

Leadership in the face of Catastrophic Climate Change?

http://redandgreen.org/Climate_Change/

We, the people of the world are threatened with catastrophic climate changes. We dare not rely on the very leadership of the market and corporate forces whose institutional greed and indifference blindly brought us this crisis. By their nature, they will not act sufficiently or in time to prevent or even lessen the escalating damages to the majority of the world.

Instead, leadership must be driven by a world wide, mass movement that understands the need for a comprehensive, crash program and is capable of requiring governments and industry refocus national and global priorities for the sake of saving human life on earth, even if it means reducing obscene short term corporate profits. The priorities of this program must be both the immediate needs of the people most affected by the crisis and the prevention of permanent climate changes before irreversible tipping points are reached.

A worldwide response aimed at successfully preventing catastrophic climate change, will require massive research and development and infrastructure investment along with strict, enforceable government regulations and assistance for individuals and business to sharply reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Given the size and imminence of the many crises we face, people will need persuasive and realistic plans to embrace. These plans must make clear what is necessary and why, spelling out scientifically defined deadlines, goals and outcomes, as early and effectively as possible, so the likely benefits of peoples' contributions and sacrifices are understood and endorsed and then required of all governments and economic institutions.

To succeed, this program must base its analysis and implementation on a scientific and humane view of society that embraces the interests of all life; a socialist response to climate change. This is still missing and was not present in the Gulf Coast in August 2005.

Katrina as an understandable example of what to avoid and how.

As a model of what a catastrophic climate change prevention plan would have to include, we could examine both what it would have taken to prevent the Katrina disaster and why leadership, including the left failed. Now, after Katrina we are still without adequate leadership or a worldwide climate change prevention plan. It is vital we learn how to develop such leadership, capable and willing to promote effective plans to prevent far worse catastrophic climate changes.

“No More Katrinas!”

Katrina, the catastrophe is known to the world and therefore provides a small, understandable model of what we all face. (By Katrina, I mean the climate event and all that led up to and followed that disaster.)

Katrina involved in lesser ways everything we now face on a far larger scale;

1. A Catastrophic Climate Threat that might have been prevented or lessened.
2. The existence of prior scientifically based warnings, explanations and predictions.
3. Capitalism in the Gulf region set the priorities and responses, showed indifference to the extent of the human suffering and damage and continued to collude in the exploitation of what followed.

4. The capitalist driven response and outcome resulted in extreme and continuing damage to lives, the economy and the future of the region, just as we now face even greater loss of homes, jobs, health care and other services all leading to dramatic disruptions in the lives of millions via increasing violence, disease, poverty, and future insecurity. [Cite below, data to prove if needed.]
5. Official denial and avoidance of reality provides maximum opportunities for greed and exploitation which are justified by blaming the threat and outcomes on nature, God, the immoral and the poor, thus protecting the current social-economic order.
6. Katrina represented on a relatively small scale the continuing imperial practices of divide and exploit * the "expendable" via institutions and their rationalizations such as institutional racism and economic disparity and the glorification of corporate dominance, private property rights, national security and the military industrial complex. (*as outlined in "Shock Doctrine")

So What is to be Done?

So how would a socialist perspective help prevent or respond to Katrina? Perhaps we can use the Katrina model to construct such a plan for leadership and action.

In addition to analyzing Katrina and a comparative analysis of the world-wide situation facing us all, we can use them to create a basic, synthesized "broadside" that presents in clear and persuasive language our basic thesis: that only an eco-socialist based plan can succeed in preventing catastrophic climate changes and all the attendant social, economic and human suffering. The broadside should show why a socialist response is necessary, in both leadership and planning, to meet the scientific and political demands required to make major changes in the political, economic and military system sufficient to prevent catastrophic climate changes, and why without it, we are likely to fail.

Comparison of Katrina and Catastrophic Climate Change (C3)

Here is a rough draft. We can add to and improve this comparison and use the results to draft a broadside and position paper on preventing catastrophic climate change, or "No More Katrinas" and why a socialist response is necessary.

#	Component	Katrina	C3
1	Prior political and economic situation.	New Orleans was a Democratic enclave in a predominantly conservative Republican South, unlike most of the rest of the Gulf Coast. Entire region had suffered the economic effects of globalization, with job loss, especially in higher paying manufacturing sector. New Orleans in particular was severely hit by the nationwide decline of municipal economic health under the national Republican Administration.	The last 50 years had seen the increasing domination of global capitalism, under the increasingly hegemonic US influence. There was an increasing gap between the wealthy players, principally multi-national corporations and the countries they were based in, and the "global south" of underdeveloped regions with high population density and limited to non-existent resources.
2	Scientific understanding of risk and prevention needs.	Recognition of increasing number of severe storms, widely held to be due to global climate change. Levees in New Orleans were known to be inadequate for storms larger than category 3. Housing codes and construction oversight in gulf region not adequate for perceived threat.	World scientific study of climate change, funded by and focused primarily on capitalist economic and political interests, has been reticent to acknowledge or systemically address human causes of global climate change. Until recently only vague connections were made between the science and social, economic political policies. There is still little unanimity

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			on what steps are necessary to remedy much less prevent catastrophic changes.
3	Political factors contributing to problem.	Choices of land development and environmental impact were dictated by capital interests, so the public impact and interests were of such little concern. This meant that warnings were ignored or suppressed. In New Orleans, responsibility for levee maintenance was subordinated to other Defense Department objectives. The fact that it was the poorest neighborhoods that were most at risk exacerbated the problem.	The dominant interest of world capital has long been maximum exploitation of the environment to maximize profits, dictating disregard of the degradation of the environment and human life. The dominant position of energy corporations in the ruling class mandates our continued addiction to oil, coal and fossil fuels, and the military spending necessary to protect their dominant role in the world.
4	Leadership	Locally, leadership served the interests of capital and any attempts to point out the failure and complicity of political and financial leadership were ignored or suppressed. Essentially, the needs of the general public were secondary or dismissed.	As with Katrina, the major governmental leadership is beholden to corporate interests. Even as the evidence of the threats are acknowledged, they continue to focus on corporate interests as they sacrifice public interests.
5	Leadership failures	Even now, presidential candidates declare there will be “No More Katrina Mishaps!” as if there was no systemic problem. Local leadership virtually ignored the warnings about the inevitability of damaging hurricanes, failures of the levees, dangerous development and destruction of protective wetlands. Emergency planning was a farce or worse. During the crisis, local and national responses were poorly designed afterthoughts that continued to disrespect people’s needs and instead provided primary attention to profits and the future of business. Again and again, it was the people themselves who provided what care they could. Not one leader of influence stood with the people’s needs against corporate interests. This pattern continues. (Many specifics could be entered here, including the US rejecting experienced medical assistance offered free from Cuba, and the ongoing failures to restore or maintain not only property, but the health and lives of the majority of people.)	Even though some among the ruling class and established military-economic interests have recognized the real dangers of climate change, most of the leadership resists fully informing the public of what it will take to protect the environment and their interests. They predictably protect their employer’s interests and either deny the need for fundamental changes or resist and slow the process, even as this risks failure to prevent catastrophes. Faced with evidence that these worldwide catastrophes will lead to greater instability, poverty, starvation, instability, conflict, and wars over food, water and survival, the wealthy and their agents are instead preparing to protect themselves by ever greater accumulation of wealth and power. We need to expose the certainty that capitalist leadership will not only profit off climate change and efforts to address it, but will sacrifice the lives, health and cultures of the many for the benefit of the few.
6	What would have been required to adequately inform, prepare and protect the public?	Leadership beholden to capital interests would have had to be replaced or forced to be responsive to the public’s needs. Such leadership would taken scientific warnings seriously and sought public understanding and support for plans to protect both the environment and the public immediately and long-range. The rights of the people over corporate interests would have guided the plans. For example, preplanning for the eventuality of serious hurricanes would have	To protect itself, the public needs to be fully informed what we face from uncompromised science and political leaders, what must be done and by when if greater catastrophes are to be avoided. The complicity and inadequacy of current leadership must be exposed and they must be replaced or forced to carry out all necessary changes.

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		been based on analysis of total needs and included practical exercises to evacuate all to safety, and return the people and repair the economy as a whole.	
7	What political changes would have to have taken place?	<p>Prior to Katrina, the poor and working people of the area had inadequate resources, information and access to representation. Efforts to improve their political involvement were not sufficient to overcome entrenched power.</p> <p>Obviously, the choice of leadership and responsible officials would have to be determined by an informed public and not undermined by false beliefs in the immutability of corporate or class inequalities.</p> <p>Perhaps if the whole progressive forces in the US had seen both the tragedy and opportunity it presented, we could have made a mass mobilization to intervene in New Orleans and the coastal areas.</p>	To develop and establish an adequate worldwide response requires the creation of a massive supportive bloc able to challenge and demand changes in established power as needed, not only be individual efforts or greening one company at a time. If the public understands how it is possible to prevent any portion of catastrophic changes, they will require leadership and government responses that address the imperatives of tipping points and deadlines and puts necessary social constraints on capitalist production. The majority must understand that leadership not beholden to dominant capitalism can open up a path to the essential eco-socialist approach. To build such a majority is to promote a climate that allows living wages, union jobs in a green economy and survival for many.
8	What barriers would have to be overcome?	In New Orleans and the Gulf area, long standing control by capital of government and most media made sure the general population was dis-empowered by distractions, hopelessness, resignation or wishful thinking. Could some of this have been overcome? (Yes, but see above on the necessity of mass organizing and a focus on the imperative of prevention of the catastrophe.)	While the general public is currently aware of many of the threats, they still remain mostly dis-empowered, by distractions, hopelessness, resignation or wishful thinking, especially when it comes to the specifics of what must be done and how the current leadership is in the way of solutions. To most Americans, taking power away from military corporate interests is not a serious consideration. Unconsciously most Americans are becoming resigned to the coming catastrophes.
9	Proposed Solutions - General	Brief review of primary proposals to address the Katrina/Gulf disaster.	Brief review of the primary world wide plans to address Global Warming, Climate Change or C3. <i>Include likely outcomes and costs, compare and break down by politics, costs and outcomes.</i>
10	Proposed Solutions - Progressive	Brief review of progressive efforts to prepare & protect NO/Gulf Coast.	Brief review of the primary world wide "progressive" plans to address Global Warming, Climate Change or C3. <i>Include likely outcomes and costs, compare and break down by politics, costs and outcomes.</i>
11	Why Solutions Resisted	Analysis of why not preventing Katrina was in some people's interest, i.e. "Shock Doctrine."	How the environmental movement might successfully expose and oppose the "Shock Doctrine" interests by promoting the implementation of a reality based C3 prevention program worldwide. <i>Include likely outcomes and costs.</i>
12	What specific role of socialists could make a difference?	Progressive efforts would have had significant impact if they had.....?????	Developing an eco-socialist analysis that presents the overall situation and shows the consequences with and without change in the

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			power structure, and with time-lines, shows why it is necessary to shift policy control and resources from the military-industrial complex - and suggests how this can be done so it addresses preventing C3.
13	Why didn't progressive forces do better?	Analysis of roles of progressive forces, strengths and weaknesses in the NO/Gulf region leading up to Katrina.-	Analysis of current strengths and weaknesses and why continuing with present focus will not be sufficient.
14	What can progressive forces do differently that will make it possible to have an influence now.	Based on the failures of progressives (people's interests) to prevent Katrina, they would have had to.....	Work together with all other progressive forces to present a realistic understanding of what we face and demand the public's interests be respected in the implementation of C3 strategies. Lay out a possible scenario incorporating our eco-socialist analysis and applied solutions, both political and scientific.
15	Failure equals....	Summarize the losses from failing to prevent Katrina, etc. extrapolating the long range outcome.	Using Katrina impact, extrapolate to world losses if C3 not prevented.
16	Timelines	Timeline of what actually happened, with future expectation. Timeline of what would have had to happen to prevent Katrina disaster.	Timelines of what will happen if C3 and what will have to happen if C3 prevented via an eco-socialist solution.-
17	Additional components?		

References and citations: (Add, describe and categorize.)

A. Left Proposals to deal with Climate Change (all left, except explicitly socialist perspectives):

1. Manifesto On Global Economic Transitions, A Project of The International Forum on Globalization, The Institute For Policy Studies, Global Project on Economic Transitions, Sept. 2007. <http://www.ifg.org/pdf/manifesto.pdf> from International Forum on Globalization <http://www.ifg.org>.

B. Socialist Perspectives on Climate Change (those that use a socialist analysis on both cause and cure):

1. The Debate Heats up, Transforming food into fuels [corn ethanol] is a monstrosity. Fidel Castro, May 10, 2007. <http://www.rhc.cu/ingles/noticias/mayo07/10mayo/cubanoti1.htm>
2. The Tragedy Threatening our Species. Fidel Castro, May 8, 2007. <http://www.rhc.cu/ingles/noticias/mayo07/8mayo/cubanoti1.htm>
3. It is Imperative to Immediately Carry out an Energy Revolution. Fidel Castro, May 1, 2007. <http://www.rhc.cu/ingles/noticias/mayo07/mayo1/cubanoti2.htm>
4. An Ecosocialist Manifesto, By Joel Kovel and Michael Lowy (Sept 2001) <http://www.ecosocialistnetwork.org/Docs/EcoManifesto.htm>
The Second Ecosocialist Manifesto (In preparation) Proposed at the founding convention of the Ecosocialist International Network, Paris October 7-8, 2007.

<http://www.ecosocialistnetwork.org/index.htm> .

5. Social Change to Stop Climate Change, statement from Climate Change/Social Change conference, Sydney, Australia, April 24, 2008. Posted at Greenleft.org.au & a [better formatted version](#).

C. Neo-liberal Responses to Climate Change (differentiated from left, system challengers proposals):

1. Al Gore.
2. Tony Blair warned "that the world will reach 'catastrophic tipping points' on climate change within 15 years, unless serious action is taken to tackle global warming" at the EU summit in Lahti, Finland 10/20/2006. Blair's letter: <http://www.pm.gov.uk/files/pdf/Vanhanen.pdf>
3. Robert F. Kennedy Jr., The Next President's First Task [A Manifesto], Vanity Fair, May 2008. <http://tinyurl.com/57rto4>
4. U.S. Climate Change Science Program, "U.S. Already Affected by Warming" in "Report Details Effects of Climate Change Across U.S." by Juliet Eilperin, The Washington Post, May 28, 2008. <http://tinyurl.com/5qcx9g> The research by the Agriculture Dept. was carried out by 38 scientists, researching thousands of papers.
5. Tony Blair, Leading On Climate Change: How Action in Congress Can Move the World, The Washington Post, May 29, 2008. <http://tinyurl.com/5arznh>

D. Global Corporate Responses to Climate Change (include government and military components of capitalism):

1. UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) - Feb 3, 2007 <http://www.ipcc.ch/>
2. Center for Naval Analysis <http://securityandclimate.cna.org/> Comprehensive assessment of the national security implications of global climate change for U.S. policymakers concerned about threats to national security. Report <http://securityandclimate.cna.org/report/> Briefing on the report http://securityandclimate.cna.org/report/CNA_NatlSecurityAndTheThreatOfClimateChange.pdf

E. Climate Change Deniers (include primary institutions and trends):

Vaclav Klaus, President Czech Republic, Blue Planet in Green Shackles: What Is Endangered: Climate of Freedom, 2008. "The largest threat to freedom, democracy, the market economy, and prosperity at the end of the 20th and at the beginning of the 21st century is no longer socialism. It is, instead, the ambitious, arrogant, unscrupulous ideology of environmentalism."

(Include best analysis of each of the main issues, with links.)

[Walter Teague Updated 11/13/2008]