

The Socialist Solution to the Ecology Crisis

Capitalism's Toll on the Environment

In the four decades between the end of WWII and the present, we have witnessed the most dramatic destruction of the earth's ecosphere imaginable. Just surveying the daily papers one finds the incidence and forms of environmental destruction to be mind-boggling. Transportation accidents involving toxic spills go on almost daily, exposing transportation workers, users of the highways and local communities to deadly materials. Raw sewage spills are common from coast to coast, closing beaches and destroying waterways as well as contaminating local fishing holes. Soil erosion, pesticide poisoning of the ground water supplies, mothers' milk containing more chemicals than cows' milk, oil spills in the Gulf, off Peru, off Galveston, in Alaska, in Australia — the list goes on and on.

In response, every shade of the political spectrum is frantically coloring itself green. Political opportunists in the twin parties of the ruling elite, from Jesse Jackson to George Bush himself, have rushed to jump on the bandwagon to prove their "green" credentials. Suddenly reactionaries like Bush have discovered overnight that they have been greens all along! But the one thing that all these politicians share in common is their assertion that the environmental crisis can be solved within the framework of the capitalist system. Some of these cronies have gone so far as to suggest that individual capitalists have begun to compete with each other for the "green market" as they spend millions to promote their gasoline, hairsprays and food-stuffs as "eco-friendly".

In reality, there is no capitalist solution to the environmental crisis. The powerful multinational corporations which are the heart of the US capitalist economy (and which play a decisive role in the state) depend for their very existence on the continuation of highly dangerous processes and unchecked pollution; this includes, the oil and petrochemical industries, the utility companies, the food and drink producers, and the computer corporations.

During the post-war economic boom new techniques of production were introduced and new demands made on agriculture and raw materials. The environmental dangers unleashed by these developments were first "exposed" in a popular manner by environmentalists such as Barry Com-

moner and Rachel Carson (*Silent Spring*) in the 1960's. Commoner popularized the view of that the earth's surface is an "eco-sphere", subject to constant assault by the overfarming and depletion of the topsoil, destruction of the tropical rainforests, thinning of the ozone layer, overproduction of atmospheric carbon dioxide, and so forth.

The environmental dangers which humanity now faces come on three main fronts:

- 1) The environment is being destroyed and poisoned by the uncontrolled uses of various materials and production processes.
- 2) The environment's ability to regenerate itself is threatened, no longer just locally but regionally and even globally.
- 3) Human society suffers from all sorts of social ills due to the effects of the first two dangers.

The first major threat to the environment comes from the various forms of pollution. In addition to any long term effect on the global ecosystem, these cause immediate and disastrous damage to human beings and their surroundings. The most notorious of these is radioactive emissions from nuclear power stations and waste reprocessing plants. The horrific disasters at Three Mile Island (US) and Chernobyl (USSR) are just the tip of the iceberg. Not only have power and waste disposal workers in the nuclear industry been repeatedly exposed to radiation, but "clusters" of cancer cases around these sites suggest long term damage to the surrounding communities. It is not only nuclear power, however, which can fatally pollute. The accident at Bhopal chemical works caused 3,300 deaths and 200,000 injuries. In Africa, millions of people have starved to death not just because of so-called "natural disasters", but because of the destruction of the rural environment by imperialist agribusiness (General Foods, Procter & Gamble, Del Monte, etc.), and because of the dumping of toxics into the rivers, lakes and streams. In Africa and Asia the topsoil has been seriously depleted or poisoned by imperialism's use of harmful fertilizers and pesticides and its use of exploitative farming methods ("The Green Revolution" etc.). The chemical poisoning does not, of course, skip the center of imperialism. In the Central Valley of California, for ex-

ample, which is a center for large scale spraying of chemicals on fruits and vegetables, many children are dying from cancer at young ages!

Why Capitalism is Responsible for the Disasters

Environmentalists and leaders of the "green" movement are quick to point out that the environment is a "human" question which stands above and outside the question of class struggle. They claim that the environmental crisis can be resolved on the terrain of capitalism. They say that capitalism can be pushed to be "responsible". They point to the evidence of individual capitalists competing with each other for the "green market" etc.

What they avoid, however, is the fundamental features of the capitalist system. There is no "environmental question" existing separately from class politics. A capitalist solution to the environmental crisis is not possible, if for no other reason that the big US corporations, which are responsible for most of the pollution, have a major and often decisive say in the running of the capitalist state itself. The environmental crisis is a class question. The working class, and the working class alone, has the material interest and the social strength to put an end to the environmental crisis which confronts us all. Why? Because this entire crisis is rooted in the functioning of capitalism itself.

The capitalists who own the means of production are incapable of defending the environment and protecting humanity from the effects of environmental damage. *This is because of capitalism's commitment to production for the sake of profit.* Individual capitalists decide what to produce and how to produce it, not with the good of humanity in mind, but the good of their own balance sheets. The result of this is what Marx aptly described as "the anarchy of production". The social mechanism under capitalism which decides the relationship between production and human need is the much vaunted "market". In the market need is measured not in terms of hunger, sickness, and pollution but in terms of profit. Individual capitalists have no reason whatever to avoid the pollution of the environment if this impedes the production of profit.

Regenerative Capacity and Climatic Calamity

As long as the human race has labored to provide itself with the means to live, it has altered and in some ways destroyed its natural environment. Every new discovery has had unforeseen consequences as well as those which were intended.

From the discovery of fire to the discovery of nuclear fission, developments in technique have improved humanity's ability to meet its needs. At the same time, unseparated from class society, the technological advances have enhanced human ability to damage itself and its environment. All forms of class society, each in turn, have strangled the potential of scientific and technological advances to benefit humanity as a whole. Society, organized to generate surplus wealth for a few, has been unable to prevent the destruction of natural resources in the pursuit of that

wealth. Indeed it is one of capitalism's contradictions that it devours the very factors which give it its life, nature and labor power.

The threat to the regenerative capacity of the environment is nothing new. Long before the 20th century the development of humanity led to the destruction of entire species through intensive hunting or the destruction of vital aspects of their environment. In every epoch there are examples of the destruction of forest to make way for agriculture, resulting in the destruction of regional ecosystems. With the advent of capitalism, however, the same degree of destruction which took ancient societies centuries to achieve *was accomplished by capital in decades.* The intensification of farming in the US Midwest, for example, first by impoverished sharecroppers and later by large scale agricultural capital, created the infamous "dust bowl".

Imperialism has created the potential to destroy the whole global environment. It is now accepted by almost everyone short of the Bush Administration that the excessive burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil and natural gas) and the destruction of the rainforests have led to an increase in the proportion of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, giving rise to the so-called "greenhouse effect". Scientists claim that the amount of carbon dioxide is rising by 0.4% every year. This gas traps heat from the sun, thus acting like the glass in a greenhouse. The more carbon dioxide in the air, the greater the increase in the earth's average temperature.



Tom Murray/The Chronicle

Scientists predict this process will result in climatic changes with drastic results. Some speculate that increased temperatures may drive the North American corn belt far to the north where the highly acidic soil cannot sustain efficient grain production. Others warn of the same effect setting off the melting of the polar ice caps and the flooding of coastal areas, displacing and starving millions who live in those areas. Still others point to the possibility of this crisis accelerating the coming of the next ice age. What is clear is that, regardless which group of scientists is correct, without drastic steps being taken now, we face disasters of unknown proportions in the coming decades.

Besides the greenhouse effect, the depletion of the protective ozone layer has been clearly identified as a product of chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) use. The recent Montreal Protocol agreement to cut production of CFC's, reached by the advanced industrial nations, has been rightly viewed by environmentalists as too little much too late. Increased instances of melanoma (skin cancer) in Australia are being linked to the drop in ozone levels over Antarctica where levels dropped 40% between 1977 and 1985. The problem is not restricted to the Southern hemisphere. The Nimbus 7 satellite recorded a drop over the whole of the earth's surface of 2.5% between 1978 and 1985. Before there was an ozone layer life could not exist on the planet's surface. If it is depleted, life on earth will be relegated to the sea and

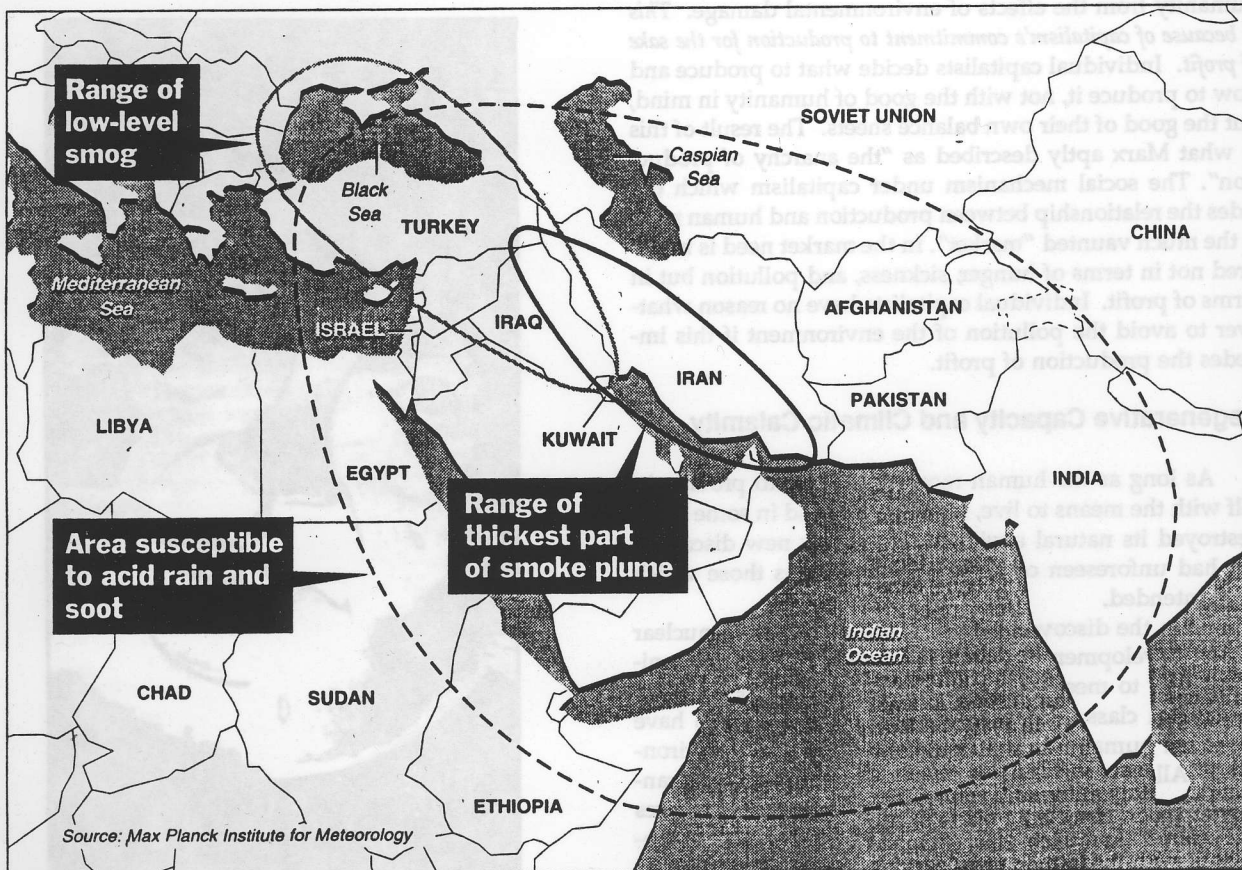
possibly underground!

It is becoming increasingly clear that capitalism is incapable, either politically or economically, of deploying the vast resources necessary to address problems like water and air pollution, the greenhouse effect and the hole in the ozone layer. This would require massive amounts of state funding, which the capitalists regard *as so much wasted profit*. It would need planning and international cooperation on a scale which, necessarily, is impossible for capitalism.

Imperialism and the Global Ecology

Capitalism, as the highest form of class society based on private property, has witnessed the greatest quantitative and qualitative development of the productive forces, based on the application of science and technology. This development has not been an even and continuous process due to capitalism's contradictory laws of motion. Capitalist development is motivated, not by planned satisfaction of human need, but by the profit motive of the capitalist class.

The imperialist epoch has qualitatively intensified this feature of class society. With the creation of a world economy and global division of labor it has produced environmental problems on an international scale, which capitalism, divided up and strangled by national capitalist states is unable to address. The same capitalist states which can



Winds have spread smog past the Black Sea. An even wider area is susceptible to soot and acid rain.

regulate the activities of individual capitalists at home are fiercely competitive on a world scale. Even where agreements exist between imperialist countries, they are flouted. For example, the agreements between the US and Canada to limit acid rain stemming from industrial production in the US have done little to arrest the problem.

Few such agreements exist between the imperialist countries and the semi-colonies. Imperialism has exploited the natural resources of the third world regardless of the environmental cost. It not only dumps massive amounts of toxics in the semi-colonies, but also palms off on their populations inadequate or dangerous medicines, pesticides (DDT) and foodstuffs (Nestle's formula) rejected under the environmental and health laws of the western countries. We see this in microcosm with the dumping of radioactive wastes by utility corporations on Native American reservations in the US, e.g., Navajo settlements in Arizona. The short-sighted "green" opposition to toxic dumping in the good ol' US of A has also served to increase the export of garbage and toxic waste from the imperialist heartland to the third world. The same kind of market logic applies to the utilization of cheaper, under-refined petrochemical fuels in countries like Mexico, which now is the home of the most polluted city in the world (Mexico City). But there is no need to travel from the US as far as Mexico City. Just south of the US border, the levels of toxics in the groundwater, ocean and waterways of Tijuana, Mex., are markedly higher than those in San Diego, a stone's throw away.

Today, the "New World Order" strategy of spreading the "blessing" of free markets far and wide is opening up an environmental nightmare. In Latin America and Asia the massive foreign debts owed by third world countries to the I.M.F. and the World Bank (i.e., imperialism!) has led to wholesale slashing of the rainforests, in order to create cash crops and meat exports with which these countries can begin to pay off the interest on their debts. (This is by no means limited to Brazil and Indonesia. Many forest areas in the Pacific Northwest have been "harvested" to cover losses in the junk bond market.)

The recent imperialist war against Iraq has demonstrated the environmental consequences of battles over oil fields. An oil slick has soiled much of the Persian Gulf, while overhead the soot from hundreds of burning oil wells deposits its toxic residue over much of the Middle East, ranging from Africa to the Indian subcontinent. Not so strangely the reports on this tragedy are not being followed up in our local or national media. We hear that over 300 wells are still burning, but little on the consequences. During the war, imperialism attempted to use the environmental destruction as a propaganda weapon against the "Arab Hitler", Saddam Hussein — that is, until it became clear that a great deal of the pollution was produced by the ("smart") missiles and bombs fired by US imperialism and company, which went wildly off target!

In reality, imperialism, whether it is American, British, German or Japanese, is not merely unwilling to solve the environmental crisis of the third world. Its very existence relies on the continued exploitation of the resources of the

semi-colonies, as rapaciously and profitably as possible, no matter what the environmental cost.

Profit\$: The Real "Green" Program of Capitalism

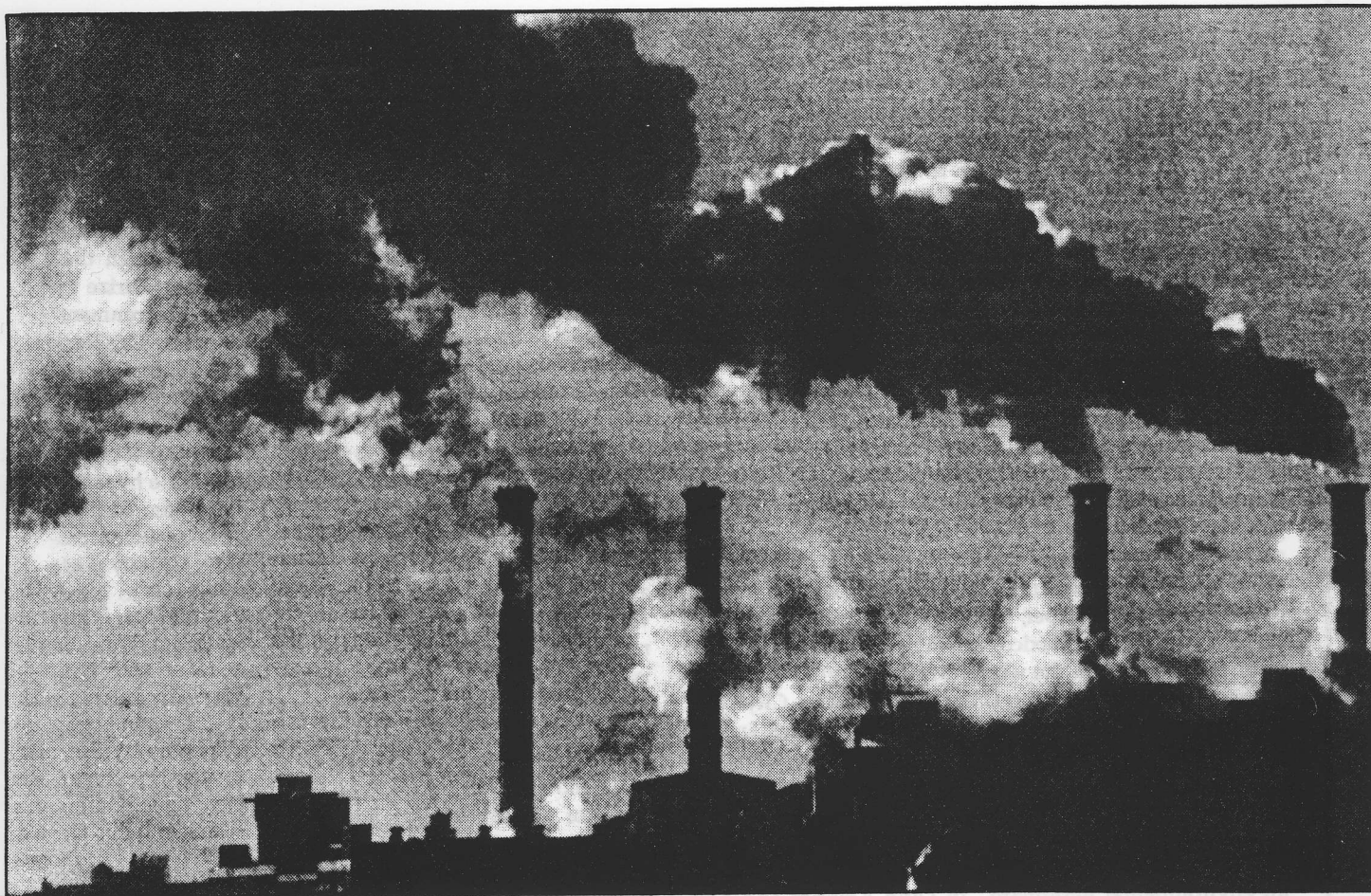
Like all ruling class strategies, the capitalists' approach to the environment is based on maintaining control of the means of production while strengthening the (bourgeois) ideology, to make capitalism acceptable. Through their "public relations" techniques, they seek to popularize the "50 Things You Can Do To Clean Up The Environment" approach of blaming the consumer for the crisis. This feeds directly into the reformist illusion that if we all do our part, on an individualist basis (from recycling cans to composting), the problem can be controlled.

This illusory approach to saving the environment opens the path for big business to take advantage of the hype and parade their "green concern". In so doing these corporations obscure the heart of the problem: the capitalist production process. For example, MacDonald's recently made a big to-do about their change from styrofoam to paper wrapping for their food products. This sounds great and makes "Micky D's" look clean. But the whole range of issues surrounding capitalist agricultural production — from the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, to the processing of meat, and the health effects on the workers — are, of course, conveniently swept aside.

Following hot on the trail, George Bush has named a panel of 15 industrialists and 9 conservationists to work toward solutions such as those accomplished by MacDonalds(!). Central to the "conservationist" approach of the panel is (of course) the "sustainability of profit."

Arco, the petrochemical giant, has recently announced that it has come up with a cleaner burning gasoline. If it were utilized completely, it would have the effect of reducing auto emissions by close to one third. Arco is making no plans, however, to put this product into production until their profit is guaranteed by the state through regulating such fuels to make them the standard across the board. When it comes to "free trade" or health and safety regulations, the ruling class abhors the intervention of the state and its agencies; but if the protection of profits is at stake, the capitalists will withhold technology which can help the environment and look to the state to enforce this protection. At the same time, the whole question of why the oil companies collaborate with the auto producers and the banks in blocking the conversion to cleaner types of cars — utilizing cleaner, existing technologies (solar electric, for example) — does not even enter into the equation. The much vaunted "sustainability of profit" once again serves as the barrier to cleaning the environment.

Reformist legislation such as the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, while supportable, has done little to stop or reverse the trend toward destruction of the environment. Rather, it has reinforced the illusion that pressure on the bourgeois state can keep the environment clean, despite the fact that the capitalist class that destroys the environment also runs the state. Putting the fox in charge of the hen house still remains the favorite trick of the ruling class!



Left to their own forms of "regulation" we see what the capitalists come up with. As the ideology of the "free market" spreads abroad, at home, right wing libertarian views are finding their way into the so-called mainstream. Economists at the Environmental Defense Fund (a "mainstream" environmental group) are credited with the following brainstorm. A commodity exchange in "pollution permit futures" will be set up on the Chicago Commodities Exchange Board through which corporations can trade "pollution rights" as futures (thus turning pollutants into commodities!). This will allow utilities that find it unprofitable to comply with the Clean Air Act to buy "pollution rate permits" from companies which reduce their emissions and wish to sell their "excess" pollution rights! This "buy now breathe later" formula will serve only to bypass the (already feeble) legislation set up by the state to limit pollution into the atmosphere.

Clearly, such solutions cannot be satisfactory from the point of view of the working class, or in fact, society as a whole. The working class and their communities have the right to know how the capitalists maneuver behind their back for the sake of profit and continue to pollute the environment. We must demand: Open The Books! To the capitalists' attempts to place the real economic and ecological costs of production on the workers and the communities,

the working class must counterpose the demand: *"Billions of dollars for toxic clean-up from the companies that profit from the production, sale and use of toxic products!"* Workers' organizations should further demand that only scientists and engineers accountable to the working class and in conjunction with workers' representatives should determine the means of clean-up. The workers and the victims of environmental rip-off, not those who caused the destruction of the environment in the first place, must *control* the clean-up!

Can State Laws Defend the Workers and the Environment?

The class struggle has led to the intervention of the bourgeois state in the form of labor protection laws, factory inspectors and rules on pollutants. These safety measures were introduced by the capitalists as answers to one or other of the following factors, or a combination of them; firstly, the pressure and organization of the working class combined with attempts by the bourgeoisie to buy support from sections of the workers in return for "social peace"; secondly, the safety and security of the capitalists own machinery and factories; thirdly, the attempt by capitalist monopolies to knock out their rivals through expensive safety

measures, hours of work, etc., in the knowledge that the rivals could not follow suit; fourthly, the need to avoid working class organization.

These laws, however, do not defend workers in many cases. To begin with, passing laws is meaningless without the funding to enforce them. The chicken plant where 25 workers recently died in a fire, for example, was governed by laws which required the fire doors to be kept unlocked. But the fire department never inspected the plant due to lack of money.

Basically, the intervention of the capitalist state changes nothing in the nature of the mode of production and its destructive effects on the workers and nature. The rapacious drive of capital raises this problem to ever higher levels. Because of this, safety cannot be left in the hands of the capitalists or their state. Because of its material needs and its central position in the process of production, only the working class can decide on and install real safety standards. For this it must attack and defeat the capitalists' decisive criteria, the driving forces of profit — private property and capitalist competition.

The Greens: Middle Class Reformism in Disguise

The alternative put forward by the newly emerging Green Party in the US is no less utopian than the capitalist answer to the environmental crisis. The Greens start out from the premise that "productive" and "industrial" societies inevitably produce forces of destruction that they cannot control. In fact they mistake the parasitic class that controls industry for industry itself. They cannot envisage industry without grime and pollution, developed agriculture without soil erosion and famine. In short, they cannot envisage society without capitalism.

As a consequence, however radically they attack capitalism, their program is one of reforming the existing social system. They proclaim in their program that productive and technological progress go hand in hand with environmental destruction and thus, they aim to turn back the clock of productivity and technology. The zero growth economy, depopulation, and small scale production are the goals of the Greens.

In California, the Green Party is on the verge of achieving ballot status. If successful, the Greens will not attempt to put forward a real, fighting alternative to the capitalist politics of the Democrats and the Republicans. Instead they see themselves as a left wing pole, to exert pressure on the Democratic Party to be more environmentally responsive. The draft program of the Greens calls for "*An ecological, energy efficient, non-nuclear economy using renewable sources of energy and materials*". Like the spokespeople of the ruling class, the Green Party buys into the myth that the environmental crisis is the result of "bad" consumption and not capitalist methods of production. They assert, that nuclear power is by its intrinsic nature dangerous, and can never, in human hands, be turned into a safe technology.

Despite the fact that individual Green Party members see themselves as "anti-capitalists" or even socialists, they have more in common with 19th-century populism than

revolutionary Marxism. The Greens' utopia is a very clear ideological reflection of the class position of the petit bourgeoisie under capitalism. They propose to return to small scale commodity production without capital accumulation.

But a return to the past is totally utopian. The unchanging rural life of the small community (which was the lot of the peasants and artisans before capitalism) is gone, as whole sections were proletarianized by the development of industry. Idyllic as it seems, it was not for nothing that Marx called this "rural idiocy". Disease, ignorance and grinding poverty were its natural by-products. The low level of productivity, of division of labour, of mechanization, etc., kept humanity in thrall to natural forces it could not control. It is not, however, technological or scientific progress which threatens humanity, but the inability of class society to use progress to meet human need. The reason why Marx and Engels rejected capitalism was not industrialization and intensive agriculture; these developments injured "the soil and the worker," but they also created the essential preconditions for the destruction of class society itself.

The ability to learn and apply the laws of nature is not antagonistic to, but dependent on technological and scientific progress. Few Greens would argue for a society without penicillin. Yet the introduction of this antibiotic, which revolutionized medicine and surgery, also led to the creation of infections resistant to the original drug. Consequently medicine has entered its fifth generation of antibiotic drugs. In the zero growth economy, humanity could not deploy technical and scientific labor to meet this and the thousands of other challenges which testify to the fact that humans interact with the environment in a constantly changing and developing way.

On the other hand, if imperialism is defeated by the world socialist revolution, the means of production — the factories, farms, offices and banks — will become commonly owned. This will allow a rational, democratic planning of the economy. Such planning on a worldwide scale could systematically anticipate and counteract the "unforeseen consequences" of innovation. It could use existing and future technologies to end the life of back-breaking, mind-numbing labor which is the lot of the working class. This could be done *without* ignoring the environmental consequences of human activity.

The Left and the Environment

If we set aside the Greens for the moment and look at the rest of US left, most of the organizations which view themselves as "Trotskyists" do not have a real program to deal with the environmental crisis either. On one pole stand those who see the environmental struggle as a petit-bourgeois issue and do not have anything of substance to offer the working class. On the other pole are the myriad of groups originating from the old Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the United Secretariat (USFI). Socialist Action is one such organization. It views the environmental movement as a vanguard movement, one which by its very nature is implicitly (if not explicitly) anti-capitalist.¹ In rela-

tion to the environment, Socialist Action has little more to offer than a "left-wing" version of the program of Earth First and the Greens.

One area on which "Trotskyist" organizations (e.g. Socialist Action, Solidarity, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency) and the Greens have common ground is their outright opposition to nuclear power. Like the Greens and Earth First, Solidarity and Socialist Action believe that nuclear power can never be turned into a safe technology and that nuclear power plants should be closed down immediately. As Marxists, we reject this superstitious, petit-bourgeois approach — although we don't for a minute ignore the dangers of nuclear power and reprocessing plants. We believe that the answer to unsafe technologies (including the chemical industry, which has the deadliest record of all!) is not the immediate shutdown of the entire technology. The catastrophe at Bhopal does not lead us to call for the closure of all chemical plants! Instead we believe that Trotskyists should demand workers' inspection and control of all nuclear power plants.

Workers' Struggle Methods in Nuclear and Other Industries

Only under workers' committees that have no vested interest in continuing capitalist recklessness can the question of operation or closure be clarified. Only in the course of workers' inspection can the dangers of nuclear fission in normal operation be decided. When a workers' inquiry or labor movement commission demands immediate closure of nuclear power stations and plants, we rely on the mobilization of the working class to enforce closure. In such cases we demand the defense of the workforce's living standards by the state. When a plant is not safe, the workers must demand that it will be closed down without laying off workers or cutting wages. If the capitalists say that they have no alternative jobs, the workers must demand re-training by the state at full salary! When the capitalists and the state refuse and say that they don't have the funds, workers should demand: open the books for workers' inspection! Workers should fight for an immediate end to business and technological "secrecy" by the bosses and for workers' control over the operation of the plant (if the workers' committees and their trusted experts find a way to operate the plants safely). To achieve these goals, plant occupations most likely will be necessary.

By using the above methods, the workers can realize that the defense of the environment is *linked* directly to their health and safety, as well as to the preservation of their jobs. The workers don't want to work in a plant that will kill them eventually in order to preserve their jobs for a short time. But contrary to the hopeless petty bourgeois methods of those who throw themselves on the fences of the nuclear plants (and who only give the workers the idea that they will lose their jobs if the plant closes!), revolutionaries link the defense of the environment to the workers interests by the methods of the class struggle.

The methods of struggle that link the defense of the environment to working class struggles are not limited to

nuclear plants. They apply to many other industries such as chemical, agricultural, etc. In California, for example, many workers and their children are dying from cancer and other diseases because the agri-corporations spray their communities together with the fruits and vegetables. The corporations literally poison the soil and the air in the entire Central Valley.

What methods of struggle can the workers use to defend themselves and the environment? The United Farm Workers (U.F.W.) must call for mass meetings in the communities, led by the union. In such meetings the workers and their families must demand that the companies stop the spraying immediately. If the companies refuse, the U.F.W. should organize massive militant strikes in which the entire communities are mobilized. The workers should fight for workers' control, under which their experts could come up with fertilization and pest control methods that will not jeopardize the workers', their families', and the consumers' health and life. When agribusiness refuses to implement safe production processes as determined by workers' inquiry, the farmworkers should respond by occupying farm land and organizing farmworkers' co-operatives. To defend such land occupations, farm workers will need to organize armed workers defense guards and call upon the workers' movement to provide militant solidarity. Thus, in the struggle to defend working class interests and the environment, the entire working class community (not only the unions) can get involved. This even opens up the possibility of building workers' councils in defense of the workers when that stage in the class struggle has ripened. Since U.F.W. and the working class communities consist to a large degree of undocumented workers, it is important that this struggle be linked to the fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrant labor.

Transitional Demands for Workers' Struggles and the Environment

Against dangerous processes and practices in industry and agriculture, we fight for factory committees and the trade unions to impose workers' control and veto power. Safer technology and conditions should be introduced under workers' inspection and at the bosses' expense with no loss of pay to workers during shutdowns.

Where danger extends beyond the plant, we fight for direct action and mobilization by the mass of workers, where possible in conjunction with the production workers themselves. We demand that the government impose safer methods and materials. Wherever the bosses or their state deny danger or cite economic grounds for refusing to act against dangerous plants, we demand a workers' inquiry, with the company's books, as well as its technology, open to inspection by workers and their appointed experts.

The demand for workers' inquiry is applicable generally in the nuclear, oil and chemical industries, and specifically when new plants and new dump sites are proposed, or when an accident occurs. The main purpose of the workers' inquiry is to unite the plant workers with the communities affected, around the struggle for safety. We must

fight for workers' control and veto power over the proposed plants, the disposal of waste and the process of construction. When the workers' inquiry finds types of plants or dumping unsafe, then the struggle becomes one to shut them down. Most of the time, local struggles cannot win. The battle needs to expand. Mass strike actions and occupations are the key to victory.

By fighting for this program through direct action, workers can begin to effectively defend the environment now, in a way that lays the basis for turning that struggle into one against capitalism and for international planning. In this context we fight for:

- A massive public works program to clean the environment, funded by the state and operated under workers' control.

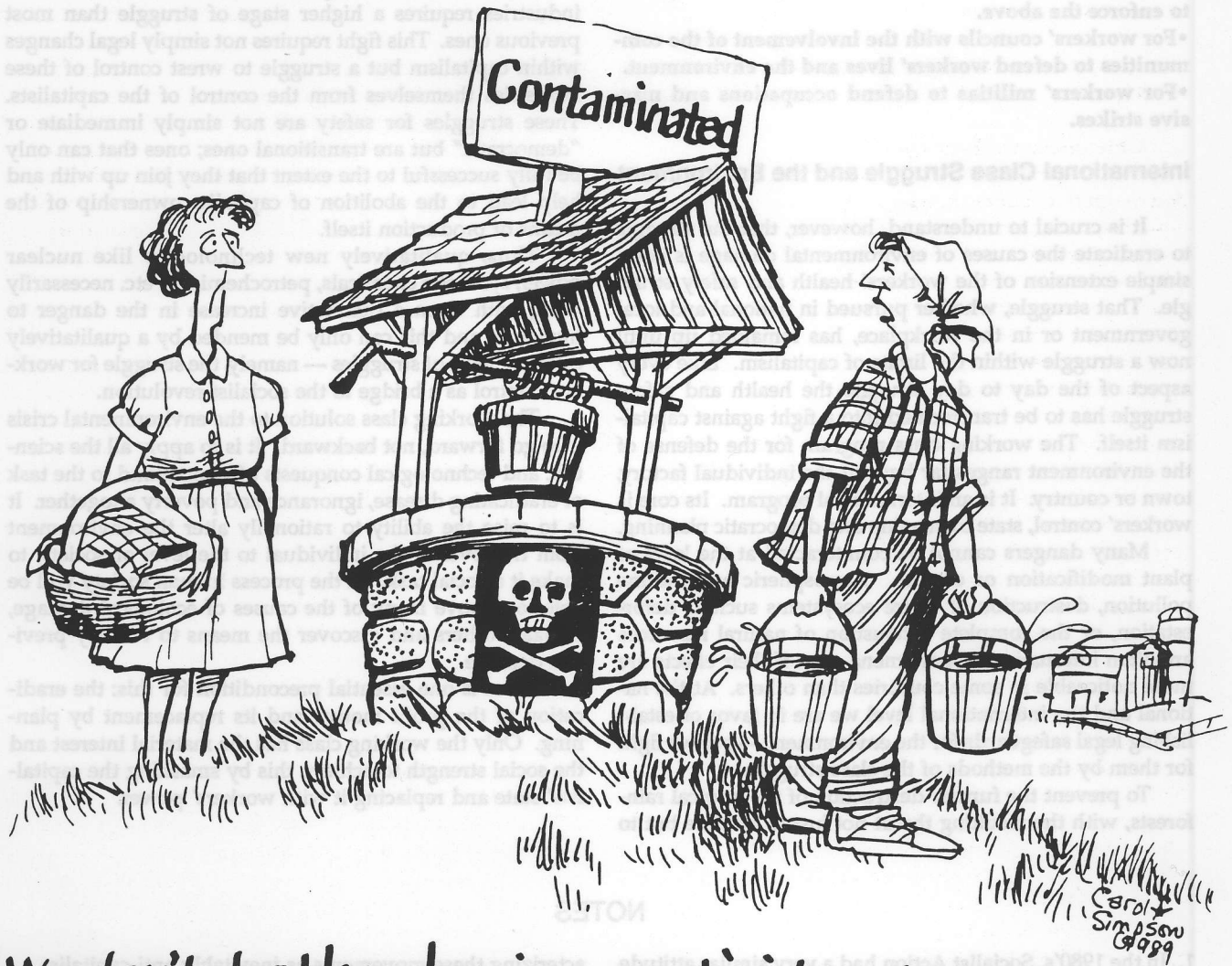
- Workers' control over health and safety standards in the factories, plants and shops and in the surrounding communities.

- Workers' inspection of nuclear, chemical and other industrial plants to determine their levels of safety; for working class mobilization to enforce closure where threats to safety are determined.

- Full lay-off pay when there are plant closures or temporary shutdowns. For alternative jobs with no cut in pay if the workers decide to close a dangerous plant.

- Down with the "secrets" of commerce and technology. "Business secrets" are not compatible with workers' health and safety! Open the company and research books!

- The workers must determine what are safe levels of exposure to radiation, toxins, and emissions. Health and



"We don't bother buying pesticides anymore. We just spray the crops with our groundwater."

safety inspectors must be accountable to the working class.

- Workers' control over the construction of new energy plants (nuclear, coal, geothermal, hydroelectric), and over plants which will utilize toxic chemicals. An end to the system of contract and temporary toxic and nuclear cleaning squads, and their transformation into permanent employees. Their work can only be made safe under workers' control!

- For power and construction workers to fight for the implementation of acceptable levels of safety precautions and building specifications at all stages of planning and in the supervision of construction.

- Structural improvements in the housing of reactors and in the means of transportation of nuclear waste and other toxic materials.²

- Representation of all sections of the workforce in factory committees as plant-based democratic organs of struggle.

- For massive strike actions and/or occupations of plants to enforce the above.

- For workers' councils with the involvement of the communities to defend workers' lives and the environment.

- For workers' militias to defend occupations and massive strikes.

International Class Struggle and the Environment

It is crucial to understand, however, that the struggle to eradicate the causes of environmental damage is not a simple extension of the workers' health and safety struggle. That struggle, whether pursued in national and local government or in the workplace, has remained up until now a struggle within the limits of capitalism. Like every aspect of the day to day struggle the health and safety struggle has to be transformed into a fight against capitalism itself. The working class program for the defense of the environment ranges far beyond the individual factory, town or country. It is an international program. Its core is workers' control, state ownership and democratic planning.

Many dangers cannot be counteracted at the level of plant modification or closure. Atmospheric and marine pollution, destruction of entire ecosystems such as deforestation, or the complete exhaustion of natural resources are often international phenomena even if their effects are more noticeable in some countries than others. At the national and the international level we are in favor of establishing legal safeguards for the environment — but we fight for them by the methods of the class struggle

To prevent the further destruction of the tropical rainforests, with the resulting threat not just to wildlife but to

the world's climate, we demand land for those who till it. This must be accomplished through the expropriation of the landed aristocracy and large agribusiness, not by passing out plots of the rain forest. The land hunger of the poor peasantry from Brazil to Bangladesh is the immediate social cause of the slashing and burning of a key natural resource.

The environmental question for the working class is not only a preventative struggle. Much damage has already been done and must be repaired. We demand that within programs of public works, restoration of the environment be given the highest priority. Whether it be the provision of adequate sanitation and, therefore, reliable drinking water in shanty towns, integrated regional rehabilitation programs in areas of desertification, or the construction of river and sea defenses in the monsoon regions, capitalism should, here and now, pay the price for these necessary repairs.

The scale of the dangers in the nuclear and chemical industries requires a higher stage of struggle than most previous ones. This fight requires not simply legal changes within capitalism but a struggle to wrest control of these industries themselves from the control of the capitalists. These struggles for safety are not simply immediate or "democratic" but are transitional ones; ones that can only be fully successful to the extent that they join up with and help lead to the abolition of capitalist ownership of the means of production itself.

Thus, qualitatively new technologies like nuclear power, synthetic chemicals, petrochemicals, etc. necessarily bring with them a qualitative increase in the danger to humanity and this can only be mended by a qualitatively different level of struggles — namely, the struggle for workers' control as a bridge to the socialist revolution.

The working class solution to the environmental crisis is to go forward, not backward. It is to apply all the scientific and technological conquests of humankind to the task of eradicating disease, ignorance and poverty altogether. It is to raise the ability to rationally alter the environment from the level of the individual to the level of society, to make it a social task. In the process human society will be able to remove many of the causes of ecological damage, mitigate others and discover the means to remedy previous damage

There is one essential precondition for this: the eradication of the profit motive and its replacement by planning. Only the working class has the material interest and the social strength to achieve this by smashing the capitalists' state and replacing it with workers' power.

NOTES

1. In the 1980's, Socialist Action had a very similar attitude toward the peace movements in Europe and the US, char-

acterizing these movements as inevitably anti-capitalist.
2. Even if plants are closed, this will still be necessary.