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USA

Biden's "Bullshit" Climate Summit

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President Biden held a meeting of some world leaders to discuss climate change in late April, to call for new commitments on carbon emissions. Climate activist and leader Greta Thunberg sent out a video the day before the conference began, denouncing it as "bullshit."

"At the Leaders Climate Summit, countries will present their new climate commitments, like net-zero emissions by 2050. They will call these hypothetical targets 'ambitious.' But when you compare their insufficient targets with the overall current best available science, you clearly see that there's a gap. There are decades missing."

What are the missing decades? The science she is referring to is the conclusion that we must reduce global emissions to zero by 2030 to avoid catastrophic consequences.

To reach that target we should have already begun to cut back carbon emissions, but instead the world continues to move in the opposite direction.

Howie Hawkins, the Green Party candidate for president in 2020 wrote: "It's too late for gradualism. We must at least aim for the 'initial target' of 350 ppm (350 parts for million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere) that was prosed 13 years ago by climate scientists James Hansen and colleagues in a 2008 study."

That target was the inspiration for the name of the "350.Org" that opposes climate change.

"The earth sailed past that 350 ppm at the end of 1988," Hawkins wrote. "At the Mauna Loa Observatory in Hawaii, carbon dioxide averaged 414 ppm in 2020, averaged 418 in march of this year, and set a record of 421 ppm on April, 3.

"The last time atmospheric carbon was this high was in the Mid-Pliocene Warm Period 3.6 million years ago when the temperature was 4 degrees Celsius (7 degrees Fahrenheit) hotter and sea levels were 27 meters (78 feet) higher than today.

"At last year's annual rate of carbon dioxide rise, the planet will hit 500 ppm around 2050

"These climate changes are locked into the climate system by the contemporary carbon emissions unless the world not only zeroes out emissions, but soon gets to negative emissions by drawing carbon out of the atmosphere and into the biosphere by reforestation and by rebuilding carbon-rich living soils with regenerative agriculture.

"Today's rapid climate change entails more than the heat waves, extreme weather, and flooded cities in the headlines. Between now and 2050, we face mass extinctions, collapsing land and ocean ecosystems, agricultural crisis and food shortages, economic contraction and increasing poverty, hundreds of millions of climate refugees and escalating social conflicts and resource wars."

At this "summit" Biden announced that the U.S. would cut its emissions by at least 50 percent below 2005 levels, and reach net-zero emissions by 2050.

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The European Union has pledged to cut carbon emissions by 55 percent of 1990 levels by 2030. China says it will continue to increase emissions until 2030, and then cap them and be carbon neutral by 2060.

China is the world's present chief emitter, and the U.S. has the dubious honor of being second. On a per capita basis the U.S. is number one.

Leaving aside Greta Thunberg's observation that all this is too little too late by decades, these goals are "fluff" according to *In These Times*. If we look at the U.S.'s "goals" and what's proposed to meet them, we get a good look at what the other countries' are also doing.

Biden has no proposals for the fossil fuel industries to cut their emissions of carbon dioxide. He knows any such proposals would meet with stiff resistance from the fossil fuel industry as well as most Republican and Democratic politicians.

Instead of such a "stick" he proposes the "carrot" of support to clean energy to make it more profitable than fossil fuels. He gives no timetable when this could occur, even if he could get sufficient funds passed through Congress to do this.

He is also vague or misleading on the scale of funds needed, or how to deal with the huge investments the fossil fuel industry has already made in everything from drilling and fracking, pipelines, refineries, etc.

Power production accounts for only 27 percent of carbon emissions, transportation 28 percent; heating buildings 12 percent and agriculture 10. All productive sectors would have to be transformed.

"That huge emergency transformation can only be met by an ecosocialist approach using public enterprise and planning," says Hawkins.

Also in Biden's proposals there is the concept of "net-zero" emissions. "Net zero" looks something like "zero" to most people which is why this misleading term is used.

It means balancing continued emissions with removal from the atmosphere of carbon dioxide.

What he mentions as a possible way to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere is technology that would pump air with a lot of carbon dioxide, say from chimney stacks, by pipes underground to where it could be combined with certain rocks, and sequestered there.

This works in laboratories, but has only been actually proven to work on a small scale because of the costs of doing so. Right now there is zero prospect of using this on a large scale.

Moreover, it wouldn't work on heating buildings, or on transportation. Converting all trucks, cars, etc. to electricity, is not possible in the near future, but we must act now. Electrifying airplanes is far off, if ever possible.

And how would this work regarding bringing down carbon dioxide in the whole world's atmosphere, not just from sites close to chimneys? It's impossible. It is a quack idea.

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We would have to take greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere to get back down to 350 ppm even if we achieve no further burning of fossil fuels. There is only one way to do this, as was indicated by Howie Hawkins.

That is to restore the balance with nature that capitalism has disrupted, by reforestation and rebuilding carbon rich living soils with regenerative agriculture.

Rebuilding those world's forests which capitalism has already destroyed and continues to destroy is necessary because they, like all green plants, take carbon dioxide from the atmosphere in the process of photosynthesis, the basis of all our (and other animals') food, and replace oxygen back into the atmosphere.

Marx long ago saw that capitalism has created a "metabolic rift" between the cities and the countryside. Plants and animals grown for food and fiber in the countryside are sent to the cities to be consumed. The waste from this consumption is no longer returned to the soil, where it replenishes and reinvigorates it.

The result is the need for chemical fertilizers and pesticides, which create pollution in the biosphere, and the plants are not as efficient as they are when part of a natural balance.

The waste goes into the rivers, sewage systems, and eventually the oceans polluting them. Along with acid rain from burning fossil fuels the plant material in the oceans is being diminished, harming the ability of the oceans to absorb carbon dioxide.

We have to re-green the earth.

Today's Marxist ecosocialists have built upon what Marx and Engels noted in the harmful disruption of nature caused by capitalism to tackle the much increased and increasing harm capitalism has and done and is doing to the ecosystem in many aspects.

In truth Biden and the other world capitalist politicians at the "summit" have no plan at all to avert climate catastrophe. With nice-sounding vague promises they continue on the road to hell.

It will take mass movement and mass action centered on the world's working people to effect meaningful change. The road ahead is difficult, but socialists must embark upon it.

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