

Beyond the G8 summit

Capitalism and Climate Change – an analysis of the interconnections and why we cannot leave solutions to world leaders.

Climate change, a global disaster entailing melting polar icecaps, rising sea levels, the possible elimination of the Gulf Stream, freak weather and overall climatic catastrophe. It's a seriously bleak future, the product of a 'profit first, look after number one' system headed mostly by a patriarchy of men who won't live to see the effects of their greedy gamble with the future of the planet.

With this future comes the depletion of animal and plant species which support the eco-systems that have sustained the planet for millions of years. It also means a massive reduction in land mass, destructive weather and climatic change, panic, poverty and death. Millions of people will become refugees fleeing the devastation, remaining resources will be stretched beyond breaking point, governments will close their already fortified borders and will continue to imprison, torture and murder those in most desperate need. Even for those with money and technology, battling the forces of nature is an impossible task and according to 'world class' scientists this scenario cannot be prevented unless the whole world STOPS burning fossil fuels NOW ('60% cuts now, 90% cuts pretty damn soon').

HOWEVER that is a future, an abstract picture of chaos which most people in the West cannot truly imagine. Sadly, that future is an everyday reality right now and has been so for many years. The very system which has created this future of climate chaos has been practicing destruction of the environment, livelihoods, homes and lives of millions, to produce a global market of cheap labour and maximum profits for the corporations, their owners and shareholders.

In every corner of the planet, communities are being poisoned by chemicals and emissions from power plants, oil and gas extraction, mass production of plastics, chemicals, metals and mass agriculture, including the contamination of huge areas with toxic chemicals and GMO (Genetically Modified Organisms -<http://www.safe2use.com/ca-ipm/03-10-10a.htm>). Indigenous land is stolen by corporate-sponsored state paramilitaries, fragile ecosystems embodying their cultures and health are razed to the ground, the people displaced, removed and killed. Community opposition and resistance are the only tools local people have to battle this threat on their culture and lives. They live it everyday and suffer the consequences of torture and death while those of us in the rest of the world continue to feast on the products of their exploitation.

Multinational corporations and private corruption each establish themselves in positions of power and wealth the same way, through violence and oppression, condoned by governments through multilateral and bilateral trade agreements allowing profit and production to be valued well above life. Environmental impact assessments, reports and science are ignored or falsified, costs are cut in wages and health and safety procedures for workers, any form of collective resistance is suppressed and industrial accidents are rarely acknowledged or compensated for. Minimum costs, maximum profits, often subsidised by the taxpayer - An all round picture of who NOT to trust with our planet.

The Kyoto Protocol

The world has been fooled these past 13 years waiting for the Kyoto Protocol to be agreed upon and ratified. For many the problem with Kyoto is that the USA (singularly the biggest contributing country to climate change) has not signed up. Unfortunately however, what is far more significant is the overwhelmingly corporate influence on policies to implement carbon dioxide reduction. Multinational corporations have held power over the protocol, due to the consequences of real effective legislation on economic growth. (i.e. to really slow climate change would radically change the current system). Over a decade in the making the Kyoto Protocol has barely managed to come up with any real emissions reduction policy, (currently stands at 5% of 1990 levels). This is laughable (in a hysterically depressing way) when reductions needed are at least 60 - 90% (as advised by the IPCC amongst others). The whole process has been dominated by industry with Carbon Trading, Carbon Sinks (www.sinkswatch.org) and Clean Development Mechanisms (www.cdmwatch.org) which promote and

subsidise, monoculture forestation, landfill gas extraction, nuclear energy facilities and hydroelectric dams being built under the false banner of a 'green, environmentally friendly' solution to climate change. These projects however, are just as socially and environmentally destructive in their effect. What it means is that current industry can continue to pollute and destroy as long as someone else, somewhere else 'appears' to be doing less. Unfortunately for the Quilombola, Tupinikim and Guarani people who were removed from their land for eucalyptus monoculture (now sold as a Clean Development Mechanism project), their livelihoods, sustenance and homes have been destroyed. The monoculture has removed all the nutrients from the ground, left the ecosystem deserted and contaminated with GMO and the trees are either burnt every few years or made into paper (see www.carbontradewatch.org). This kind of mechanism neither helps the climate nor the people but further adds to the profits of capitalist business. Furthermore across the globe thousands of roads, airport runways and terminals, bridges, dams and industrial infrastructure are being constructed despite scientific evidence and advice that such things are seriously detrimental to the future of the planet as well as the present inhabitants.

Western governments like to blame corrupt leaders in the South for the inequality that is rife there, omitting to mention that massively unjust policies emanate from G8 dominated structures such as the World Bank, the WTO (World Trade Organisation) and the IMF (International Monetary Fund), as well as trade agreements such as GATS (General Agreement on Trade and Services - www.gatswatch.org), GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs), NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas - <http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/ftaa/topten.html>). These institutions impose policies which will never benefit and in many cases directly damage the people and the environment. 'Free Trade' laws override just about everything; protection of the environment, human and animal rights, loan conditions such as cutting public expenditure on health and education services, the export of mass produced food stuffs and the appropriation of resources for debt repayment (for example oil - <http://thereitis.org/printarticle930.html>). Whilst publicly blaming state corruption, Western governments impose (through clandestine agencies and wars) leaders who will tow their line and along with corporations finance many brutal regimes with weapons, money and lessons in repression.

Why capitalism can never be 'ethical'.

A prerequisite for capitalism is market expansion which requires the constant turnout of more goods and services whether needed or not (hence built in obsolescence.) Even if produce is made in a more environmentally friendly way, the sheer level of consumption and transportation negates all efforts to curb negative effects. It's not just about emissions it's also about over-consumption! It is interesting that the state gives a harder time to none profit making activities like earthships/low impact development than to mainstream property developers (who may get extra grants for slipping in the odd solar panel).

'Ethical Capitalism' is historically based on land ownership / class division - so even Fair Trade does not offer any escape from the cycle of producer/consumer. Furthermore, there is a big industry employing a lot of the comfortable minority of this planet attempting to reform capitalism (the dominant faction of the dominated) who have their own agenda. A desire to make a company more environmentally sound and remain competitive, reveals that the major concern is not the environment or our human brothers and sisters, but money. Money is just a conceptual idea brought about as a trading devise, and as a way to separate and disconnect, as well as a power tool. Ideas such as 'green capitalism' are like placing a plaster over an arterial wound, or better still leaving ones children with the psychopath next door because its better than leaving them home alone.

There is no doubting that industrialisation is the cause of climate change (along with the many other abuses it has created and furthered). It has been added to by other systems, like the Marxist state in Russia, with its industrialisation, but capitalism is ever becoming the only system of economic, political and personal relationships on the planet.

The basic premise of capitalism is to add value; this can be broadly interpreted as using and abusing. As Martin Wolf explains in 'Why Globalisation Works' (Yale University Press) "the business of any company is to look for the opportunity to turn something cheap into something more expensive. It is to add value. The better it is at

identifying them, the more successful a company will be. One of those opportunities is to use resources (including people) that have historically fallen outside the global market economy and are, correspondingly cheap". So capitalism's very basis is built on abuse and power. Hence capitalism is the cause of climate change and must be dismantled if we have any hopes of slowing the environmental meltdown.

Correspondingly, State and Socialist ideologies of providing a 'comfortable' living standard for mass society rely on the continuation of mass production, heavy industry and therefore the depletion of global resources. This in no way addresses issues of climatic, environmental and ecological destruction. Nor does it address issues of community autonomy. Very few (if any) people would choose to work in dangerous, health threatening factories or spend their days mind numbingly plucking endless chickens, picking out non-uniform pies or monotonously screwing in the same nut and bolt sequence. State control still means that everyone is supposed to live by rules which have been decided without the participation of the people. Real grassroots participatory decision-making on a mass scale of millions is difficult if not impossible. State level legislative power and the means to reinforce laws of social control result in the violent repression of resistance and any calls for change or accountability.

Only when there is a return to small scale communities living with the land rather than abusing it can these issues be rectified. With a global peak in fossil fuels upon us and the means to fuel mass industry lessening with every coming year, eventually there will undoubtedly be very little choice. Why wait until we are forced into living in way we have not prepared for. The industrial and technological eras have taken away the skills and knowledge we had to live with the land without destroying it. Convenience products have taken over our leisure time which has been squeezed to almost nothing for most people. Our lives have been turned into robotic parts in the mega-machine of mass production.

Scarcely the world's governments do not want to acknowledge that the pursuance of industry which requires the depletion of finite resources (anything involving plastic, uranium, oil, gas, coal etc) is a game where the whole planet loses. A game which the G8 currently has on their table, playing the nuclear energy card (as well as ignoring the World Bank's own Extractive Industries Review which concluded that fossil fuel industries do not alleviate poverty or promote sustainable development). They wish to continue economic growth (the kind that grows into the pockets of a comparatively tiny elite with enormous power) regardless of its effects on our present and future ability to survive.

The contamination of the ecosystems that sustain us and the climate which supports them has to stop now. The repression of indigenous peoples and activists fighting for freedom from domination has to stop, now.

Government and corporate structures cannot be trusted (as the record shows) to find or implement solutions to the escalating destruction and "climate apartheid" facing everyday people and the natural world. Climate Chaos is the final blow from the perpetrators of a global system of oppression and control, exploitation and violence.

Take action, everywhere we are!

The G8 leaders meet every year as a symbol of their dominance over the world. This is the summit of ministerial meetings where they decided how to influence and control everything from trade to immigration laws, on a global scale. The G8 dominate the decisions and policies of other global institutions of similar control like IMF, WTO and World Bank. They encourage each other to create the same laws in each member state and the final summit is the final farce, a 'kodak moment' before the press to show their power and pretend they have the interests of everyone at heart. They haven't.

Actions and demonstrations against this summit is important, as a global symbol of resistance to capitalista and state control over all life of this planet. What is also important is that symbolic resistance is supported by creative, diverse and inspiring action, not just at the summit but everywhere we are, now and after this 2005 summit. Resistance and effective action against projects which are products of these global institutions in the places they are happening, are needed to prevent the oppression, rape and murder of indigenous peoples and their lands.

...When we take our dreams for a future where compassion overrides exploitation and weave them into our resistance to these global institutions and their impacts, then there is hope..

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