

**"We've known for some time that we have to worry about the impacts of climate change on our children's and grandchildren's generations. But we now have to worry about ourselves as well."**

-- Margaret Beckett, British Secretary of State for Environment

## **The well-bred terrorists?**

Near the venue of the UNFCCC-COP 8 in New Delhi, a group of youth and children from different parts of India gathered in protest at the global negotiations on climate change.

The children's protest reminded us of the ruthlessness and callousness of the ongoing climate change negotiations that has clearly lost all consideration for the future generation while it has failed to deal with the ecological perils facing the present generation.

The negotiators have reduced all human and ecological systems to the calculus of finance and the logic of global capitalist development while nature, local communities, equity, peace, the health of the earth are relegated to the background.

Quite rightly, the children targetted the Government of the United States (US) - the planet's biggest polluter - that has done everything possible to wreck and manipulate the negotiations to make them meaningless.

The President of the US and his corporate buddies, willing to destroy the earth and pawn the interests of future generations in sheer greed and for their personal gain, resemble the modern equivalent of the medieval torturers.

Albert Camus, the French writer, writing about the atrocities committed by the fascists in Europe before the Second World War, said that the ordinary torturer while taking the Paris train to work, and having been well brought up (like the present US President Bush and his dad), would give up their seats to old women on the train. This, Camus said, was a terrifying example of good manners and behavior in public while deep down remained the ruthless mindset of the torturer and terrorist.

The US President and his gang of corporate hoodlums who use public relations machinery to hide their unethical and, in the long run, murderous behavior as they ignore the threats to the earth and human civilization cannot be seen as different from Camus's torturers taking the Paris train to work.



Consider the Bush administration's climate change strategy and energy plans: US emissions, already the highest in the world, would rise by another 20 per cent (6 per cent to 37 per cent) from today's levels by 2012; also, **by 2012, US emissions would be allowed to rise to 38 per cent above 1990 levels, which is 45 per cent higher than the initial targets set by the Kyoto Protocol.**

As the well-mannered ecological terrorists and their cohorts continue to wreak planetary destruction, and the international negotiations become not only futile but actually promise to

worsen global warming, is there no hope? There is, if decent human beings around the world join together to make these modern day market and financial capitalists pay for their actions.

In a Gandhian sense of moral boycott, there should be consumer boycotts on an ever-increasing scale around the world against these transnational corporate entities especially US corporations. Companies like Coco Cola and Pepsi Cola as well as companies like Ford and ExxonMobil that represent the rapacious face of greed and ecological destruction should be targeted for a social boycott around the world. Now.

## Dealing with the corporate state

Ross Gelbspan, journalist and the author of 'The Heat is On', writes, "The relationship between ExxonMobil and the current White House administration has been one of lockstep ever since President Bush took office.

"Last year, ExxonMobil sent a memo to the White House requesting the ouster of Dr. Robert Watson, then-chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and the replacement with one of two known 'greenhouse skeptics'. Shortly thereafter, the Bush administration withdrew support for Watson's second term, Watson lost the IPCC election, and was replaced by India's Dr. Rajendra Pachauri".

Despite the behind the scene manipulations by Exxon to get "more acceptable" persons like Dr. Pachauri into the climate change negotiations, the company's public position as a 'greenhouse gas sceptic' according to Gelbspan, suddenly changed following an unusually successful move by dissident shareholders.

At the ExxonMobil Annual Meeting in May 2002, a group of shareholders introduced an alternative resolution calling on the company to stop its disinformation about global warming and to develop a plan for renewable energy. While such alternative resolutions are normally considered successful if they garner five percent of the vote, the alternative resolution won about 21 percent of the votes at the Annual Meeting.

The shareholder resolution, which was promoted by the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility and Campaign ExxonMobil had a significant impact on top executives inside the company. If this is what can be done to the world's third largest and powerful corporation like Exxon, sustained citizens' action can create the processes for accountability of rogue corporations and their colluders in national governments.

This is because many responsible civil society groups in the US are also working at great odds to enforce accountability and good governance in their own society and government.

Groups like Interfaith Corporate Responsibility or Multinational Monitor are important allies of those fighting for accountability of governments like those of the Bush administration and exposing the state's complicity in putting the interests of corporations before that of people.

Of course, there are also civil society groups (funded either by these corporations or the US government) who try to make these corporations sound like nice people.

# The Corporate State and the Public Interest

The tragedy of September 11 has put an end to the ridiculous notion, popular especially in the United States (US), that the best government is the least government. Public sector fire fighters, police and health workers responded heroically to the violence of September 11. The anthrax spread took the lives of several public sector postal workers.

September 11 and its aftermath has made clear that there are some functions that uniquely belong in the public sector; that private sector profit motives may lead to shoddier performance than that of the public sector; and that the government has a vital role in managing and directing the economy.

The debate now is not over whether there should be government, or whether it should intervene in the economy, but how, on what terms, and for what purpose. For now, the wartime opportunists are winning this debate, funneling government resources to narrow corporate and elite interests.

## A student speaks ...

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land are engaged in sericulture where they plant mulberry trees. They are less affected since the mulberry trees can cope with any delays in the seasonal rainfall. But the farmers who cultivate cabbage, tomato or similar crops suffer the impacts of inadequate or delayed rainfall. Sometimes they can lose up to Rs. 10,000 if a crop fails and then they get into debt.

The rise in temperature also affects our health; some diseases like dengue fever are now appearing. Moreover, the traditional varieties of plants are disappearing, and new varieties of hybrid plants are being introduced. But the traditional species have characters that relate to certain specific climate. We are not able to cope up with the new varieties that need more water, pesticides, insecticides and fertilisers. When the temperature rises, transpiration increases, and the leaves shrink. So diseases like Blight Disease attack the potato crop.

We need more programmes for the students to make them think. The students do not fully know

No area is more important in this regard than energy. If the U.S. government had invested even modestly 20 years ago in solar and renewables, or created modest incentives for private sector investment, the world might be a very different place. It didn't, and the United States remains oil and fossil fuel dependent.

Unfortunately, the US energy plan envisions ongoing reliance on fossil fuels and nuclear, and the oil barons have sought to use September 11 as an excuse to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for drilling.

The public-minded spirit of the day has evinced a political climate hospitable to pushing forward with public interest agendas in many areas. But, so far, it has been the corporate lobby shops and their allies that have responded most effectively to the political moment, with narrow interests looting the treasury and working people and the long-term environmental concerns ignored.

courtesy Multinational Monitor

about the impacts of climate change. We are planning to conduct debates and screening of documentary films on the issue of climate change.

We are told that climate change takes place when fossil fuels are burnt. In our village, we use energy for our survival. But the rich people especially those from the countries like US use fuel for luxury. There are single persons driving cars in the rich countries. Therefore their per capita emissions are higher. Also, advertisements promote products like cars, air conditioners, refrigerators, motorbikes and so on that directly contribute to climate change. Moreover, they also ask us to change our traditional farming methods.

Right now there is a struggle going on in our village. There is a silk-weaving company called Pearl Valley Silks Ltd. The factory produces bad smell and heavy pollution through its effluents. The villagers have protested strongly. In response, the factory owners with the help of the police attacked the village at night and many people were beaten up and were injured. There is now a legal case against the factory and police.

## A student speaks ...

My name is Rashmi. I am nineteen years old and I am studying in my second year of university in Bangalore. My father is a farmer. We are living in Shettihalli located 30 kilometers from Bangalore.

Samvada, a nongovernmental organisation, used to conduct programmes for students in Bangalore to introduce us to social and political issues. I have attended workshops on water and on climate change. These issues are very challenging and I was able to translate the material that I picked up at the workshops into Kannada language and conduct programmes for students in my college.

The programmes in Delhi conducted by NGOs on Climate Change alongside COP 8 are very impressive. I was especially moved by the rally of village people at the Vigyan Bhavan.

There is great impact from climate change on agriculture; as I come from a farming family, we are directly experiencing the changes in our lives. The seasonal rains are getting delayed making it difficult for cropping. As small-scale farmers, we suffer very much since we are having only one or one and a half acres of land. We cannot buy pump sets to pump underground water; digging wells is even more costly. So we depend only on the seasonal rainfall. The farmers with a little more  
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## Coke the Evil Doer

Coke. Where do we begin?  
Let's start with Harry Potter.

Earlier this year, Coca-Cola reportedly paid Warner Brothers (a unit of AOL Time Warner) \$150 million for the exclusive global marketing rights to the first Harry Potter movie and possibly the sequels.

Coca-Cola is aggressively marketing to children by featuring Harry Potter imagery on packages and in advertising for its carbonated (Coca-Cola, Minute Maid, and other brands) and noncarbonated (Hi-C, Minute Maid) soft drinks.

Coke's Potter promotion, called "Live The Magic", also uses contests, games and a web site to entice kids to drink more soft drinks.

"Children and adults worldwide are outraged that their beloved Harry Potter is being used to market 'liquid candy' to kids", says Michael F. Jacobson, executive director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest. "Over-consumption of Coca-Cola and other sugar-laden soft drinks contributes to obesity and diabetes, reduced nutrient intake and tooth decay",



The movie won't include product placements and Coca-Cola says that its marketing program includes a literacy campaign. But, "the bottom line is that an adored literary phenomenon is being put to work to sell more junk food", says SaveHarry.com organizer Jacobson.

"It is outrageous that Coca-Cola is using the magic of Harry Potter to lure kids to drink more soda pop. Consumption of soft drinks has soared over the past two decades, contributing to the doubling in the percentage of obese teenagers", says Dr. Patience White, professor of medicine and pediatrics at George Washington University Medical Center. "That obesity epidemic is fueling a diabetes epidemic".

According to US Department of Agriculture (USDA) surveys, 20 years ago teenagers drank almost twice as much milk as soda pop. Today they drink twice as much soda pop as milk.

A recent study done at the Harvard School of Public Health found that increased soft-drink consumption was associated with increased obesity in sixth- and seventh-grade students.

courtesy Multinational Monitor

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