

# Climate demonstration in Washington - Ecosocialism: The Time is Now!

Sunday 24 February 2013, by [DAVENPORT Nicholas](#) (Date first published: 10 February 2013).

The Forward on Climate demonstration in Washington, DC on Sunday , February 17<sup>th</sup> [\[1\]](#) will be a landmark event in the history of the US environmental movement and a major step forward for the struggle. Radicals and revolutionaries, including Solidarity along with other socialist organizations, are organizing an Ecosocialist Contingent at the demonstration [\[2\]](#). (Details of the contingent are at the end of this article.)

Despite great advances in changing popular consciousness on the gravity of the ecological crisis, mainstream environmentalism has been ineffective at dealing with the crisis because its ideology is based on a compromise with capitalism. The leadership of these mainstream groups hope to introduce reforms and regulations that will supposedly make the system sustainable. But this goal is impossible, as ecological sustainability runs counter to the profit motive [\[3\]](#) and imperialism [\[4\]](#). Because they are unwilling to give up on pursuing a compromise with capitalism, this strategy must, in the end, compromise on ecology.

Major campaigns of liberal environmental organizations often take a soft stand on destructive practices like fracking, calling for regulation rather than bans. They fail to take a systemic view of the crisis threatening the planet, and to keep protest within the bounds of the current system they adopt a strategy based on lobbying — not mobilizing people in a way that can build real power. Such a strategy is so non-threatening to polluting industries that natural gas companies gave over \$25 million to the Sierra Club between 2007 and 2010 [\[5\]](#).

Environmental activist groups, like 350.org [\[6\]](#), are clear and honest about the urgency of combating the climate emergency, and have displayed strength in bringing people out to protests. 350.org's campaign for campus divestment from the fossil fuel industry is an edxciting initiative! 350 is a leading sponsor of the Forward on Climate demonstration (along with the Sierra Club, which may be seeing the bankruptcy of a lobbying-based strategy).

This looks to be the largest U.S. climate demonstration to date, and it's an inspiring and sorely needed effort. The demonstration is politically strong in taking a firm stance against the Keystone tar-sands oil pipeline, demanding that president Obama reject it.

The demonstration, held on President's Day weekend, expresses faith in Obama, calling him to take leadership to move "forward on climate" (without specifying what that should look like). The problem is that Obama is beholden to the corporate interests which run this society, and financed his election. Although he is no doubt personally aware of the gravity of the climate crisis, president Obama has consistently supported continuing the United States' reliance on fossil fuels and building new oil pipelines [\[7\]](#).

We believe that Obama is unlikely to reject the Keystone pipeline, as he will be under intense pressure from oil interests as well as the Canadian government. But even if he does – which would be a tremendous victory for the movement! – this is a long way from truly solving the climate crisis, which will require a break from the endless exploitation of natural resources and the increasing

production of consumer goods which corporations depend on for their bottom line.

In order to win immediate demands like rejection of Keystone XL, we need to show political elites that there is a real threat that they will lose their legitimacy in the eyes of the public if they approve the pipeline. And ultimately, we need a revolutionary transformation of our political and economic structures in order to create a sustainable society free of oppression.

This points to the need for radicals to build a current within the climate and environmental movements that advances a revolutionary strategy based on ecosocialist politics. Such a strategy would be based on challenging political elites, maintaining independence from pro-capitalist politicians, and building alliances with struggles for social justice, workers' rights, and the liberation of women and oppressed peoples around the globe. Such a strategy is the only way to win the immediate ecological reforms we need to avoid catastrophe, as well as to build a new, truly sustainable society.

Ecosocialism would put forth a vision of a society worth living in, truly democratic at all levels, in which production and consumption would be carried out to fulfill people's needs and regenerate the earth, not to produce private profit. An opportunity to start building an ecosocialist current will come on the 17<sup>th</sup>, when members of Solidarity, the International Socialist Organization, and other radical organizations will march together as the Ecosocialist Contingent in the Forward on Climate demonstration.

We hope to begin building a radical current within the movement, in order to overcome the limitations in the strategies pursued by mainstream environmental groups and build grassroots power that can win. Through our participation in the demonstration, we'll show that ecosocialism is a real force within the movement. Anyone who supports ecosocialist politics is welcome to join us.

*The Ecosocialist Contingent will meet at 11 A.M. on Sunday, February 17<sup>th</sup> at the Smithsonian Metro station (12<sup>th</sup> St. and Jefferson Drive SW) in DC. If you're in DC the evening before the demo, come to the forum, "How to Stop Climate Change: A Socialist Response", Saturday, February 16<sup>th</sup> from 7 to 9 P.M. at All Souls Unitarian Church, 1500 Harvard St. NW. The forum, sponsored by the International Socialist Organization, will feature several speakers, including a member of the Ecosocialist Working Group of Solidarity and Chris Williams, author of Ecology and Socialism.*

**Nick Davenport**

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**P.S.**

\* <http://www.solidarity-us.org/site/node/3801>

\* Nick Davenport is a member of Solidarity and an activist involved in environmental organizing in Baltimore.

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**Footnotes**

[1] <http://action.sierraclub.org/site/PageServer?pagename=forwardonclimate>

[2] <http://ecologicalsocialists.com/>

[3] See on ESSF (article 27246), [Climate Change: The Tragic Farce At Doha](#).

[4] <http://www.solidarity-us.org/site/node/2647>

[5] <http://science.time.com/2012/02/02/exclusive-how-the-sierra-club-took-millions-from-the-natural-gas-industry-and-why-they-stopped/>

[6] <http://350.org/>

[7] See on ESSF (article 27928), [From North America: Tar Sands – The world’s filthiest fuel](#).