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A SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY STATEMENT—

Global Warming

All Talk, No Action Worsens Threat

In industrializing the world, the capitalist system carries in its wake environmental degradation and destruction. The most far-reaching example of this is global warming. Despite clear evidence of dramatic effects happening today and the devastating effects global warming will have in the future, the United States, the leading source of greenhouse gases, refuses to take timely action to deal with the problem because such action will adversely affect capitalist profits and economic growth.

What It Is

The term global warming describes the artificial increase in worldwide average temperatures caused by the generation of so-called greenhouse gases, primarily carbon dioxide, which trap the infrared radiation of the sun in much the same way that the glass of a greenhouse does. These gases are primarily generated by the burning of fossil fuels—coal, gas and oil—that are the principal source of energy used to generate electric power, fuel transportation and provide heat.

What It Has Done

Global warming has already led to dramatic changes in the physical environment and ecosystems around the globe. The fourth hot-

test year on record was 2004, extending a trend that has registered the 10 warmest years since 1990. It included four Category 4–5 hurricanes in the Caribbean, which caused an estimated \$43 billion in damages. Numerous typhoons in Japan and the Philippines caused extensive damage and loss of life. Droughts in a variety of places around the globe extended a decade-long trend.

What to Expect

In the meantime, glaciers have been melting at an alarming rate, threatening water supplies in countries that rely on snow packs and glacial melt. Most dramatic have been the shrinking of glaciers in the Arctic and Antarctic. Well-studied glaciers in Alaska have been shrinking at an increasing rate in recent years, and dramatic changes are taking place in fragile arctic ecosystems.

Scientific studies reported in 2005 have clearly demonstrated that changes in ocean temperatures over the past 40 years correspond closely to increases in greenhouse gases, as predicted by computer models. Researchers from a number of institutions showed effects on ocean ecosystems, and suggested that future changes could accelerate warming if marine organisms that absorb car-

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bon dioxide are adversely affected.

In addition, the melting of arctic glaciers has been adding large amounts of fresh water to the North Atlantic, potentially disrupting the flow of warm water from the tropics to the north. Scientists worry that slowing or shutting down this “conveyor belt” could lead to drastic changes in the world’s climate.

The Kyoto Protocol

In February 2005, 140 nations, accounting for 55 percent of greenhouse gas production as of 1990, approved the Kyoto Protocol to control greenhouse gases. Parties to the agreement include Russia, Japan and the nations of the European Union, which were particularly motivated following warming-induced floods of the last decade. Of these, 35 have agreed to reduce their greenhouse gas production by 2012 by five to eight percent below levels measured in 1990.

However, the Kyoto Protocol is only a symbolic advance. China and India, the two nations with the most rapidly developing economies, and in the top four in greenhouse gas production, have not only not agreed to any reduction, they have increased their output markedly since 1990 as they push for economic growth and profits. The Kyoto Protocol, signed eight years after its inception in 1997, will expire in 2012, leaving no formal framework in place and little accomplished.

The principal industrialized nation holding out against Kyoto is

the United States, which produces about one-fifth of the world’s greenhouse gases—and the United States is increasing its production. As of 2002, the British Royal Society calculated that U.S. production of greenhouse gases was about 13 percent above that of 1990.

The Bush administration, with its ties to the petroleum and electric power capitalists and its need to bolster a faltering economy, is clearly unwilling to act to control global warming. It prefers to study the matter and has ignored, blocked or thrown pennies at efforts to develop renewable sources.

Time Is Short

However, there is no time to delay. Scientists estimate that to reverse the existing buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the world will need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 40 to 70 percent by the end of this century. Such changes will require restructuring the world’s energy and transportation systems.

Such changes require massive investment and represent a threat to existing capitalist industries, their growth and profits. Capitalism requires profit and economic growth to survive. Capitalists want their profits *now*. The future has little meaning in a profit-driven society.

Answers That Aren’t Answers

Environmental reforms are not the answer. Capitalism has eroded even those feeble efforts of the past. The Bush administration has been

so effective at rolling back environmental regulation and increasing fossil fuel consumption, that capitalist pundits have recently declared the environmental movement to be dead.

International agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol are not the answer, either. Similar agreements on disarmament, on peace, on torture litter history, as do the bleached bones and broken bodies of tens of millions whose fate proved just what such agreements are worth.

If the future is not to be plagued with the floods, droughts and other catastrophes predicted related to global warming, the political and economic system of capitalism must end.

The Socialist Solution

The Socialist Labor Party urges workers to organize to abolish capitalism and institute socialist production for use. Workers must realize their latent economic and political power as operators of the industries and services and begin forming industrywide unions integrated into *one movement* with the goal of building a new society with completely different motives for production—human needs and wants instead of prof-

it—and to organize their own political party to challenge the political power of the capitalists, express their mandate for change at the ballot box and dismantle the state altogether.

The new society they must aim for must be one in which society itself, not a wealthy few, would own the industries and services, and the workers themselves would control them democratically through their own organizations based in the workplaces. In such a society, the workers themselves would make decisions governing the economy, electing representatives to industrial councils and to a workers’ congress representing all the industries that would administer the economy.

Such a society—a socialist industrial democracy—is what is needed to solve the environmental crisis. By placing the economic decision-making power of the nation in the hands of the workers, by eliminating capitalist control and the profit motive in favor of a system in which workers produce to meet their own needs and wants, the necessary resources and labor could be devoted to halting global warming, employing the renewable resources we now have available and develop new ones, and clean up the damage already done.