

would speed renewable deployment.

Expanding and improving public transit: transit-oriented development and walkable neighborhoods can reduce energy use and enhance safety and fair access to jobs and recreation.

Diverse forms of economic democracy: organize worker and consumer cooperatives, credit unions, community-supported agriculture and cohousing. Local and state public enterprises can serve common needs accountably, for example public broadband internet, public banks and loan funds, land trusts and green banks to finance the initial costs of renewable energy.

Improving public education: guarantee quality education for everyone from universal pre-K and afterschool programs to graduate school and lifetime continuing education. Science education should highlight the challenges of this century, applying the progressive principle of learning by doing. Students can learn biology by growing food, and learn physics and chemistry by making renewable energy and recycling systems.

Grass roots campaigns to stop hazardous technologies: fighting pipelines, hydrofracking and other fossil fuel infrastructure, toxic dumps, incinerators and nuclear plants can all be starting points for coalitions to demand systemic alternatives. "Not In My Back Yard" attitudes can be reactionary and divisive when opposing socially progressive facilities like drug treatment centers, but are the beginning of democratic accountability when resisting what shouldn't be in anyone's backyard.

Divestiture campaigns against fossil fuel corporations: switch investments to renewable energy. Energy corporations claim as assets trillions of dollars in coal, oil and gas reserves which if burned would push the atmosphere past the point of no return. We must avoid runaway positive feedbacks inexorably melting the icecaps and inundating coasts for miles inland, but

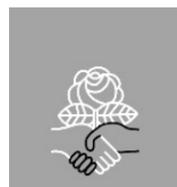
causing catastrophic floods, droughts and crop failures long before.

Permanently protecting vital ecosystems as commons: the natural world should be accessible for public enjoyment by all, but not for commercial exploitation. Private enterprise has already cut down 97% of the old growth forest in the United States--practice sustainable forestry there.

Reversing subsidies to corporate agribusiness and junk food: use extension programs to promote sustainable agriculture. End food deserts and the hustling of junk food to children, to improve the health of people and the planet.

Public financing of political campaigns: concentrated private wealth should not buy elections, drowning out the voice of the 99% in making public policy. Instead enable leadership of, by and for the people to set the agenda, as part of a broader progressive movement to expand voting rights and democracy.

When we work in local protest and organizing movements, we strive to unite diverse communities, to promote a global perspective and democratic participation, and an understanding of the need for systemic change. The next decade may be the last chance to turn the ship of state around before it hits an iceberg calved off from a melting polar glacier. Martin Luther King warned, "Over the bleached bones and jumbled residues of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words 'too late.'" If you agree on the need to work actively to transform society on the basis of sustainability, democracy and justice, JOIN US.



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CAPITALISM, SOCIALISM & SUSTAINABILITY



HOW POLITICS AND THE ECONOMY ARE RUINING THE ENVIRONMENT & WHAT WE NEED TO DO TO CHANGE IT

By Mark Schaeffer

The global environmental crisis, together with growing inequality, is the great challenge of the 21st Century. Fossil fuel combustion and deforestation are destabilizing the global climate, and extreme weather events are accelerating. Renewable resources such as topsoil and groundwater are being consumed far faster than they regenerate. Species and entire habitats are disappearing at a pace unseen since the extinction of the dinosaurs. Even the oceans are not immune to oil spills, fertilizer runoff, overfishing, acidification and the poisoning of coral reefs.

It is already clear that business as usual is leading toward catastrophic collapse of the natural systems that billions of people depend upon for their livelihood. Strategic planners at the Pentagon recognize that climate disruption, causing crop failures and mass migrations fueling violent conflict, threatens US security. Most at risk are the struggling peoples of the global South, who are least responsible for greenhouse emissions.

These problems are not accidental, but are symptoms of fundamental pathologies in our systems of production and consumption. The logic of private profit is to clearcut every tree and move on to the next forest. Greenhouse gas concentrations will increase as long as our economy depends on coal, oil and natural gas, controlled by some of the wealthiest corporations

in history. Converting the whole economy to recycle materials and use renewable energy, abandoning fossil fuel investments, would impose huge costs on corporate bottom lines. Under capitalism, decisions on what and how to produce are made by corporate executives maximizing profits by increasing sales and decreasing costs to the private firm. Working people and nature are exploited directly and indirectly as external costs are imposed on them. Controls on corporate excess, through regulation,

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labor organizing or mass boycotts can limit abuse, but tend to be too little, too late as long as the major decisions are made behind the closed doors of corporate boardrooms.

Changes in individual behavior and technology can buy time but are insufficient to save the biosphere as long as "free enterprise" allows huge corporations to continue polluting. The entire production system must be transformed; we must change the way society decides to allocate resources in the interdependent web of the world economy. Securing an environmentally

sustainable production system will require fundamental political and social change on every scale from household to planet.

Human and environmental needs can be brought into sustainable balance only if production takes account of all environmental consequences. This requires conscious planning and foresight. But who will do the planning? Scientific expertise is clearly necessary, but scientists and experts brought us the technologies that are threatening the planet.

For all the impacts to be taken into account, the people affected must participate in planning and decision-making, not just experts and authorities. (The interests of future generations and fellow creatures can only be defended by people in the

"System change can only be achieved by uniting movements for social justice, peace, and human rights"

present with values of empathy and solidarity.) Polls show that people do care and are willing to pay substantial short-term costs for the long-term benefits of a healthy environment--public concern made possible laws to reduce pollution. But too often people lack the knowledge and power to make fundamental change.

A NEW SYSTEM AND HOW TO GET THERE

A sustainable economy requires a system in which production is democratically planned and controlled by well-informed people. The environment can be sustained by collective stewardship as our material needs are securely met by a fair distribution and sharing of resources, and our psychological needs are met through an ethos fostering cooperation rather than acquisition and competition. We call such a

system democratic socialism.

A socialist society can be achieved by nonviolent struggles, continuing over generations, to expand democratic rights, institutions, and social relations within a mainly capitalist system, until the democratic processes and structures come to predominate. These centuries-long struggles continue in our time on many fronts--political, economic, social and cultural.

Popular struggles have achieved partial socialization on many levels. Local public enterprises like sanitation were won by "sewer socialist" mayors; generations of labor organizing lifted millions from poverty to comfort. We share public parks designed by 19thC. Christian socialist and abolitionist Frederic Law Olmsted. Many benefit from islands of direct democracy like food coops and worker managed businesses. National programs from Social Security and Medicare to EPA and OSHA improve our lives, as do such international agreements as the Ozone Treaty and Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All these embody the principle of production for common need, not private profit.

System change can only be achieved by uniting movements for social justice, peace, and human rights as well as environmental justice and stewardship. So we work toward racial and gender equality, civil rights and liberties, labor organizing, universal health care, quality education and child care for all, free higher education, livable communities, full employment at living wages to abolish poverty, and the progressive redistribution of wealth.

Each of these social movements, however just the cause, can make gains but lacks the strength by itself to prevail fully over concentrated wealth and power. We therefore work for a strategic coalition of all these movements, based on their common interests and shared values, to unite them into a sustainable democratic majority.

Within these movements we emphasize issues

that can help build such coalitions. Environmentalists are baited as "elitists who don't care about workers' jobs and prefer trees to people," by the same corporations that exploit and poison both workers and trees. The divide-and-rule strategy the 1% use to stay on top can be met by choosing intersectional issues appealing both to environmental activists and to the constituencies for social and economic justice, and by choosing strategies that can change the balance of power from corporate plutocrats to the vast majority.



Some intersectional issues that can build solidarity across movements, shift power from corporations to the 99% and advance the transition to a just and sustainable world include:

Green Jobs: replacing transportation, building and electric generation systems to use renewable energy can create millions of domestic jobs. Those should be living wage, union jobs hiring and training disadvantaged workers. Publicly owned or cooperative utilities would be more accountable, affordable and sustainable.

Fair trade: we need rules for the world economy that reverse the priorities of so-called "free trade" agreements which privilege the property rights of corporations, investors and speculators over human rights and nature. Environmental health, economic justice, sustainable development and political democracy should prevail over commercial values wherever they conflict.

Uprooting environmental racism: the worst hazards are imposed on minority and low-income communities. Workers of color are typically given the dirtiest jobs; vulnerable people are denied a voice in decisions that affect their health and survival. Toxic production will end only when all communities have the power to defend themselves against becoming dumping grounds.

Reproductive choice and family planning: women have a right to control their fertility, in both developed and developing countries; education of girls is also vital. Unmet demand for birth control is about equal to net global population growth.

Healthy workplace environments: pollutants typically originate in factories where workers are often exposed to high levels of toxic substances, serving as human guinea pigs. Workers are fighting for the right to know and decide what hazards they are exposed to, and the right to refuse unsafe work. When polluting plants are shut, workers must be guaranteed a fair livelihood.

Reducing the working week and year: more free time would facilitate full employment and reduce stress. As Juliet Schor points out, people are happier in societies where wealth and income are more equal and productivity gains are taken as leisure time for recreation and social interaction rather than throughput of disposable stuff. Products should be designed for durability, not planned obsolescence. In Bill McKibben's words, "we need not more belongings, but more belonging."

Democratic local and regional planning: we can use public visioning and participatory budgeting to invest in existing communities, instead of subsidizing developers to destroy communities and landscapes by suburban sprawl. We can increase public parks and community gardens, use intensive recycling, and require strict energy standards for new buildings. Programs enabling households to install efficiency retrofits and solar systems and "pay as you save" on utility bills