

Developing working class environmentalism

Arthur J. Miller

The basic cause of most environmental problems is the system of industrial greed: capitalism, both private and state. The owners of industry treat workers like they treat the rest of the environment. Our environmentalism should come from the understanding that all things are connected.

I do not say that all things that eco-groups do are bad. But we tend to follow the direction of groups that do not have the same interests as ours. Because of this we get burdened with baggage harmful to our class. For this reason and many others, we need to develop our own form of environmentalism based on working class interests.

Much environmentalism of other eco-groups is based on the eurocentric idea of superiority. They seek to define the natural world as having values which do not exist in it. They see humans as something above or outside of the natural world. This is why they come in conflict with indigenous people and other workers.

Humans are not outside of the environment. Rather they are part of it. Thus, human conditions should be as much a part of the environmental movement as the conditions of anything else.

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Workers who are forced to work for wages and workers who are able to work outside of the wage system come under attack by the industrial rulers for the same reason: industrial greed. Thus, the workers struggling against the wage system controlled by the industrial rulers, and those workers struggling to keep from being controlled by the industrial rulers are all a part of the same struggle. All things are connected.

Often other eco-groups will blame both types of workers for those things for which the industrial rulers are responsible; and the sacrifices these groups call for often are sacrifices from our class.

Many eco-groups are more inclined to look at the effects rather than the real causes of environmental problems. They also tend to focus on pet issues rather than the environment as a whole. They will come out against something they don't like and then present some type of alternative. But often they will not look at the effects that the alternative has on the environment.

A good example of this is solar power. Many of the systems I have seen, which involve moving solar heated water from the panels into the house, use copper tubing. The largest strip mine in the U.S. is a copper mine, which by the way is on land stolen from the Western Shoshone. Real environmentalism must look at the effect everything has on the environment, not just pet issues.

Something that we learn when we take a good look at all industrial production is that ALL of it contributes to the problem. It is not so much industrial production itself, but rather the values of industrial production, being maximum profit for the owners at the expense of everything else.

Just as workers want better pay, they should also want better environmental conditions. Those first exposed to the hazards of industrial production are workers. The next to be exposed are working class communities. When was the last time you saw the owners of industry living next to a chemical plant?

Working class environmentalism would start at the point of production and from there struggle for earth-safe industrial production. It would create a struggle against the owners of industry, uniting on-the-job struggles, working class community struggles and the struggles of those who are resisting being taken over by the greedy industrial system.

Being that we are a revolutionary working class organization, we will use the skills of working people to transform the capitalist industrial system into a system where all of the environment matters, including humans. We will base our production on the well-being of all rather than the profit of a few.

This revolutionary struggle will mean that we will be opposed by the owners and there will be affects upon us due to changes. Thus, we need to stand together in solidarity, be it a strike, be it the resistance of indigenous people, be it against such things as racism, and be it the hardships that change or economic devastation has on working class communities. Thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

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