We live in a time of extreme contradictions. On the one hand, our civilization has eliminated smallpox, brought us cell phones, robotics, and space travel, and booms immense resources and wealth. On the other hand, we face the worst crises in human history. We are experiencing a calamitous level of species extinction brought on by massive ecological destruction. Wars of domination have torn whole regions of the world apart, killing millions of people. Around the world billions of people face poverty, homelessness, and disease while in 2017 the richest eight people own more wealth than the poorest half of the world’s population combined. In the U.S., millions of people have jobs that barely provide a living wage. Homeless people occupy the streets throughout our cities. Less visible are the hungry, and yet, one in six people in the U.S. face hunger today. These crises are not the result of poor decisions by world leaders. They are the result of the functioning of the capitalist system in its relentless drive to generate profits.

The Profit Motive
While we are told that profit is the result of creativity and ingenuity, in reality profit has only one source: exploitation. Under this economic system, the basic resources humanity needs for survival are privately owned by corporations. Without the incentive of profit, the owners and stockholders will not invest in production. These profits have one source: the exploitation of labor. The more work that can be squeezed out of workers, and the cheaper the price of their labor, the higher the profit. At the same time, the greater the number of unemployed workers competing for jobs, the easier it is to lower workers’ wages. Ingenious inventions, often the result of the work of salaried engineers whose patents belong to the corporations that hire them, are not the sole source of profit. All wealth ultimately comes from the labor of working people.

Divide and Conquer
Those in power have always attempted to use a “divide and conquer” strategy – pitting one group of people against another to maintain their power. The elites use their well-developed propaganda tools to turn us against each other, fueling the fires of resentment among those who have the least. One way is to give some rewards to one group for accepting the degradation of others. Sexist attitudes encourage the acceptance that women do the unpaid work in the home, face discrimination and lower wages at work, and are subject to violence rarely experienced by men. Racism too has created an enormous divide. Racism was used to justify the slaughter of the native population in the Americas, and to maintain and justify slavery. Racist ideology has infected our society like a virus, and created a racial caste system. The same lies, ignorance and frustration that fuel racism have also been used against anyone who can be labeled as different or “other” in our society. As capitalism continues to create fear and insecurity, virulent voices use racism, xenophobia, sexism and homophobia to divide us.

The War Machine
War plays a basic role in the functioning of capitalism. To maintain control over resources and populations, the world is ravaged by endless war. The history of the U.S. has been one of systematic war and violence, beginning with the expropriation and murder of the Native peoples in North America, and the enslavement of millions of African people, followed by wars around the world. The estimated death toll from wars in the 20th century was 187 million, without counting the millions of people whose lives were ruined in their aftermath.

Military spending is enormously profitable. Today the U.S. spends 28% of the Federal budget on the current military, projecting to spend over 700 billion dollars for the coming year. The cost of past wars account for another 20%. On average U.S. spending "collateral damage." This is the basic functioning of a system of imperial domination, which ensures that the banks and corporations maintain their profits.

Ecological Destruction
There have been five mass extinction events on earth in which most of the largest plant and animal species were wiped out. The last mass extinction event killed the dinosaurs. It was most probably caused by an asteroid crashing into earth, leading to a drastic climate change. And today we are living through the sixth mass extinction. This time, however, scientists tell us that our own species is the cause of the disaster and will also be its victim.

Ongoing carbon emissions into the atmosphere are causing dangerous worldwide changes in climate patterns. We see all the symptoms with record-setting temperatures each year, melting glaciers, rising oceans, drought, famine and massive storms. This decimation of the earth’s ecosystems is resulting in the extinction of many species.

The ultimate cause of severe climate change is not simply carbon emissions, but the capitalist system that demands a constant expansion to maximize its profits. The fossil fuel industry, along with all of the industries tied to it, is not a small piece of the global economy, but rather at the center of it. It includes the energy industry, agriculture, transportation, pharmaceuticals, shipping, plastics, armaments, and the banks. The people who own these industries are the global ruling class. The mounting evidence of their actions over the past quarter century has not led them to curtail their destructive activity. They would like us to believe that climate change does not exist or that capitalism will develop the technology to stabilize the earth’s climate. This is a fantasy that disregards the conclusions of climate scientists around the world.

A System That Must Be Replaced
As long as the capitalist system exists, the crises we see around the world will continue. The capitalists’ political system is there to maintain the functioning of this system. It gives us the choice of electing candidates presented to us by their two parties, slightly different policies.

Efforts to reform capitalism will run into the same dead ends as they have in the past. If the power is left in the hands of the owners of capital, successful reforms will be temporary, taken back when the struggle to maintain them subsides.

As a species, we have arrived at a crossroads. The fate of humanity cannot be left in the hands of the tiny elite who own and control the world’s resources. Either we put an end to capitalism or we will likely face our own extinction. Our future depends on what each of us chooses to do. It depends on the millions of workers around the world who make this society run. Collectively we have the power to put an end to capitalism and replace it with a new society run by those who do the work and for the benefit of all of humanity.

www.speakoutsocialists.org
The Future is Socialism

The functioning of capitalism, its ceaseless quest for ever-greater profit, the engine of the entire global economy, is at the center of every major problem society faces today: from wars and violence and exploitation and despair to economic crises, poverty, and racism. To confront these problems, a complete social transformation of society is necessary, a revolutionary change of the entire foundation of society, to create a new society, democratically run by the majority to serve the interests of all. There is a name for this kind of society: it is called socialism.

A Real Participatory Democracy

A socialist society would mean a society collectively run by the majority of people to meet the needs of humanity. Decisions would be made democratically by those who work in a workplace, live in a neighborhood, city or town and who are directly affected by the consequences of those decisions. On a larger scale, decisions would be made in an open way, guided by what is best for the majority – not a minority of profit-seekers. If elected representatives ignored the interests of the majority, they would be immediately recyclable. To prevent careerism from arising among those administering various aspects of society, they would receive the wages of the average worker. The resources and means of production would be under the control of the 99%. And the majority, directly or through their representatives, would decide how much to produce based on careful planning.

A Complete Transformation of Society

A socialist society means an end to capitalism, on an international scale, not pressuring an owning class to “do the right thing.” There could be no such thing as “socialism in one country,” with that country cut off from and defending itself from the capitalist powers of the rest of the world. Just as capitalism is an international system, in order for socialism to thrive, it too must be international, stamping out every last vestige of the capitalist order. Problems that seem insurmountable under capitalism could begin to be addressed and ultimately eliminated on a global scale. War would be unthinkable in a society that truly represented the interests of the world’s people. The basic necessities of life could be guaranteed to all. The problem today is not a lack of goods and services – in fact there is abundance – an abundance of waste. If the purpose of production was to meet social needs, then production could be planned and waste could be eliminated. In a socialist society, life would be transformed. Innovation could finally be freed from the traps of profit and the need to constantly expand to generate more capital.

Limitless Human Potential

Imagine if all children were encouraged to explore and develop their talents. Imagine if every child could try any sport, play any instrument, could carry out science experiments and art projects without limitation. Imagine if learning was collective and not competitive. We could learn with experts in their fields: music with musicians, sports with the athletes, biology with biologists, physics with physicists, and so on. We could learn with all the experts in society, working collectively.

A World Based on Peaceful Collaboration and International Cooperation

A socialist world would mean a world based on peaceful collaboration and international cooperation of working people - not the exploiters who rule today.

A Fair and Just Distribution of the World’s Resources

A socialist world would mean a world where the resources and means of production are distributed equally and not based on anyone’s wealth or status. It would mean an end to the privilege of owning and dominating the means of production. In a socialist world, the power of the economy would be in the hands of the majority who produced it. It would mean an end to the hold of the capitalist class over the economy, which controls the means of production and bickers over who gets what. In a socialist world, the working class and the poor would control the economy and decide how the resources are distributed.

A New System of Planning

A socialist world would mean a system of planning that is democratic, participatory, and accountable to the people. It would mean a world where economic decisions are made democratically, with input from all concerned. It would mean a world where the economy is planned to meet the social needs of all, not just the needs of the capitalist class. It would mean a world where the economy is planned to serve the interests of all, not just the interests of profit-seekers.

A Culture of Revolutionary Solidarity

A socialist world would mean a world where revolutionary solidarity is at the center of all social and political activity. It would mean a world where people come together to build revolutionary organizations and movements. It would mean a world where people come together to build political parties and unions that represent the interests of the working class and the poor. It would mean a world where people come together to build a revolutionary movement to transform society and create a new society.

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