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www.revolutionaryworkers.org

mail@revolutionaryworkers.org

(510) 343-9105

Trump's Policies – Accelerating to Ecological Destruction

The world's environment was in a dangerous state even before the election of Donald Trump. The world's scientific community repeatedly pointed to the coming ecological catastrophe if carbon emissions were not drastically reduced, slowing the warming of the earth's atmosphere. The agreements signed by previous administrations were not sufficient even to begin addressing the problem. Now, with the Trump administration in charge, the world is accelerating even faster towards ecological catastrophe.

Climate change is a deadly threat to life on the planet. There is a near-total agreement among scientists that human beings have caused climate change by emitting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere ever since the industrial revolution. Scientists have warned that if the carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere remain at more than 400 (ppm) parts per million, the temperature increase will cause catastrophic weather patterns threatening cities, agriculture, and threatening life on this planet.

The Trump administration has come into office with a total denial of this looming catastrophe. The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) budget was slashed by 25 percent. Trump's appointee to the head of the EPA, Scott Pruitt is a climate change denier who claims carbon dioxide is not responsible for global warming. Pruitt was once the Attorney General for Oklahoma where he was notorious for blocking lawsuits against companies that were polluting the environment.

While the headlines have been grabbed by Trump's bullying rhetoric, bomb-dropping and making threats around the world, the damage of his environmental policy is quietly taking effect. The 25 percent cuts to the EPA have eliminated thousands of jobs for inspectors, technicians, and workers whose job it is to clean up toxic waste and monitor pollution.

By cutting the EPA budget, the Trump administration undercuts the possibility of testing and monitoring, let alone enforcing pollution standards. In March, Trump signed an executive order undoing the Waters of the United States Act that gives the federal government authority to limit pollution in major bodies of water. The polluters are being given a green light.

The Trump administration's relationship to the big oil and coal companies could not be more obvious. Trump's secretary of state Rex Tillerson is the former CEO of Exxon Mobil, a company which has spent millions of dollars covering up data and releasing propaganda against the existence of climate change. In another one of Trump's executive orders, the Clean Power Plan put in place by the Obama administration, was reversed. This order removes restrictions on coal-fired power plants and allows a greater amount of pollution.

As a signal of his contempt for the environment, Trump also reversed the temporary halt of the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline, a pipeline to ship the tar sands in Southern Canada to the United States for processing. The Keystone XL pipeline is a major source of new pollution. According to former NASA climate scientist James Hansen, if that pipeline comes online it will be "game over" for the planet.

The Trump administration is accelerating towards destruction while the corporations are lining their pockets. We can't have any faith in the politicians who got us into this mess, but we can look to the Women's March which brought out four million people or the thousands who stood up at Standing Rock. We will need even greater numbers to stop the polluters. The threat is greater than ever before and we have a planet to lose if we don't organize and fight back!