

THE CLIMATE IS CHANGING

FALSE SOLUTIONS TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS



If people took the scientific reports about global warming seriously, the engines of every fire department would sound their sirens and race to the nearest factory to extinguish its furnaces. Every high school student would run to the thermostat, turn it off, and tear it from the classroom wall, then hit the parking lot to slash tires. Every responsible suburban parent would don safety gloves and walk around the block pulling the electrical meters out of the utility boxes behind houses and condominiums. Every gas station attendant would press the emergency button to shut off the pumps, cut the hoses, and glue the locks on the doors; every coal and petroleum corporation would immediately set about burying their unused product where it came from—using only the muscles of their own arms, of course.

But those who learn about global warming from the news are too disconnected to react. The destruction of the natural world has been going on for centuries now; you have to be alienated indeed to drive past felled trees, spewing smokestacks, and acres of asphalt every day without noticing anything until it shows up in a headline. People who draw conclusions from news articles rather than the world they see and hear and smell are bound to destroy everything they touch. That alienation is the root of the problem; the devastation of the environment simply follows from it.

When profit margins are more real than living things, when weather patterns are more real than refugees fleeing hurricanes, when emissions cap agreements are more real than new developments going up down the street, the world has already been signed over for destruction. The climate crisis isn't an event that *might* happen, looming into view ahead; it is the familiar setting of our daily lives. Deforestation isn't just taking place in national forests or foreign jungles; it is as real at every strip mall in Ohio as it is in the heart of the Amazon. The buffalo used to roam *right here*. Our detachment from the land is catastrophic whether or not the sea level is rising, whether or not the desertification and famine sweeping other continents have reached us yet.

This detachment didn't come out of nowhere; it's a corollary of the separation imposed between production and consumption. When we



can only see the world through an economic lens, it becomes abstract, expendable. Some environmentalists would reduce the causes of global warming to “too much” technological development, but the problem is that capitalism imposes relationships that promote *a certain kind of* technological development. In the US, the major oil producers bought up the patents for fuel-efficient automobile engines and buried them, while automobile and oil companies successfully lobbied against public transportation. Los Angeles once had a decent public transit system, but it was dismantled under pressure from the auto industry, making way for the commuter nightmare that exists today.

As usual, the class that brought about the crisis would have us believe that they’re the best qualified to remedy it. But there’s no reason to believe that their motives or methods have changed. Everyone knows smoking causes cancer, but they’re still selling low-tar cigarettes.

Pollution and environmental destruction are yet another case of capitalists passing costs down the pyramid to the poor. Garbage dumps are never built in wealthy neighborhoods; neither are oil wells. Mines collapse on miners and laborers die of exposure to poisonous chemicals—and employers have the audacity to argue that environmental protections are bad for workers because they endanger their *jobs!* If it weren’t for economic pressures, no one would take such jobs in the first place, nor wreak such havoc on the environment. And the workers who must take them are treated no better than the ecosystems they’re paid to destroy; mountaintop removal and other destructive practices have enabled corporations to eliminate tens of thousands of jobs.

Capitalism is not sustainable. It demands constant expansion; it can reward nothing else. Beware of supposed environmentalists whose first priority is to sustain the economy. Nuclear power, solar power, “clean” coal, and wind turbines are not going to usher in a pollution-free utopia. Neither are carbon trading, biofuels, recycling programs, or organic superfoods. So long as our society is driven by the logic of profit and competition, these are all just bids to maintain the present state of affairs. But it can’t go on forever.



Solutions to Global Warming!

*From the makers of global warming—
“sustainable” energy!*

THE CORPORATE SOLUTION

Where others see hardship and tragedy, entrepreneurs see opportunity. Putting the “green” in greenhouse gases and the “eco” in economy, they greet the apocalypse with outstretched wallets. Are natural disasters wrecking communities? Offer disaster relief—at a price—and put up luxury condominiums where the survivors used to live. Are food supplies contaminated with toxins? Slap “organic” on some of them and jack up the price—presto, what was once taken for granted in every

vegetable is suddenly a selling point! Is consumerism devouring the planet? Time for a line of environmentally friendly products, cashing in on guilt and good intentions to move more units.

So long as being “sustainable” is a privilege reserved for the rich, the crisis can only intensify. All the better for those banking on it.

THE CONSERVATIVE SOLUTION

Many conservatives deny that our society is causing global warming; some still don't believe in evolution, either. But what they themselves believe is immaterial; they're more concerned about what it is profitable for *others* to believe. For example, when the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released its 2007 report, an ExxonMobil-funded think tank linked to the Bush administration offered \$10,000+ to any scientist who would dispute its findings.

That is to say—some people consider it a better investment to bribe experts to deny that anything is happening than to take any steps to avert catastrophe. Better that the apocalypse snatches us unawares so long as they can maintain their profits one more year. Sooner the end of life on earth than the possibility of life beyond capitalism!

THE LIBERAL SOLUTION

Certain do-gooders would like to claim credit for bringing global warming to the attention of the public, even though environmentalists had been clamoring about it for decades. But politicians like Al Gore aren't trying to save the environment so much as to rescue the *causes* of its destruction. They press for government and corporate recognition of the crisis because ecological collapse could destabilize capitalism if it catches them off guard. Small wonder corporate initiatives and incentives figure so prominently in the solutions they propose.

Like their conservative colleagues, liberals would sooner risk extinction than consider abandoning industrial capitalism. They're simply too invested in it to do otherwise—witness the Gore family's long-running relationship with Occidental Petroleum. In this light,

their bid to seize the reins of the environmentalist movement looks suspiciously like a calculated effort to prevent a more *realistic* response to the crisis.

THE MALTHUSIAN SOLUTION

Some people attribute the environmental crisis to overpopulation—but how many shantytown dwellers and subsistence farmers do you have to add up to equal the ecological impact of a single high-powered executive? If there is such a thing as overpopulation at all, it's made possible by unsustainable industrial agriculture—so the Malthusians have it backwards.

THE SOCIALIST SOLUTION

For centuries, socialists have promised to grant everyone access to middle-class standards of living. Now that it turns out that the biosphere can't support even a small minority pursuing that lifestyle, you'd expect socialists to adjust their notion of utopia accordingly. Instead they've simply updated it to match the latest bourgeois fashions: today every worker deserves to work a "green" job and eat organic produce.

But "green job" is an oxymoron: *working* isn't sustainable. The problem is that both private corporations and government-sponsored agencies look at the world as something to be *managed*, something from which value can be *extracted*. Likewise, "green" products only came to be as a marketing ploy to differentiate high-end merchandise from proletarian standard fare. If you're going to think big enough to imagine a society without class differences, you might as well aim for a future in which we share the wealth of a vibrant natural world rather than chopping it up into inert commodities.

THE COMMUNIST SOLUTION

Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism served as a convenient means to jerk "underdeveloped" nations into the industrial age, utilizing state intervention to "modernize" peoples who still retained a connection

to the land before eventually dropping them unceremoniously at the margin of the free market. As the old Eastern European joke goes, socialism is the painful transition between capitalism and capitalism. Even today, despite the legacy of Chernobyl, party communists have gotten no further than blithe assurances that new management would take care of everything. Sing along to the tune of “Solidarity Forever”:

*If the workers owned the factories, climate change would not exist
All the smoke from all the smokestacks would be changed to harmless mist . . .*

THE INDIVIDUAL SOLUTION

An individual can live a completely “sustainable” lifestyle without doing anything to hinder the corporations and governments responsible for the vast majority of environmental devastation. The same goes for whole communities. Keeping your hands clean—“setting an example” no statesman or tycoon will emulate—is meaningless while others lay the planet to waste. To set a better example, *stop them*.

THE RADICAL SOLUTION

Many people respond to the crisis with despair or even a kind of wrong-headed anticipation, imagining that it will bring about social change if nothing else can. Yet there’s no reason to believe the exhaustion of the planet’s petroleum supply will put an end to capitalism—there were economic imbalances before fossil fuels were the backbone of the economy. Likewise, it’s all too plausible that these imbalances will make it through ecological collapse intact, so long as there are people left to dominate and obey.

We’ll get out of the apocalypse what we put into it: we can’t expect it to produce a more liberated society unless we put the foundations in place now. Forget about individualistic survival schemes that cast you as the Last Person on Earth—Hurricane Katrina showed that when the storm hits, the most important thing is to be part of a community that can defend itself. The coming upheavals may indeed offer a chance for social change, but only if we start implementing it *right now*.



Another end of the world is possible!



AND THINGS ARE HEATING UP



This pamphlet is a selection from *Work*, a 376-page analysis of contemporary capitalism produced by the CrimethInc. ex-Workers' Collective. For more ammunition, consult www.crimethinc.com.