sphere or as an idealised moral good. Enclosure of the natural world is seen as an unfortunate and curable symptom of the market rather than one of its fundamental and necessary modes of expansion. We can also see how climate change, like human rights, may be turned around and used against us. Just as humanitarian intervention has been used as a mask for power politics, such as justifying the invasion of Iraq, environmentalism may suffer the same fate. In fact the process is well underway. In the Lacondon jungle of Chiapas, southern Mexico the government is attempting to ‘resettle’ communities that are now in zones designated for conservation. This is because there is a grand plan, the Plan Puebla Panama, to ‘develop’ (i.e. enclose) Central America. Conservationists kicked up a fuss and were granted the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor, a conservation initiative. So the local people are now in the ‘wrong’ place. This isn’t simply a case of spin by the Mexican government: one of the prime movers behind this has been the giant US eco-NGO Conservation International, which worked intimately with the military and Mexican government to design the reserve areas. The indigenous people have done a good job of preserving their local environment – so much so that it’s globally important for conservation – yet if we consider only the environment then we end up siding with the Mexican military and against the Zapatistas.

What this makes clear is that we can’t treat climate change as a separate issue: like everything else, power relations run right through it. Any movement based around climate change has to be enmeshed in the rest of the problems of the world’s movements. Likewise any movement for a liveable future needs to take on climate change. Climate change is not a cause; it’s a symptom (albeit one with the potential to kill off the patient). Equally the impacts and interconnectedness of climate change will undermine any success we might have in other areas. In the context of the debate in these pages it will be difficult to talk of winning, as millions starve or the Amazon burns. Looking at it this way round, we can see that climate change has the potential to link us not just as victims of disaster but as people fighting together.

Common Struggle

As we’ve already hinted, the links between radical campaigning on climate change and other areas are so strong that they could in time become indivisible. Migration is one key example: the greatest cause of migration in coming years will be climate change-induced drought and ‘natural’ disasters. We must say yes to a world without borders, and equally yes to people having a functioning environment wherever they choose to live. We sometimes neglect to look at the causes of migration because we don’t want to reduce our focus on the injustice of border control and racist immigration policy. Unless we act now, the near future will see a world in which people are forced to migrate in vastly increased numbers and in which fear-induced border policy becomes more extreme.

“CLIMATE CHANGE IS NOT A CAUSE; IT’S A SYMPTOM (ALBEIT ONE WITH THE POTENTIAL TO KILL OFF THE PATIENT).”

Whilst the struggle against alienating, shit work is an essential measure of our struggles against capitalism, it is also essential for solving the problem of carbon emissions. Capital’s main means of winning out in workplace struggles is either attack, restructuring and increasing precarity, or else paying people off with increased wages. In neither case is the central issue of exploitation challenged. Instead the globalised (and thus increasingly energy-intensive) nature of capital is affirmed. In the former, capital is globalised to weaken the position of the worker; in the latter the worker strikes a kind of deal with the devil and accepts an increased level of consumption in return for ongoing alienation. Both options exacerbate climate change.

In an increasingly globalised market the chances are that what we produce has an ever more remote relationship to our actual needs. A growth in consumption is both the market’s solution and its *raison d’être*. But how do workers take back meaning and control? Part of this must involve autonomy but part must also mean relocalisation. Of course local production is not sufficient to solve the problem of alienation and exploitation (there are countless ‘local’ businesses that are as corrupt and exploitative as those keyed into global markets). But at the same time autonomy alone is not enough. While there is a world of difference between worker control and capitalist control, shit and polluting work remains shit and polluting work, regardless of who owns the production line. Our challenge is to tackle both the relationships within the workplace and the kind of work being done. In other words solutions to climate change have to encourage good solutions to crap work: not more consumption and exploitation but less work and commodities and more free time and happiness.

Moreover climate change makes us all potentially precarious because it undermines the ways people try to achieve security within

capitalism. A climate-related economic crash is a growing possibility, given the increasing frequency of extreme weather events and the impact of this on both infrastructure and the insurance industry. This crash alone won’t necessarily undermine capitalism but it will wipe out pensions, house prices, savings etc. We’ve seen in Argentina how precarious those forms of security are.

There is a danger of a vicious circle emerging, with the atomisation and conflict being caused by the huge increase in precarity then feeding back into support for policies of the free market, economic expansion and authoritarian methods of control. Against that, we have to raise the possibility of entering into a virtuous circle. Any amelioration of climate change increases the room or time all movements have to manoeuvre. The more time and space people have for politics,

the more we can control the level of climate change and make sure that the measures used to combat it aren’t used against us. And in the end that sort of autonomous self-organisation is the only sort of security we can rely on.

Climate change is not an environmental issue, even if NGOs and liberal greens have claimed it so thus far. It is above all a social issue, and its impacts will affect all our social movements. The weather of the coming decades will literally frame and limit our struggles and, if left unchallenged, will completely undermine any successes we have elsewhere. Somehow in this blizzard of climate rhetoric we have to bring into focus the possibility of solutions that emphasise the human not the technological, solutions that reside in what we have to hand here and now, not what may or may not be on the desk in the shining corporate R&D lab.

Beyond Greenwash

There is a remarkable mismatch between rhetoric and reality when it comes to climate change. The attempt to reengineer reality in terms of market solutions is about more than presentation and image, it’s a modal shift in the market to fend off the growth in more radical and threatening ideas (ones that suggest the market is in fact the problem). As one would expect the oil companies are out there at the forefront of this latest wave of greenwash. BP is for example planning a new gas-fired zero emission power station in Scotland that buries all its waste CO₂ far below the North Sea, thus in their words taking hundreds of thousands of car equivalents of the roads. Further down we find out that the buried CO₂ is actually being used to help pump out otherwise unreachable oil reserves releasing millions of new barrels of oil that – surprise surprise – will put many more cars back on the road than the first sleight of hand is taking off. Calling BP ‘Beyond Petroleum’

is like calling the British Army ‘Beyond Violence’. The oil companies will drill every last barrel of oil and gas there is on this planet until and unless they are stopped. Meanwhile the UK government talks green in one corner with a climate change bill (tying the government to binding targets for emissions reductions) but in the other corner it promotes road building, aviation expansion, free trade, and a relaxation of planning laws in favour of big developers.

Let’s be clear, it is the wealthy that produce most CO₂ emissions. That goes for countries and individuals within countries. In the UK we produce on average around 9 tons of CO₂ per head of population compared to a Tanzanian who produces around 0.1 tons. Within the UK it is the wealthy who drive and fly most. The world economy is built on the self-expansion of alienated labour but the burning of fossil fuels has also been intrinsic to industrial expansion, providing energy for the machines that labour uses. Shifting weather patterns are not a form of direct control, like military invasion or economic constraint, but they exacerbate the already appalling divisions between rich and poor.

There’s no doubt that a social movement with climate change as one of its central concerns is the only way to tackle human-induced climate change and the expansion of capital. The Climate Camp is an active part of that movement and a place where it can constitute itself. Climate change and the growing rhetoric around it expose a crack in the system. While the mainstream attempts to plaster this over with techno-fixes, there is, at the same time, the chance to expose the limits of these solutions and turn people on to the need for more fundamental action. The vast political space opened up by climate change will either be filled by business people and industry selling the latest shiny, plastic, bury-it, green-it, burn-it, offset-it, sell-it solutions or by people who have a critique of capitalism and can see enclosure and intensification as both an inevitable expression of capital and a changeable reality. 🐺

“Mommy, where do carbon offsets come from?”

“Well, you see honey, when a polluter and a consultant love money very, very much, they come together in a very special way to produce an extremely long piece of paper.”

— **Gar Lipow, systems analyst and peace activist,** 2006

Carbon Trading

BY J. D.

Market solutions are clearly needed to avert dangerous climate change, and drastic market solutions at that. As Larry Lohmann argues, the necessity of radical market solutions has long been obvious. What is required are:

...Long-term shifts in the structure of Northern industrial, transport and household energy use away from wasteful expenditure of fossil fuels toward frugal use of solar and other renewable sources... [and] addressing the institutions and power imbalances that had resulted in both the overuse and the globally unequal use of the earth's carbon-absorbing capacity.

Unfortunately, the “market solutions”, such as offsetting, which have been sold to a well-meaning public keen to do their bit for the planet, have allowed polluting to continue as usual. Rather than resulting in concrete environmental outcomes, these “market solutions” have seen a massive transfer of cash to those profiting off the carbon markets; traders, certifying bodies, and large corporations. The “win-win” rhetoric, surrounding such market solutions, works to marginalise those who are calling for real, meaningful and effective action to avert climate disaster. The main achievements of such false solutions are to increase corporate power and to further commodify natural resources such as the earth's carbon carrying capacity.

Carbon trading mechanisms are at the heart of the Kyoto Protocol. The theory is that an emission saved anywhere is as good as an emission saved anywhere else given the global nature of climate change, and therefore it makes sense to make the emission reductions where it is cheapest to do so. The Protocol allows polluters to invest in “pollution reduction schemes” which generate “additional” carbon savings called certified emission reductions (CERs) in other countries to help purchasing countries achieve their (manifestly inadequate) Kyoto targets.

Kyoto sets out two main mechanisms for generating carbon credits. Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects are projects in countries which do not have targets under the Protocol (predominately countries in the global South). Joint Implementation projects (JI) are projects situated in countries which do have Kyoto targets (JI projects are intended mostly for Russia and Eastern European countries, however can theoretically happen in any country with reduction commitments).

The carbon credits generated by a scheme are calculated as the difference between the level of emissions that happened with the project and the level in an imagined alternative future scenario where the project did not happen. Thus, trading in carbon savings from such schemes requires massive speculation of alternative futures. Firstly, without this investment from selling certified carbon reductions (CER) would this project have gone ahead? And secondly, does this project save additional carbon than would have been saved under alternative schemes? The difficulty in calculating how much carbon is actually “saved” is summarized well by English journalist Dan Welch: “Offsets are an imaginary commodity created by deducting what you hope happens from what you guess would have happened.”

These market solutions will not contribute to protecting the earth's climate. This article discusses the many reasons why these solutions are failing to create any real emissions reductions. This article outlines how these “solutions” have been promoted by neo-liberal ideologues with vested interests. Like other neo-liberal economic policies, these false solutions work to entrench and magnify social inequalities. This article focuses on many CDM projects which are environmentally disastrous and have serious consequences on affected communities. Many of these projects are being actively resisted by those affected by them. In contrast, carbon trading is proving to be a lucrative market for large corporations. In order to actually engender meaningful social and

environmental change in the climate arena, we must challenge these market trends explicitly.

For too long environmentalists have made allegations that governments and large corporations have lacked the political will to tackle climate change properly. Constantly, the refrain has been that too little is being done too late. What these arguments obscure, is that a lot is being done, and that indeed corporations and governments have a surplus of political will. The assertion of the lack of action of governments and corporations has obscured a political critique of what is being promoted as the solutions. Now is the time for us to stop arguing that something, anything needs to be done and to be more politically astute about exactly what must be done, because the reality is that the main proposed solutions to climate change: market mechanisms, such as carbon trading and offsetting, will not only be completely inadequate to deal with the climate crisis, they will greatly exacerbate inequalities under global capitalism.

History of market solutions for pollution trading

Acceptance of [the carbon trading provisions of the Kyoto Protocol] represents an article of faith, faith in the free market and faith in the process of globalisation. It rests on an ideological stance.

— Mick Kelly, *Development Dialogue* September 2006 – *Carbon Trading*, Climatic Research Unit, University of East Anglia, 2000.

Market solutions for climate change began to take shape in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Ronald Coase, an economist from the University of Chicago, is considered by many to be the grandfather of pollution trading, due the influential articles he wrote on the topic. He argued that a pollution dump was just another resource or commodity and that the right to pollute is a factor of production just like the right to use land. He argued that to find out how to best use the pollution dump, it should be placed on the open market, and the market will distribute the most economical and hence the most efficient use of these rights to pollute. These “solutions” have at their heart neo-liberal economic theory.

These mechanisms, proposed in the 1960s, started to be put in place in the US in markets for lead, nitrogen oxides, sulphur oxides and other pollutants from the 1970s onwards. The Clean Air Amendment Act 1990 adopted these sorts of mechanisms to deal with pollution reductions in America. Academics have forcefully argued that such measures have been unsuccessful in cutting back pollution levels. Instead what was achieved was an increase of polluting particles in working class communities and black and Hispanic communities, as the market has deemed it more ‘economical’ to emit pollutants in these areas than in the leafy suburbs of the well-off.

The adoption of such market mechanisms under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change of 1992 and particularly in its 1997 Kyoto Protocol was the result of a deliberate and sustained lobbying effort by US government, economic advisors, NGOs and business organisations. They were included in Kyoto in a last minute deal, pushed heavily by the Al Gore-led US negotiating team.

Corporations have been actively involved in lobbying for carbon trading schemes. The International Chamber for Commerce together with Shell, Texaco, Mobil and Chevron sent a 30 person team to Senegal to lobby the environmental ministers from more than 20 African countries to support the CDM prior to the 1998 climate talks in Buenos Aires. In return for political support, the companies offered technology transfer and foreign investment. The politicians of forest-rich Latin American countries have also been heavily lobbied to win their support for carbon forestry proposals.

In 1999 the World Bank's Prototype Carbon Fund (PCF) was set up. The PCF is designed to generate cheap credits from Southern countries to ‘reduce the costs of emissions reductions for

industrialized countries.’ Companies such as Mitsubishi and BP, as well as several governments were quick to invest in this fund.

The International Emissions Trading Association, a corporate lobby group, was also established in 1999. The Washington-based NGO World Resources Institute (partly bankrolled by government and UN agencies, international financial institutions and corporations such as Monsanto, TotalFinaElf, Shell, BP, and Cargill Dow) tirelessly lobbied for carbon trading alongside the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and other corporate pressure groups.

Many environmental groups who initially opposed these market solutions when they were proposed later back-flipped, becoming defenders of the Kyoto Protocol when it looked like the Protocol, flawed as it was, was not even going to get off the ground due to US opposition. The argument was defeatist; “Kyoto isn't perfect, but it's the best we have.” The simple answer is that if we are to avert climate disaster we need better.

Market solutions such as offsetting and carbon trading have, due to a decade of corporate lobbying, positioned themselves so that government rhetoric on solutions to climate change focuses predominately on them. An astonishing range of institutions from private companies to UN agencies, university departments and NGOs are now aligned around an agenda characterised by rejection of precaution, inability to come to terms with indeterminacy and irreversibility, insistence that tradeoffs are always possible, and support for growth in corporate power.

Problems with market solutions

A UK satirical website highlights the absurdity of offset promises. Cheat Neutral (cheatneutral.com) argues that “When you cheat on your partner you add to the heartbreak, pain and jealousy in the atmosphere.” It promises that they can offset cheating “by funding someone else to be faithful and NOT cheat. This neutralises the pain and unhappy emotion and leaves you with a clear conscience.” Absurd? Absolutely. They happily admit the website is a joke thought up at the pub. The problem is that carbon offsetting, an equally absurd proposition, is thought up by vested interests and is being seriously promoted by powerful governments and corporate interests as a credible solution to climate change – arguably the most serious problem facing humanity today.

There are massive problems with these market solutions. The first and most crucial is that they are simply not working to reduce carbon emissions. Unfortunately, as well as not working to achieve the stated objective many CDM projects, such as methane capture, eucalyptus plantations and large hydropower dams, are having massive environmental consequences and impacts on surrounding communities. Many of these projects are being actively resisted by the communities who they adversely affect.

Independent analysts estimate that up to two-thirds of the CDMs offsets do not represent real emissions cuts. A key problem is that offsetting creates a dangerous illusion that Northern consumption and production patterns can be maintained without harming the climate. Each so-called “emission reduction” which generates an offset allows an industrialised country to keep polluting, therefore the net benefit is insignificant. Moreover, this relies on an assumption that the project actually reduces carbon emissions and reduces them to the extent claimed – both of which are highly dubious propositions. The logic of offsetting makes people believe they can carry on emitting excess carbon through their lifestyle rather than think about reducing their emissions, whilst still feeling morally smug. Consumers in the north simply cannot continue to keep polluting and assume that offsetting will alleviate them from their greenhouse sins. Moral responsibility cannot be abrogated and handballed off to the South for a small monetary contribution. Perversely the logic of offsetting may actually be encouraging people to emit more.

Analysis of CDM projects shows that money is not going towards small, localized sustainable development initiatives, but rather to large projects, many of which would have been built anyway

without CDM funding. Moreover, many of these projects – most commonly hydropower dams, but also wind turbines, biomass power plants, changes to industrial processes, capturing methane from coal mines and many other schemes – never needed income from the CDM to be built. Patrick McCully argues that “In these cases, the CDM is increasing global emissions because polluters in industrialized countries are meeting their legal requirements to cut emissions by buying fake credits rather than actually cutting their own emissions.”

The 1000th CDM project was registered on 15 April 2008. The most common type of CDM project is hydropower, consisting of more than a quarter of all projects, bio-mass is the second most common, followed by wind power. 36% of CDM projects are non-hydro renewable projects. Only 16 CDM projects, or 0.5% of total approved projects to date have been solar projects. Energy efficiency measures make up only 5% of all projects. Half of all CERs issued up to March 2008 had come from HFC-23, an intensively harmful greenhouse gas used in refrigerators, akin to CFCs. Perversely, the chemical companies which produce these gases can earn twice as much from selling carbon reductions than they can from actually selling the gas they manufacture, and thus the carbon market has created an inverse monetary incentive for greater amounts of these gasses to be produced.

The complexity of carbon science and the inherent speculation involved in such an exercise means there are massive issues in actually monitoring and calculating these “carbon savings”. These calculations are also not made on a long term basis; a mono-crop eucalypts plantation is calculated as a carbon saving, yet the plantation could be destroyed in a fire or the trees could die releasing carbon into the atmosphere. To calculate on a solid and quantified basis how many tonnes of CO₂ emissions were “avoided” through the use of a CDM or JI project or carbon sink requires a biophysical knowledge of carbon flow through the atmosphere, biosphere and lithosphere that does not currently exist. For some of these questions scientists still leave the uncertainty as plus or minus 50%. These problems are compounded by the lack of regulation and enforcement in these areas, especially given that the data is being provided by the polluting companies.

Serious questions have been asked about the process of verifying the carbon credentials of CDM projects. The UK Guardian has accused the CDM of being “contaminated by gross incompetence, rulebreaking and possible fraud.” Newsweek declared that the CDM’s “real winners” have been “polluting factory owners who can sell menial cuts for massive profits, and the brokers who pocket fees each time a company buys or sells the right to pollute.”

The Wall Street Journal confirmed last March that emissions trading “would make money for some very large corporations, but don’t believe for a minute that this charade would do much about global warming.” The paper termed the carbon trade “old-fashioned rent-seeking . . . making money by gaming the regulatory process.” Newsweek magazine’s investigation of Third World carbon trading (through the Clean Development Mechanism) March 2008 concluded, “It isn’t working . . . [and represents] a grossly inefficient way of cutting emissions in the developing world.” The magazine called the trade “a shell game” which has transferred “\$3 billion to some of the worst carbon polluters in the developing world.”

A key problem is that the companies that are tasked with “validating” projects for the CDM as assessing whether projects comply with all rules such as the “additionality” requirement have “shown themselves willing to rubberstamp project documents containing unverifiable and highly dubious claims.” This is an obvious risk when the DOEs are all selected and paid by the developers, who unsurprisingly seek low costs, a speedy process and thus validation companies with a track record of giving positive assessment. Three companies dominate the validation process – Det Norske Veritas, based in Norway, TV S.D from Germany, and the Swiss SGS Group.

These companies, as well as brokers and others involved in the growing trade in carbon credits, are members of the International Emissions Trading Association (IETA). IETA has massive political clout, it had approximately 300 delegates at the 2007 climate negotiations in Bali and thus because of how well-resourced the association is in its excellent access of government negotiations, would be able to exert a powerful influence over the international negotiations.

Many of these projects which have been verified as CDM projects have massive social and environmental consequences. Many of the projects which have been approved as CDM mechanism projects are being actively resisted by the communities affected by them. A case study, a methane landfill gas extraction project in South Africa can illustrate these points.

The Road landfill gas extraction project, South Africa

A huge waste landfill site is situated next to the Clare Estate township. The landfill site is proving to be lethal to the community. Cadmium levels were 2-3 times the guideline limit and lead was 10-40 times the limit. Both cadmium and lead are recognised carcinogens. Seven out of ten of the houses in the block downwind from the dump on the Clare Estate in Durban have tumour cases in the family. One resident Sajida Khan was diagnosed with cancer in 1996. Sajida’s nephew, who lived with her, died of leukaemia aged eleven.

The dump also produces methane from waste decomposition. The gas extraction project which commenced in 2003 extracts methane generated by waste decomposition and use it to generate up to 45 MW of electricity for supply to the national grid.

Because methane is one of the most powerful greenhouse gases, this project and thus the continuation of a dangerous waste dump is seen as a carbon offset project. The reduced methane from the dump is turned into CERs that are sold to foreign countries and companies which they can then use to count towards their reduction commitments under Kyoto. The managers of the dump claim further credit, because they argue that the energy created from the methane replaces energy, which would have otherwise been produced from coal-fired power stations, thus saving further emissions.

“THERE ARE MASSIVE PROBLEMS WITH THESE MARKET SOLUTIONS. THE FIRST AND MOST CRUCIAL IS THAT THEY ARE SIMPLY NOT WORKING TO REDUCE CARBON EMISSIONS.”

The World Bank’s Prototype Carbon Fund in May 2002 described this project as “a world-class site” and an “environmentally progressive” model to be applauded internationally. Meanwhile the community living next to the waste dump continues to suffer the effects of the toxins. The income generated from the carbon credits creates an incentive for the company to remain operating the dump for a longer period of time.

Underpinning market arguments that Western excess consumption can be offset more economically and efficiently by projects in the South are highly racist and colonialist assumptions. In 1991 Larry Summers, a former US Treasury Secretary and former president of Harvard University, expanded on Coase’s view in a famous memorandum he wrote to colleagues when he was chief economist of the World Bank: ‘The economic logic of dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest wage country is impeccable, and we should face up to it,’ Summers said. ‘Underpopulated countries in Africa are vastly underpolluted.’

So who exactly is benefiting from these market mechanisms?

Carbon trading has spawned a whole new industry and carbon economy, and a vastly profitable one at that. The head of the UN’s climate treaty secretariat recently told a carbon industry trade fair that CDM credit sales could reach US\$100 billion under a new climate agreement.

Citigroup’s Peter Atherton recently confessed that he believed the European Union’s Emissions Trading System (ETS) had “done nothing to curb emissions” and acted as “a highly regressive tax falling mostly on poor people.” On whether policy goals were achieved, he admitted: “Prices up, emissions up, profits up . . . so, not really. Who wins and loses? All generation-based utilities -- winners. Coal and nuclear-based generators -- biggest winners. Hedge funds and energy traders -- even bigger winners. Losers... ahem... consumers!”

The CDM is by far the world’s biggest carbon offset market. CER transactions in 2007 totaled \$18 billion, more than triple the previous year’s figure. More than 1.8 billion CERs are expected to be generated by 2012. The price of CERs varies according to supply and demand. Using a typical current price of \$20 per CER, project developers will sell around \$36 billion worth of CDM credits over the next five years.

When a carbon trading scheme was set up in the UK the issue of how emissions rights were distributed was highly controversial. Pollutions permits were distributed free of charge to industries which can now make substantial profits from selling these handouts. In effect such a distribution of permits financially rewarded the largest polluters.


There is also the problem of “hot air”. Countries such as Russia are able to cash in under these schemes by selling excess permits. The collapse of the Russian economy in the early 1990s cut their CO₂ emissions by a third. The benchmark year emissions reductions are measured against is the arbitrarily-chosen 1990. Therefore compared to 1990s emissions Russia now has a whole bunch of carbon credits they can profitably sell, and someone in Australia can buy these emissions and keep driving their car, in the blissful ignorance that their carbon has been “offset”.

If these market solutions are the answer the question was not “how do we avoid dangerous climate change?” The question to which carbon trading becomes a solution is: “How best might corporations ride the wave of the climate crisis, seeking rewards for innovation and seizing new assets?” The prominence of market solutions show that climate change presents as many opportunities as dangers to capital. Capital is currently jumping at the chance to use the rhetoric of climate crisis as a new motor for accumulation. However, as demonstrated, “green capitalism” is unlikely to cut emissions to the radical extent required.

Instead, commodification of the atmosphere and the creation of property rights to the ability to pollute has operated to provide for capital’s constant need for expansion. The creation of property rights in the atmosphere represents a new enclosure of the commons. Throughout the history of capitalism we have seen constant waves of enclosures, where products which were previously common and valued intrinsically became privatized and thus a tradable, marketable commodity. This began with the creation of property rights in chattels, continued with the creation of private rights to land in Europe during industrialization, and the ongoing policies of the World Bank continue to push such policies in the South today. The creation of rights to pollute (or to trade carbon), like the ownership of ideas (intellectual property), represents the creation of tradeable property rights in intangibles.

Carbon trading has proven to be unable to meet the need for dramatic carbon reductions. What carbon trading does do successfully is fulfill capitalism’s inbuilt need for constant expansion in a situation where there are clear ecological limits to growth. Markets for the intangible right to pollute is the perfect commodity to meet capital’s current dilemma – how to keep fulfilling its need for constant expansion on a planet of which we are more and more aware is made of finite resources.

It’s time for some real solutions. To quote George Monbiot; “Ladies and gentlemen, I have the answer! Incredible as it might seem, I have stumbled across the single technology which will save us from runaway climate change! From the goodness of my heart I offer it to you for free. No patents, no small print, no hidden clauses. Already this technology, a radical new kind of carbon capture and storage, is causing a stir among scientists. It is cheap, it is efficient and it can be deployed straight away. It is called . . . leaving fossil fuels in the ground.”

Genuine solutions need to be those which tackle neo-liberalism rather than reproduce its logic, such as those demanded by Climate Justice Now!: “reduced consumption; huge financial transfers from North to South based on historical responsibility and ecological debt for adaptation, and mitigation costs paid for by redirecting military budgets, innovative taxes and debt cancellation; leaving fossil fuels in the ground and investing in appropriate energy-efficiency and safe, clean and community-led renewable energy; rights-based resource conservation that enforces Indigenous land rights and promotes peoples’ sovereignty over energy, forests, land and water; and sustainable family farming and peoples’ food sovereignty.” 

For further information see:

www.carbontradewatch.org

Bad Deal For The Planet: Why Carbon Offsets Aren't Working... And How To Create A Fair Global Climate Accord, Dams, Rivers and People 2008

Carbon Trading: A Critical Conversation on Climate Change, Privatization and Power Development Dialogue, No 48, September 2006.

The Sky is not the limit: The Emerging market in Greenhouse Gases, Carbon Trade Watch Briefing No 1.



don't talk about the war!

THE NONSENSICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LABOUR AND ENVIRONMENT MOVEMENTS IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

BY LIZ TURNER

Over the past twenty years in Australia, the relationship between environmental activists and some aspects of the labour movement has been plagued by nonsensical paradoxes and conflict, to the detriment of the environment. Big industrial giants and governments are clearly not going to be the ones to prevent dangerous climate change because their interests lie in fossil fuels. This leaves environmentalists and workers to create solutions that will transform the energy industry to be sustainable, localised and grassroots, while providing people with jobs.

We can't rely on the leaders of the mainstream labour unions to transform the logging industry because the Forestry division of the powerful Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) has been embroiled in conflicts with the environment movement for years. New approaches are needed in order to begin resolving these conflicts. Strategies based on the principles of mutual aid and direct action, are the most likely ones to get good results.

Many environmental activists have anti-capitalist ideas that are not fostered by a strong workers' movement. This is a ridiculous

Joe Owens, the New South Wales BLF ran 42 Green Bans, holding up well over \$5 billion worth of inappropriate development in areas of environmental significance and low-income residential areas at The Rocks, Kelly's Bush, Centennial Park, the Botanic Gardens, and Woolloomooloo.¹

In 1983, Bob Hawke's Labor government introduced the Prices and Incomes Accord, an agreement between governments, bosses and unions. The Accord was promoted as apparently "heralding the end of industrial disputes". The BLF signed on, but broke the accord when industrial disputes were needed. The ALP government then deregistered the union. Police were called to sites in Victoria, NSW and Canberra, where BLF members were ordered to join rival unions. If they refused, they were sacked on the spot and escorted off site. BLF officials were banned from sites and if they entered anyway were charged with trespass. The courts would then issue an order banning them from the site. If the official ignored the court order, they were jailed for 28 days.² Howard can partly thank Hawke for laying the foundations for workplace organising laws under Workchoices.

Violence in the forest is often a case of family against family, workers against people concerned for their children's futures. But the interests of forest workers and environmental protesters are the same.

This violence came to a head in the courts in the early 2000's when activists from the Wilderness Society claimed they were beaten up, trapped in a log cabin and terrorized to the point of suffering post-traumatic stress disorder by loggers who are members of the CFMEU's Forestry division during a forest blockade. The unsuccessful response of the activists was to try and sue the CFMEU for all they had, which would have effectively decimated the most militant union in the country.

The extent of this damage cannot easily be undone. It presents barriers whenever workers and environmentalists try to find new solutions, to the point where it seems easier to simply not talk about the war. For young environmentalists exploring all possible solutions to environmental crises, it can be tempting to find relief by looking to the corporate sector. But there is simply no sufficient solution to be found within the capitalist system. BHP Billiton,

“THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE FOREST INDUSTRY HAS LED MORE AND MORE FOREST WORKERS TO BECOME INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS. SO IF THEY MISS A DAY'S WORK BECAUSE SOMEONE HAS CHAINED THEMSELVES TO THEIR TRACTOR, THEY CAN'T CLAIM WAGES.”

situation. However, Union Solidarity is an organisation based in Melbourne that aims to build sustainable housing co-operatives for low-income earners. This very practical project could go leaps and bounds towards healing strained relations, while at the same time, demonstrating that workers control can transform industries to be sustainable.

The Forestry Division of the CFMEU

Claims that the Forestry division of the CFMEU have been bought off by the forest industry, are well-founded. Michael O'Connor from the Forestry branch of the CFMEU supported John Howard's 2004 election campaign after Opposition Leader Mark Latham promised to protect more of Tasmania's Old Growth forests.

The CFMEU will not dissolve its forestry division due to the Forestry division's historical threat that they will dismantle the doors of Victoria's Trades Hall. I have a proposition: Perhaps Trades Hall does not need the doors as much as the CFMEU needs to be liberated from the conservative and damaging leaders of the Forestry union.

The Builders Labourers Federation

From 1971 and 1974 the New South Wales Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) helped foster a powerful relationship between strong elements of the labour movement and the environment movement. Under the leadership of Jack Munday, Bob Pringle and

The sustained attacks by the state, an economic recession and the constant blacklisting of BLF militants presented the final nails in the coffin of the BLF. Make no mistake: the government were engaged in a deliberate project to ensure that workers and concerned members of the community could not interfere with unsustainable development.

Stories of violence perpetrated by loggers against environmental protesters are not uncommon. On the ground, these fights are sometimes articulated as some kind of "class" war, where forest workers defend their right to their job and are happy to fight to apparently "bourgeois" greenies (who are often students earning a meager income of Austudy or underemployed people). The restructuring of the forest industry has led more and more forest workers to become independent contractors. So if they miss a day's work because someone has chained themselves to their tractor, they can't claim wages. Stripping workers of guaranteed wages and conditions is a very good strategic move for industry and government because it is harder for these workers to sympathise with the concerns of environmentalists. Instead, forest workers effectively perform the role of enforcer against environmentalists, while industry and the state can sit back and watch.

for instance, is responsible for ten per cent of Australia's overall greenhouse emissions and they have refused to set a target to reduce emissions. (Instead they have set a target to reduce energy intensity by 13% by 2010).

This means there is a lot of hard work to do to build the relationship between workers and environmentalists. This is where we need to start.

Union Solidarity's sustainable housing workers co-operatives should be applauded. We can only hope it will provide a positive example and lead to a groundswell for other construction workers to join. 🐾

“IF IT DOES TAKE OFF INTO A LARGE MOVEMENT IT’LL HAVE STEMMED FROM A SMALL MEETING IN DEAN JUST NEAR BALLARAT. ALTHOUGH THE INSPIRATION GOES BACK FURTHER TO DENMARK AND THE 1980’S.”

The Power of Community

HEPBURN SPRINGS: DECENTRALIZED ENERGY

BY SCOTT FOYSTER

Hepburn Springs is a small town an hour and a half’s drive north of Melbourne. Known for its mineral water and health spas it and neighbouring town Daylesford are weekend getaways for Melbournites looking for fresh air, scenic hills and lakes to swim and picnic around. It’s also a town for historical excursions for kids interested in learning more about the gold boom that the wealth and prosperity of the state of Victoria was built on.

Come a few years and we may be calling Hepburn Springs the start of a community based energy revolution in Australia. It’s a lot for a region that comprises of little more than 2000 homes to take on board but, as Kev Carmody says, “from little things big things grow”. Hopefully the work of Hepburn Springs will be the first in a line of a more decentralised energy system here in Australia. If it does take off into a large movement it’ll have stemmed from a small meeting in Dean just near Ballarat. Although the inspiration goes back further to Denmark and the 1980’s.

Tired with the lack of change on governmental level citizens of Denmark got together in the early 80’s to form renewable energy co-ops. Owing to it’s island and coastal nature that ensures high gusting winds communities in Denmark banded together to form wind co-operatives ensuring that as Denmark grew it did turn to Coal and Nuclear. As the 80’s and 90’s continued and more and more families brought it, to the stage today where an estimated 150 000 Danish families own a share in a wind farm. Nowadays close to 20% of Denmark’s energy is produced by wind power.

With word spreading other countries followed suit with wind co-operatives starting up in Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, Holland and the United States. Australia, being reliant on coal was slow to catch on although by the early years of this decade the town of Denmark in WA was pushing ahead with it’s attempt to build a community owned windfarm. Ultimately though it would be a failure with the council afraid that the wind turbines would ruin the tourist industry to the town.

Fast-forward to 2004 and Per Bernard a resident of Hepburn Springs attends a Wind Power PL meeting about a proposed commercial wind farm in Dean near Ballarat. The meeting environment was hostile and with Australia’s lack of a Mandatory Renewable Energy Target it become apparent to Per and the other community members who went to the meeting that large scale investment in renewable energy in Australia was not likely to happen.

Inspired by his Danish upbringing Per and crew instead decided to look into co-operative schemes and so Hepburn Renewable Energy Association was started. Over the next year, with the help of Melbourne based consultative Future Energy, the community was consulted over what they thought of the project. After extensive research where support for the concept was found Future Energy then undertook a series of environmental findings in order to write up the final project to lodge before the Hepburn Shire.

The final project was lodged in late 2006 and on February 2007 the Hepburn Shire approved the project given the green light for the project. Or so it seemed but with 28 formal objections being lodged to the VCAT the project was put on hold whilst the appeal was

heard. With the appeal over the project was ready to start and the Hepburn Community Wind Park Co-Operative was born working out with power companies how the money will be sold into the grid and how the \$9 million dollars will be raised.

It’s not going to be without its difficulties but as Jane Knight from the Hepburn Renewable Energy Association says the plan is for the turbines to be up and running by late 2009. Five years after it begun but still heading in the right direction. And with one co-op built a model and precedent has been set for more to be built in communities around Australia. 🐕

Hepburn Windfarm

If you are interested in contributing to the Hepburn wind farm: hrea.org.au/

For a windpower plan for the state of Victoria check out beyond zero emissions: beyondzeroemissions.org/files/Victorian_Stationary_Energy_Scoping_BZE.v1.13.15Feb07.pdf

For more on windpower:

- 🐕 Wind Power Monthly wpm.co.nz
- 🐕 For more on community owned wind farms check out: Middelgrunden Wind Co-operative middelgrunden.dk
- 🐕 Baywind energy Co-operative www.baywind.co.uk
- 🐕 WindShare Co-operative, Toronto windshare.ca
- 🐕 Ecodyfi, Wales ecodyfi.org.uk
- 🐕 for an interesting report on decentralised energy check out Greenpeace UK pdf at: www.greenpeace.org.uk/MultimediaFiles/Live/Full/7154.pdf



No Borders, No Nations

BY ANONYMOUS

With defining symbols like the high-tech, militarised camps at Woomera, Baxter & Villawood and notorious moments such as the government-ordered military seizure of 400 people on the Tampa, the debate and conflict over refugees has been a heated political issue in Australia over the last 10 years. Frequent protests, both inside the camps and out have been held. Slogans such as “Free the Refugees” have been widely heard in general political discourse. Although Kevin Rudd has propagated a ‘softly, softly’ approach to the refugee issue, recently reversing some Howard-era policies, substantial elements of the key infrastructure remains.

It has also been a pivotal component of radical political struggles. Andrea Maksimovic’s piece on the Woomera 2002 protest ‘With Our Bodies Against the Camps’ – where the fences of the detention centre were torn down and over 50 refugees freed – wonderfully articulates this:

The best thing of all was that we didn’t demand anything of the state – we demanded things of ourselves, of the movement, of the temporary community which existed for those five days. We (including those on the inside) demanded that a view which sees our protests stop at the fence be dispensed with, and a new practice of protest arise. And that call was answered by everyone in their own way. And whilst it would be wrong to call Woomera 2002 purely an anti-capitalist action, undoubtedly it served to question the logic of a system which aims to divide us from our brothers and sisters throughout the world.

On a global scale similar struggles have eventuated. Around May Day 2006, millions of undocumented workers in the US mobilized around the demand for a repeal of a congressional bill that would criminalize them for being in the U.S. without proper papers, and criminalize U.S. citizens who provide them with assistance. Although only partially victorious, this has led to large demos and showings of dissent in the subsequent years.

Anthropologist Ettiene Balibar has noted cogently that “globalisation tends to knock down frontiers with respect to goods and capital while at the same time erecting a whole system of barriers against the influx of a workforce and the ‘right to flight’ that migrants exercise in the face of misery, war, and dictatorial regimes in their countries of origin...At the same time as they are

supposed to enjoy ‘liberation’ with respect to traditional forms of authority and dependence,... movements are strictly controlled through a system of differential citizenship. At the bottom of this ladder we see the migrants who suffer the most discrimination: the ‘illegals’, or ‘undocumented’”.

In this context, the issues of migration surrounding climate refugees has emerged as a key new terrain of struggle, encompassing both climate change politics and those rejecting borders and acting in solidarity with refugees. The Red Cross already estimates that the numbers of environmental refugees outnumbers every other category of refugee. This is set to radically increase – it is feared that pressures due to climate change will lead to as many as 200 million forced migrants by the end of the century.

As with all refugees, the burden of environmental migration is borne predominantly by individuals and communities from the Global South-mainly Sub-Saharan Africa, the Indian subcontinent, China and Central America. Our response to this scenario must not just be to push for reforms to improve the lot of individual migrants, but, given the scale of the impending crisis, to push for an end to borders and for freedom of movement for all.

The Pacific Region

Throughout the Pacific region, climate change has already had significant impact. The islands of Tuvalu, Fiji and Kiribati have experienced major geographical changes. In Tuvalu sandbanks and shorelines have been lost since the 1960’s. ‘The Guardian’ newspaper describes the Cataret Islands as a “Pacific Atlantis”, and it is frequently described as the site of the world’s first climate refugees. Seawalls and other devices no longer deter tides from flooding arable land and destroying key agricultural infrastructure.

In all these areas, coastal roads, bridges and plantations are suffering increasing erosion. Intense storms and floods are impacting on housing and community infrastructure, and are occurring more and more frequently. The Red Cross claims that there has been an increase of 65 times in weather-related disasters over the last 30 years. This will all force large-scale migration.

Food security and water security are generally under threat, with fisheries becoming depleted as a consequence of coral bleaching. Rainwater is becoming inaccessible, particularly in Tuvalu, Kiribati and the Cook Islands as a consequence of oceanic and climatic variations.¹

Warmer temperatures can lead easily to increased rates of disease. Research indicates that Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands are now vulnerable to outbreaks of malaria. Micronesia and the Marshall Islands have experienced cholera recently.

The Australian government’s response to this situation appears to be far from benign. Angus Houston, chief of the defence force, has decreed that climate change is one of the new “security challenges” for the ADF to face. Mick Keelty, chief commissioner of the Australian Federal Police has called climate change the “greatest security threat” of the 21st century, even surpassing terrorism. He explicitly mentions “border security”, which at least partially refers to the ‘threat’ posed by climate refugees.

An ASPI (Australian Strategic Policy Institute) report on climate change, entitled ‘A Change in Climate for the Australian Defence Force’ highlights this.² Some suggestions outlined by the report include:

- ⓐ Defence being excluded from carbon-offset responsibility, other than to make profit by selling off land.
- ⓐ A general expansion in the capacity of the military, especially with regards to short-term surges, ‘border protection’ and logistical capability.
- ⓐ A continuation of the trend towards private contractors and NGO’s in the place of a formal military presence.

It concludes that climate change is “...making the world more dangerous. The ADF will feel the effects... The biggest challenge will be changing Defence behaviour and systems without reducing ADF operational capacity”.

There is already a large Australian police and military presence in the Pacific of over 20,000. This has been a deeply unpopular presence and has culminated in large-scale rioting in Honiara in 2006, and protests against neoliberal reforms in Vanuatu in 2002, PNG in 1995 and Tonga in 1995.

Kevin Rudd is firmly behind this, arguing that “there are better places to have combat troops than Iraq” and has described the Pacific as an “arc of instability” that needs to be a focal point for Australian militarism.

Given this context, rhetoric of humanitarian assistance, as spelled out in the Labor party’s *Our Drowning Neighbours* report – adopted as federal policy at the last election (a marked improvement over previous policy) – does little to assuage fears of environmental disaster.³

A LOOK AT THE EMERGING CLIMATE REFUGEE CRISIS

An International Struggle

A report tabled to a European Union summit in March stresses the emergence of the “environmental migrant”. It is anticipated that there will be millions of environmental refugees and that, at the least, Europe must expect “substantially increased migratory pressure”. The political situation in Europe has recently deteriorated around this, with the passage on June 18th of a ‘returns directive’ that sets conditions in which migrants can be detained and forcibly returned to a previous country of residence. Individuals will be detained for at least 6 months, plus a further year if they fail to co-operate. They will be kept in purpose-built detention centres, unless they suffer from “unforeseen heavy burdens”, in which case ordinary jails will do.

The grassroots direct action group London Rising Tide sums up the relationship between the global North and the South on the issue:

The vast majority of environmental refugees are created by the effects of climate change, and rising sea levels and expanding desertification will see millions more displaced individuals in the near future. The developed world is and has been almost entirely responsible for green gas emissions, that are the primary cause of climate change. However, it is the developing world that suffers the greatest consequences of climate change, while not having benefited from the technology that induced it. The time has come to address the ecological debt of the developed North.⁴

Scientists in Dhoaka, the capital of Bangladesh, predict that as many as 20 million people there will become climate refugees by 2030, unable to farm or survive on their flooded land. A substantial amount of migration has already started. In 1995, half of Bhola Island, Bangladesh’s largest island, was swallowed by rising sea levels, leaving 500,000 people homeless.

A 2007 Military Advisory Board reports (comprised of America’s top military officials) warned of the underlying consequences of massively increased migratory flows and side-by-side competition for water and food. It argues that this could plunge the world into nuclear conflict. “Humans fight when they outstrip the carrying capacity of their natural environment” it warns and argues that “the most combative societies are the ones that survive.”

The report further outlines some of the “potential military implications of climate change”. These include the collapse of the EU, civil war in China and, significantly, the takeover of US borders by the army to prevent refugee incursions from the Caribbean and Mexico.

Struggles So Far

There has been a wave of direct action, such as ‘No Borders Camps’ across Europe and North America over the last few years, similar in ethos and practice to a number of Climate Camps. These have targeted key infrastructure restricting migration, such as the enormous fence built to keep out illegal immigrants on the Mexico-North American border.

In Britain last year, connections between the climate movement and no borders advocates were particularly strong in some ways, despite fears that the choice of targeting Heathrow airport might signal something less than support for freedom of movement. Some workshops made the connection between the two issues and No Borders campers, who set up near Gatwick Airport a month later, extensively reused the infrastructure that set up the Heathrow camp.


The local No Borders group describes Gatwick, the site of a new detention centre, Brook House, as “a border in the middle of Britain. People arrive there everyday. People are forcibly deported from there everyday. It is a place where people are imprisoned for unlimited lengths of time without trial, where people are forced to hide underground and be invisible, where people are treated as criminals for the ‘crime’ of crossing the border...”.

Resistance on a more everyday level also occurs. Migration itself can be seen as an act of defiance, in the context of an international system that promotes enclosures and exclusion. Riots in the Harmondsworth detention centre near London occurred recently.

The No Borders network in Europe has eloquently commented upon how borders have permeated everyday life:

Borders are no longer material lines of fortification clearly identifiable by barbed wire or highly developed surveillance instruments... Under the pressure of increasing mobility and in view of the autonomy of migration, the drawing up of borders is becoming virtual and its repressive character is hardly generalisable any more: it could happen here as well as there, for this reason or another, and with a series of different consequences.

Ways Forward

Much of the focus in countering the problem of climate migration so far has been to push for reform to international agreements such as the Geneva convention, which currently fails to incorporate environmental refugees. This would constitute an important practical victory. But the vision of environmental calamity sketched briefly above is only ultimately preventable through a rejection of the ideology of borders, nation-states and an unconditional acceptance of freedom of movement for all. Resistance needs to be expanded from tight-knit ‘activist’ circles to something much broader and more everyday, and rooted in ideals of a better world. This means that climate change provides not just a crisis but an opportunity for a radically democratic transformation of society. 

Some links you can check out include:

noborders.org.uk
makebordershistory.org
noborderscamp.org
deletetheborder.org

Resisting the Changing Climate (and the root causes of it)

SOME CONTEMPORARY DIRECT ACTIONS AGAINST THE COAL INDUSTRY

SOURCEWATCH.ORG

There has been a rapidly growing increase in grassroots direct actions against critical infrastructure supporting the worldwide coal industry over the last few years. This industry provides an enormous source of global greenhouse emissions, and is generally supported by government and big business.

These series of histories attempts to recount some of these direct actions and provide material from which we can draw inspiration.

Resistance to coal-mining in Happy Valley in Aotearoa/New Zealand 2005-2008

In March of 2005 at Christchurch (New Zealand) there was a Save Happy Valley Coalition occupation of Solid Energy headquarters, the company that is planning to develop a new open-cast coal mine on the Happy Valley site. This will destroy the ecologically significant sub-alpine wetland ecosystem and substantially further Solid Energy's contribution to climate change, already greater than that resulting annually from the entire vehicle fleet (trucks, cars and buses) in New Zealand

As a consequence four activists locked on at the corporate headquarters of Solid Energy in protest of plans to build a coal mine in Happy Valley. Supporters hung banners and pitched tents on Solid Energy's property. The occupation came one day after Solid Energy sued three activists for defamation.

August 13, 2005: Save Happy Valley Coalition coal train blockade

In this case a group of 25 blockaded train tracks leading from Solid Energy's coal mines to the port of Lyttelton, New Zealand. Two people locked themselves to the tracks, while a third suspended himself from a tree 100 feet in the air, attached to a support rope that was tied to the tracks. Four Solid Energy trains stood on the tracks for five hours, while police cleared the blockade; the company claimed in court that the blockade cost them \$150,000. The three blockaders were arrested.

January 28, 2006: Occupation of Happy Valley

Over 75 people began an indefinite occupation of Happy Valley in an effort to halt development of the mine. Despite facing substantial police intimidation and surveillance, the occupation continues to this day.

June 7, 2005: Knoxville, USA: 45 persons disrupt the first stockholders meeting of the National Coal Corporation

Demonstrators with a marching band demanded that National Coal stop mountaintop removal mining and distributed informational flyers to shareholders. The sheriff and National Coal Corporation responded by assaulting protesters with pain compliance, choke holds and arrested three on bogus felony charges.

June 30, 2005: Richmond, Virginia, USA. Parents, grandparents and other residents of Coal River Valley occupy Massey Energy's headquarters

The residents demanded that Massey shut down its preparation plant, coal silo, 1,849-acre mountaintop removal coal mine and 2.8billion-gallon coal sludge dam – a toxic waste storage facility –

located feet from an elementary school, Marsh Fork Elementary, in Sundail, WV. Two were arrested.

July 16, 2005: First Nations Mt. Klappan mine blockade

Representatives of three British Columbia First Nations tribes – the Telegraph Elders, the Tl'abânot'în Clan, and the Iskut First Nations – blockaded a road leading to the Mount Klappan coalfields in northwestern British Columbia. Tl'abânot'în tribe members had notified the mine's owners, Fortune Minerals, that their mine infringed upon Tl'abânot'în Aboriginal Title and Rights, as the company had failed to consult adequately with the tribe; Fortune Minerals had ignored the tribe's appeals. The blockade was maintained for seven weeks.

August 15, 2005: Earth First!/Mountain Justice Summer blockade of Campbell County mountaintop removal sites

In this instance, a road was blockaded leading to National Coal's mountaintop removal coal mine in Campbell County, Tennessee. A car was stopped on the road, removed its tires, locked themselves to the vehicle, and erected a tripod with a person perched on top of it. National Coal workers arrived and threatened the protestors; one tried to ram the tripod with his car. Eleven people were arrested; the police treated those arrested brutally, endangering their safety.

June 5, 2006, and November 3, 2007: Rising Tide boat blockades of Newcastle port

In a Rising Tide Newcastle action, 70 people used small boats to blockade the port of Newcastle, Australia, which exports 80 million tons of coal each year. The protest aimed to oppose a planned expansion that would allow the port to export twice that amount. The action was repeated by 100 people on November 3, 2007: at this second action, participants attempted to block ships from entering the port for four hours, but police boats managed to escort three ships into the port. At one point, a police jetski rammed one woman's kayak, resulting in her hospitalization.

July 10, 2006: Earth First!/Rising Tide blockade of Clinch River Power Plant

Seventy-five persons blockaded an access bridge leading to American Electric Power's coal-fired Clinch River Power Plant near Carbo, Virginia. Several people stretched a rope across the bridge and suspended themselves off the bridge's edge; others waved a coal truck onto the bridge, blockaded it, deflated its tires, and locked themselves to the truck. The protestors demanded that Clinch River and other outdated coal plants be shut down, and that mountaintop removal coal mining be ended. After several hours in which coal trucks were unable to get into the plant, police agreed to make no arrests if the activists would dismantle their blockades.

August 31, 2006: Drax Power Plant blockade attempt

On August 31, 2006, around 600 people attempted to shut down the Drax coal-fired power plant in Selby, England, in a widely-publicized action. This was billed as "the battle of Drax." Several 'raiding parties' of people were arrested while trying to break through the perimeter fence. A larger crowd then pushed through police lines, and persons involved in this were arrested as

well. Thirty-eight were arrested throughout the day, in a massive show of force by police. Many power plant staff didn't show up for work, and others locked their doors.

December 12, 2006: Dooda Desert Rock blockade

Members of the Diné tribe blockaded a road leading to the planned site of the Desert Rock coal-fired power plant near Farmington, New Mexico, in protest of Sithe Global Energy's failure to consult with members of the Indigenous community. Ten persons with the group Dooda Desert Rock set up a campsite on the road. On December 22, under threat of arrest, the campsite was moved to a nearby location, and company vehicles were once again able to access the site. This second campsite has been continually occupied ever since. No arrests have been made.

March 16, 2007: Sit-in at West Virginia Gov. Manchin's office

Dozens of West Virginia community members – together with other supporters -occupied the office of West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin, in protest of the State Mine Board's approval of construction permits for a second coal silo near Marsh Fork Elementary School in Sundail, West Virginia. Community activists demanded that the state move the school; state officials have failed to comply thus far. Eleven people were arrested at this action, and many were treated roughly by police.

April 13, 2007: Blockade of Asheville Merrill Lynch

Two people calling themselves members of the "Climate Justice League" entered a Merrill Lynch building in Asheville, North Carolina. They then dumped a sack of coal in the lobby, and used a bicycle lock to blockade the door. The activists demanded that Merrill Lynch stop funding mountaintop removal coal mining companies such as Massey Energy. No arrests were reported.

August 13, 2007: Southeast Convergence for Climate Action occupation of Asheville Bank of America

One hundred and fifty persons from the Southeast Convergence for Climate Action occupied a Bank of America branch in Asheville, North Carolina. The protestors condemned Bank of America's ongoing funding of mountaintop removal mining in Appalachia. Two people locked themselves to the main lobby, while others blockaded the entrance to the branch, and delivered coal to the bank's managers. Five people were arrested.

September 3, 2007: Occupation of Loy Yang Power Plant

Activists occupied the coal-fired Loy Yang Power Station in Traralgon, Australia. Two people chained themselves to the coal conveyor belt, and others hung several large banners from the plant. The action took place several days before an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Sydney. Four people were arrested. A website, called Real Action on Climate Change (realactiononclimatechange.blogspot.com/), advocating direct action and anti-capitalist politics was produced to coincide with the occupation.

September 4, 2007: ASEN Occupation of Newcastle coal port

Twenty people involved with the Australian Student Environment Network occupied the coal port in Newcastle, Australia. Five people chained themselves to machinery at the Carrington Coal Terminal. This took place several days before an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Sydney, and was intended to demonstrate the complete inadequacy of APEC leader's climate policies and the PM John Howard's failure to limit Australian carbon emissions. Eleven people were arrested.

October 23, 2007: Rainforest Action Network banner hang at Bank of America corporate headquarters in Charlotte, NC

Here, four individuals scaled a 15 story crane across the street from Bank of America's corporate headquarters in downtown Charlotte. Reading "Bank of America: Funding Coal, Killing Communities" the banner drop referred to the bank's funding of mountaintop removal and new coal plant development. The banner drop disrupted traffic for several blocks until police and firefighters brought down the activists. All four were arrested.

November 15, 2007: Rainforest Action Network day of action against coal finance

Rainforest Action Network (RAN) activists – acting together with a variety of allies – staged dozens of actions against Citibank and Bank of America branches in cities across the county. This was in protest of those two companies' refusal to stop funding new coal power plant development and coal mountaintop removal mining. In San Francisco, RAN members attached caution tape – reading "Global Warming Crime Scene" – to dozens of Bank of America and Citibank ATMs, and held 'cough-ins' in several branches. Similar ATM closure actions were held in three other cities, while protests against the two companies were held in numerous other places.

November 15, 2007: Student blockade of Duke Energy headquarters

Two Warren Wilson College students – dressed as polar bears – chained themselves to the door of Duke Energy's headquarters in Charlotte, North Carolina, in protest of Duke's plans to build the Cliffside coal-fired power plant in western North Carolina. Several dozen people held a rally in support of their blockade, dressing as Santa Claus and elves and presenting a stocking full of coal to the company. The two students were arrested on charges of trespassing and disorderly conduct.

November 19, 2007: Rising Tide Kooragang Coal Terminal rail blockade

Several individuals blocked a train carrying coal to the Kooragang Island coal terminal – from which 80 million tons of coal are exported each year. One person chained himself to the train; he was later arrested. The protestors demanded that the Australian government begin to reduce Australia's reliance on coal.

December 5, 2007: Blockade of Ffos-y-fran coal mine construction site

About thirty local residents and supporters – many of whom were dressed as polar bears – occupied the Ffos-y-fran coal mine construction site in South Wales. Several polar bears chained themselves to bulldozers, while other people hung a banner from

one bulldozer criticizing Prime Minister Gordon Brown's ongoing support for coal power (the action was timed to coincide with the Bali climate change negotiations). Miller Argent, the company digging the mine, plans to remove 11 million tons of coal from the site. Several community groups have spoken out against the mine, which is being built about forty yards from several homes.

March 28, 2008: Mountain Justice Spring Break action at AMP-Ohio headquarters in Columbus

Activists participating in Mountain Justice Spring Break occupied the lobby of AMP-Ohio's headquarters in Columbus, Ohio, and demanded a meeting with AMP's CEO Marc Gerken. Several people stated their intention to conduct a sit-in in the office if their demands weren't met; about 40 people protested outside. After 30 minutes, Gerken met with the protestors, and agreed to their demands: to schedule a meeting of the Board of Trustees at which community members could present their concerns with AMP-Ohio's proposed coal-fired power plant in Meigs County, Ohio. No arrests were made.

April 1, 2008: Occupation of Cliffside construction site

As part of the Fossil Fools International Day of Action, a group of North Carolina activists with Rising Tide and Earth First! locked themselves to bulldozers to prevent the construction of the Cliffside coal-fired power plant in western North Carolina. Others roped off the site with "Global Warming Crime Scene" tape, and held banners protesting the construction of the plant. Police used pain compliance holds and tasers to force the activists to unlock themselves from the construction equipment. Eight people were arrested.

April 1, 2008: Rainforest Action Network blockade of NYC Citibank office

As part of the Fossil Fools International Day of Action, 25 "billionaires for coal" blockaded Citibank's Upper West Side headquarters in New York City. Two people chained themselves to the door, while others – dressed in tuxedos and top hats – drew attention to Citi's funding of new coal power plant development and mountaintop removal mining. Police cut through the chains locking the two billionaires to Citibank's door, and arrested them.

April 1, 2008: Occupation of Ffos-y-fran coal mine construction site

As part of the Fossil Fools International Day of Action, dozens of local residents and activists from a variety of environmental groups occupied the Ffos-y-fran coal mine construction site in South Wales. Protestors arrived at 6 am, scaled a coal washery and dropped a 100-foot banner, took over construction machinery, and locked themselves to the front gate, shutting down major work at the site for the day. Police made two arrests, and the other activists left without incident.

April 1, 2008: Eastside Climate Action blockade of E.ON headquarters in Nottingham

Again as part of Fossil Fools Day, 30 individuals with Eastside Climate Action blockaded the front entrance of E.ON's headquarters in Nottingham, England. Two people used U-locks to lock themselves to the front door, while others blockaded the

back entrance; other protestors poured green paint on themselves, to simulate E.ON's "greenwashing". The action was in protest of E.ON's plans to build the Kingsnorth coal-fired power plant – the first new coal plant in the UK in 50 years. Police made two arrests, and the building was shut down for the day.

April 3, 2008: Rising Tide occupation of Aberthaw Power Station

Members of Bristol Rising Tide occupied the Aberthaw coal-fired power plant in South Wales. Activists entered the facility, chained themselves to conveyor belts, and occupied several buildings; others locked themselves to the facility's front gates. The action was in solidarity with the opposition to the Ffos-y-Fran mine construction site in South Wales; coal from Ffos-y-Fran will be used to fuel Aberthaw for 17 years. Police arrested 11 people.


April 15, 2008: Blue Ridge Earth First! blockade Dominion Power's headquarters

Fifteen persons blockaded the entrance of Dominion Power's headquarters to protest Dominion's planned coal-fired power plant in Wise County. Three activists locked on to trashcans filled with concrete and blocked both lanes of the only road in and out of the office complex. The blockade, established just before 8 am, held for almost two hours and backed up traffic almost a mile. Those locked-on were eventually dragged to the side of the road by police and were given traffic citations for impeding the flow of traffic and released without arrest.

April 19, 2008: Rising Tide blockade of coal terminal construction site in New South Wales

Fifty people associated with Rising Tide Australia stormed the gates of a Newcastle coal terminal construction site in Newcastle, New South Wales. About 20 of the protestors locked arms once inside, and refused to leave. Rising Tide activists were protesting the planned expansion of the Newcastle coal terminal, which will allow the region to export more coal. 16 people were arrested.

June 13th 2008: The Great Coal Train Robbery

Twenty-nine people meticulously planned a hijack of a coal train headed to 'Drax the Destroyer', the largest coal-fired power station in Britain. At 12pm on Friday evening the last three coal train blockaders where evicted from the bridge above the blockaded train. The occupation had lasted 16 hours and occupiers had shovelled around 30 tons of coal onto the tracks. 20 people where cut out of arm tube lock-ons and 9 were taken off the bridge. All 29 were arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit Unlawful and malicious obstruction of trains. 

The above is mostly edited from Source Watch. For full information, see sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Nonviolent_direct_actions_against_coal, Links to groups involved in these actions include: earthfirst.org.uk, risingtidenorthamerica.org, asen.org.au, savehappyvalleycoalition.org.nz

Electricity privatisation

AN ATTACK ON WORKERS, AN ATTACK ON THE CLIMATE

ANONYMOUS

Emma and Costa's plans to privatise the state electricity industry in NSW constitutes a savage attack on both workers and the climate. Despite overwhelming public opposition (70% of people oppose electricity privatisation, regardless of a \$380,000 advertising campaign) and a sustained response from unions and ALP branches, (involving lobbying, mass rallies and some strike action) they have expressed determination to forge on with the plans. It currently looks like a deal has been brokered with the Liberals, and the privatisation will be passed in the parliamentary sitting in September.

Privatisation would be an unmitigated disaster for real action on climate change. The plan would mean handing control of NSW's biggest source of domestic greenhouse pollution – coal-fired power – to profit-driven corporations.

⊗ A privately-owned electricity industry will be driven to sell more energy in order to increase profits. Helping consumers to reduce energy use will just get in the way of the corporate bottom line. NSW's coal-fired power stations already emit more than 55 million tonnes of CO₂ each year and comprise over 35% of the state's greenhouse gas emissions. Privatisation will see emissions soar, further resulting in dangerous levels of climate change.

⊗ The prime argument for privatisation is to attract private investment in the construction of a new base-load coal-fired power station for NSW. This ignores the reality that we need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the face of dangerous climate change. This also neglects the fact that reducing energy demand will not only erase the need for more power stations, but that this is also necessary in the face of climate change. It is only the current perspective of the NSW government that is delaying the implementation of demand-reduction measures like phasing out off-peak hot water systems.

Public ownership is essential for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and shift to renewable energy. It should be also recognised that privatisation is a clear attack on everyday workers.

⊗ Electricity prices will almost certainly increase to feed corporate profit margins. Currently NSW has prices that are roughly 30% lower than Victoria and South Australia, which have privatised electricity industries. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal has already decided to raise prices for the next 3 years, in anticipation of a more expensive privatised market. Instead, we need to press for cheap, affordable electricity as a basic right.

⊗ Privatisation would be a further step away from the shift we need to renewable energy sources in the fight against climate change. Currently the Federal and State governments subsidise the fossil fuel industry to the tune of \$9 billion/year, while renewables receive a fraction of this support. A privatised power industry will hardly move to invest in renewable energy when their profit margins are made up by maximum use of cheap, government-subsidised coal.

⊗ The experience of privatisation in Victoria has been the devastation of communities in areas like the LaTrobe valley region, where most of Victoria's power stations are based. Job losses, homelessness, domestic violence and welfare rates have increased drastically. A similar situation can be expected in NSW.

⊗ Transnational corporations are likely to take advantage of the situation. Giant retail energy suppliers AGL Energy and Origin Energy, which own energy assets in other states, have been arguing for years that NSW power facilities should be sold off. Due to their size, such corporations are exceptionally well placed to pressure governments and form energy cartels. They can then easily disregard employees, cut jobs and set high prices.

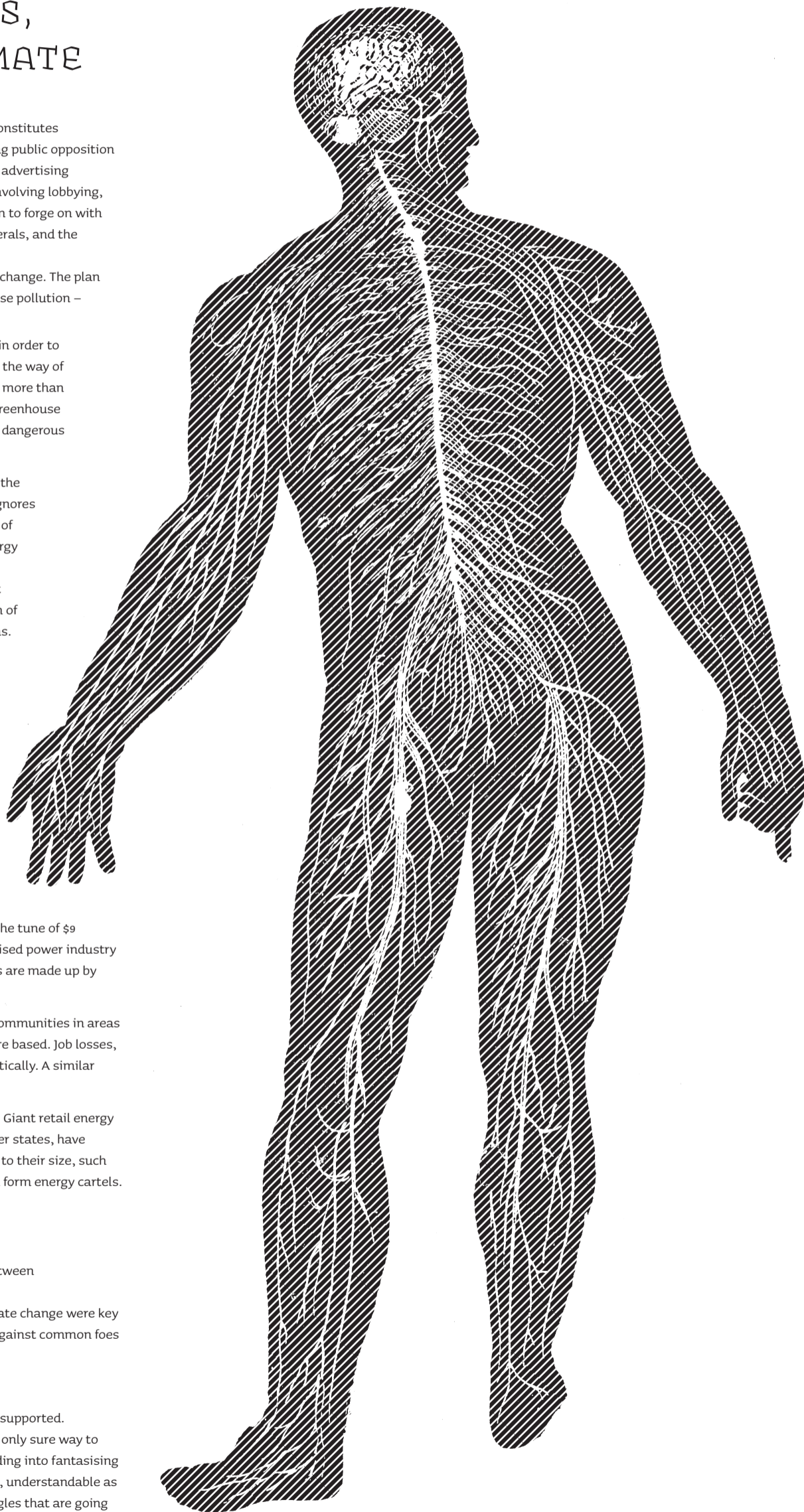
Building alliances

This context offers a huge amount of scope for tangible alliance building between environmentalists, radicals and union members.

Both the union campaigns against WorkChoices and concerns about climate change were key reasons for the demise of the Howard government. Together, we can work against common foes both now and in the future.

Ways to Win

The union campaign seems to have had some success so far, and should be supported. Sustained militancy, involving direct action and rolling strikes, remains the only sure way to beat the plans however. Advocacy of militancy should try and avoid descending into fantasising about the possibility of a 'general strike' and a mass working class uprising, understandable as this may be. Rather those wanting to be involved should be porous to struggles that are going on, remaining receptive to new ideas, while at the same time always trying to push a harder and more militant political perspective. 🐺



What's in a limit?

CAPITAL, CRISIS & CLIMATE CHANGE

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For movements climate change represents the possible emergence of a new focus, as shown by the buzz in public opinion and events such as the 2007 climate camp in the UK. This is being repeated in Germany, the US, Australia and elsewhere in 2008. From the perspective of governance and capital, climate change is becoming a key element in the management of the global system, both at the level of decision-making and of political legitimisation, not to mention new market niches.

In the space between movements and governance, it exemplifies the ambiguity and complexity of the question of 'winning'. If the whole emphasis of environmental activism over the last few years has been on raising awareness about the threat of climate change, then 2007 must be seen as the year when 'we won'. The issue is now everywhere, and everyone, politicians and big companies included, talk about it.

“FOR CAPITAL, LIMITS ARE PECULIAR. CAPITAL HAS AN INTERNAL DYNAMIC OF EXPANSION WHICH MUST BE SATISFIED, SO LIMITS MUST BE IGNORED, SUBVERTED, SIDE-STEPPED, OR OTHERWISE OVERCOME.”

Yet it is precisely this victory that could prove to be a defeat. Global concern about climate change must be given a new form if it is to actually affect the state of things (that is, radically reduce carbon dioxide emissions in a short time-frame). In part this means constructing a new story, one that can stop the issue being turned into a huge profit-making opportunity for capital. Without this, it's easy to see climate change being used to unleash a new regime of austerity on the governed, and to excuse measures like increased 'security' and border controls as geopolitical tensions rise. But if the fight is to be more than a public opinion dispute – one where we're always on the back foot – then it has to also take place at the level of production and social reproduction.

It's common to think of climate change as a technical-environmental problem that calls for a technical-environmental solution: the problem is too much carbon dioxide going into the atmosphere, so the solution is to reduce these emissions to 'acceptable' levels via technological innovation, government legislation and the public 'doing their bit'. The difficulty with this is twofold. First, almost everything we do is bound-up with fossil fuel use and the resulting CO₂ emissions: from travelling to work to phoning-in sick so we can watch DVDs. Second, the cuts required (some 60–90% before 2050) are so large they require sweeping changes, and cannot be solved simply by the world's environment ministries getting together.

An alternative way to understand climate change is in terms of metabolism. The Earth's metabolism, its ability to process carbon, runs at a slower speed than the metabolism of contemporary capitalism. The economy is on a collision course with the biosphere. Here we are talking about a limit to the expansion of capital and a possible crisis of accumulation.

For capital, limits are peculiar. Capital has an internal dynamic of expansion which must be satisfied, so limits must be ignored, subverted, side-stepped, or otherwise overcome. And the secret of capital's longevity lies precisely in its ability to use limits and the crises they engender as a launch-pad for a new round of accumulation and expansion. A good example of this dynamism is the emergence of the so-called Keynesian/Fordist phase of capitalism. The high levels of organisation of the industrial working class in the first half of the 20th century – not only the Russian Revolution but intense struggle worldwide – appeared as a limit to the expansion of capitalism, threatening not only to halt accumulation but to destroy the system once and for all. The welfare state was a direct result of these struggles, but it was also a way of neutralising this threat. And capital's greatest feat was to strike a productivity deal which actually transformed this limit into the engine of a new phase of capitalist growth.

What does an analysis of the generic response of capitalism to limit-crises tell us about likely responses to climate change? There's no doubt that climate change is a limit which presents as many opportunities as dangers to capital. Many are jumping at the chance to take this new limit, this potential crisis, and turn it into a new motor for accumulation. Look at the clamour for buying and selling rights to emit carbon: carbon credits, carbon offsets, Tradable Emissions Quotas, carbon futures. And then there's green consumerism: green cars, solar panels, green home make-overs. Could climate change inject new dynamism into the global economy?

Are we looking at a new, 'green' phase of capitalism, where the atmosphere is opened up like cyberspace was in the '90s? It's possible. And it's also obvious that it's unlikely to cut carbon emissions radically!

A capitalist solution will look, well, like capitalism. Just as the effects of climate change are uneven, having a far more devastating effect on the poor – look at the impact of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, or the east Asian tsunami on Aceh – so almost all the current crop of solutions will also work to reinforce existing hierarchies. Most 'green' taxes will increase the price of basic goods and services, limiting mobility and access to food and heating. Access to travel, food and comfort all tied in to possession of money? No news there, of course: just the rules of the game as we know it. Except now they will be justified on the grounds that they're necessary in order to save the planet. Expect 'green capitalism' to be a new regime of austerity and discipline, imposed on the poor more than on the rich in the name of the 'greater good'. 🐕

Endnotes

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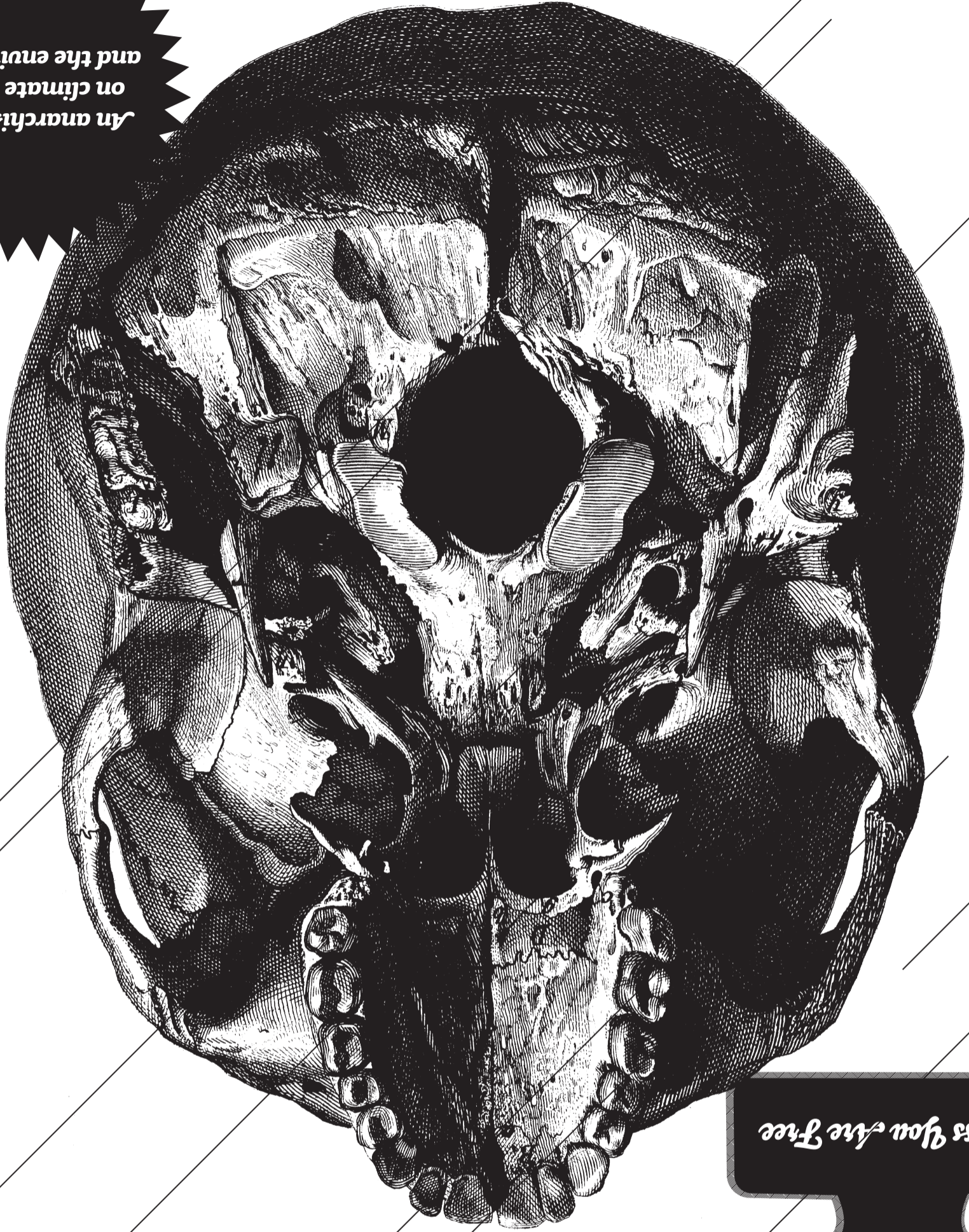
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*An anarchist paper
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