

PEOPLE'S WORLD

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July 25, 2015

Decline of Earth's plant life threatens human life

By Thomas Riggins

A recent scientific study comparing the role of plants in the sustainability of life on Earth and the current rapid destruction of such life has convinced many scientists that human civilization and well-being will be placed in jeopardy. Rainforests and grass lands around the world are being destroyed at an alarming rate to make room for palm oil plantations, commercial crops of no intrinsic value (tobacco), and the practices of illegal logging for the furniture and lumber trades.

This has led to a massive destruction of the total biomass of the planet all of which is fueled by the immense profits available under capitalism for the private exploitation of natural resources at the expense of sustainable use and of preservation in the interests of environmental conservation for the common good of humanity. The drive for profits is led by major private and state owned capitalist enterprises which, in addition to using the political systems they encounter in many countries to get control of the resources they intend to plunder, also resort to bribery, corruption and other illegal operations in order to attain their ends.

Dr. John Schramski, of the University of Georgia, has recently completed (as lead author) a study of the effects of the overexploitation of Earth's plant biomass (Science Daily 7/15/15



“Continued destruction of Earth's plant life places humans in jeopardy”). The rich and diverse animal and plant life of today is the result of several hundred million years of evolution that began when simple one celled organisms developed which were able to chemically change the sunlight they received into useful energy which they could metabolize.

The fact that plants can create their own “food” from sunlight allowed animals to evolve us-

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ing plants as their source of food: in directly feeding off of the sun. Dr. Schramski used the laws of thermodynamics (the physics of heat in relation to mechanical energy) to calculate the amount of chemical energy the plant world produces and the amount that humanity is at present consuming or

Humans are draining energy much faster than it can be replenished.

destroying via the reduction of forests and other plant environments.

"You can think of the Earth like a battery that has been charged very slowly over billions of years," he said. "The sun's energy is stored in plants and fossil fuels, but humans are draining energy much faster than it can be replenished."

In the last 2,000 years human activity has reduced half of the battery charge (i.e., the biomass accumulated from living carbon over the last several million years). In just the last one hundred years about 10% of that biomass was wiped out according to the article. This destruction means the Earth has less and less energy to keep the food webs and "biochemical balances" going upon which we all depend.

Dr. Schramski pointed out that, "As the planet becomes less hospitable and more people depend on fewer available energy options, their standard of living and very survival will become increasingly vulnerable to fluctuations, such as droughts, disease epidemics and social unrest."

If humans survive this accelerated loss of biomass Dr. Schramski, and his co-authors (James

H.Brown and David Gattie) predict that our species will have to abandon our current civilization and return to hunting and gathering or simple gardening, as populations will crash and large-scale industrial agriculture will be impossible. [Perhaps the world population, after the die off, will be about what it was in 10,000 B.C. or so (one to 10 million people).]

Dr. Schramski says, "I'm not an ardent environmentalist; my training and my scientific work are rooted in thermodynamics. These laws are absolute and incontrovertible and once it's exhausted, there is absolutely nothing to replace it."

The scientists are hopeful that we can take the drastic measures needed to halt this downward spiral to the paleolithic or extinction. "I call myself a realistic optimist. I've gone through these numbers countless times looking for some kind of mitigating factor that suggests we're wrong," Dr. Schramski said, "but I haven't found it."



Thomas Riggins is a retired city housing manager.

Reds join festival in Columbus

By Anita Waters

Columbus Ohio once again hosted the nation's largest and oldest volunteer-run music and community festival, known locally as ComFest, during the last weekend in June. This year the Ohio District of the CPUSA sponsored a table on behalf of the district's youth organizers which was staffed by young and old communists from across the state. During the three-day fest they spoke to hundreds of people, sold progressive literature and union-made apparel, and signed up dozens of people for the area's mailing list.

John D'Alessandro of the Cincinnati young Communists said. "At a time when people are suffering under grotesque and crippling student debt, I think these events are a good example of the Communist Party's continuing dedication to the causes and voices of young people in our country. We're experiencing an unprecedented period of growth because we speak to people where they are and offer real solutions to the problems of our time. The solution is socialism, and we're going to

fight like hell for it."

Ohio District Organizer for the CPUSA, Rick Nagin, spoke from one of the ComFest stages, celebrating the historic Supreme Court decisions and reporting on a Gallup Poll that shows that nearly half the people polled - 47% - would vote for a socialist for president. Among Democrats, that number goes up to 59%, and for young people 18-29, it goes up to 69%. Nagin quoted Bob Dylan: "The times, they are a-changin' ... The richest 1% of families have \$30 trillion in assets- that's \$30 million for each of their families." Nagin called on the crowd to demand that the US use its resources "to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure, to develop renewable energy industry, and to provide high quality free health care and education for all."

Among the festival's guiding principles are "working for the collective good of all people rather than for personal gain...cooperation and collective activity rather than competition and individual profit." At the table 60 festival goers signed a "Do you want to attend a CPUSA meeting form."

These events are a good example of the Communist Party's dedication to the causes and voices of young people.

President Obama visits with young prison inmates

By Associated Press

President Obama rode into a razor wire-surrounded federal prison Thursday and said he met young inmates “who made mistakes that aren’t that different than the mistakes I made.”

The president came to the medium-security El Reno Federal Correctional Institution near Oklahoma City to press his case that the nation needs to reconsider the way crime is controlled and prisoners are rehabilitated. The president met with inmates and walked past rows of empty cells secured by large grey doors. Prison officials opened cell no. 123 for Obama and he gazed at its sparse trappings: a double bunk bed and third bed along the wall, a toilet and sink, along with a small bookcase and three lockers. “Three full-grown men in a nine-by-10 cell,” he said.

The White House said Obama was the first sitting president to visit a federal prison.

Young people who make mistakes, he said, could be thriving if they had access to resources and support structures “that would allow them to survive those mistakes.”

“When they describe their youth and their childhood, these are young people who made mistakes that aren’t that different than the mistakes I made,” Obama said.

Among the changes Obama is seeking is the re-



duction or outright elimination of severe mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent offenders. Earlier this week, he used his presidential powers to shorten the prison sentences of 46 people convicted on charges involving drugs.

The president has also called for restoring voting rights to felons who have served their sentences, and said employers should “ban the box” that asks job applicants about their criminal histories.

Obama has expressed hope that Congress will send him legislation to address the issue before he leaves office in 18 months, given the level of interest in the issue among Republican lawmakers and presidential candidates.

Support on Capitol Hill for prison reform goes beyond just members of the president’s own party. GOP Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., a 2016 presidential contender, is pushing to restore voting rights to nonviolent felons who have served their sentences.

Another GOP candidate, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, was giving a speech Thursday calling for changes that in part would give nonviolent drug offenders a better chance at rebuilding their lives.

Half a million people were behind bars in 1980, a figure that has since quadrupled to its current total of more than 2.2 million inmates.

President Obama said there must be a distinction between young people “doing stupid things” and violent criminals.

LOCAL NEWS

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American Federation of Teachers endorses Hillary Clinton

By Mark Gruenberg

The American Federation of Teachers executive board endorsed former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for the Democratic presidential nomination. Its convention, next year, will make a general election endorsement. The announcement was made by AFT President Randi Weingarten to the union's Teach 2015 professional development conference here. It drew a long and loud ovation from the 2,800 delegates.

"There are candidates who respect the vital work that we do," educating the nation's kids, Weingarten declared. The board and rank-and-file teachers interviewed Clinton, Sen. Bernie Sanders, and former Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley. None of them flinched or floundered, she said. "Each of them are great people and each of them said, in no uncertain terms, that elected leaders must respect educators and work with them and their unions."

Weingarten quoted Clinton as saying, "Where I come from, teachers are the solution" to society's problems. "I strongly believe unions are part of the solution, too."

So with a 3-to-1 ratio on AFT members responding to union polls demanding an endorsement now, and the same ratio demanding Clinton, the union's board voted to do so.

AFT also invited all the GOP hopefuls to participate in its endorsement process, but none of them even responded to the questionnaire, Weingarten said. Their attitude, she said, was dismissive.

Ya ondea en Washington la bandera cubana

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Por primera vez en más de medio siglo se escucharon hoy en esta capital las notas del Himno de Bayamo y se izó la bandera de la estrella solitaria para dejar oficialmente reinaugurada la embajada de Cuba en los Estados Unidos.

Los dos países, distanciados desde el 3 de enero de 1961, cuentan con embajadas plenas en sus respectivas capitales desde el primer segundo de este 20 de julio, en cumplimiento de un acuerdo entre los presidentes Barack Obama y Raúl Castro.

Más de medio centenar de personas, franqueados por varias decenas de cadenas de televisión y periodistas acreditados, están presentes en la sede diplomática ubicada en la Calle 16 de Washington para asistir a un evento calificado de histórico.

Ahora esperan escuchar la intervención del ministro cubano de Relaciones Exteriores, Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, quien se convirtió la víspera en el primer canciller de la Isla en efectuar una visita oficial a los Estados Unidos.

Rodríguez Parrilla será recibido por el secretario de Estado, John Kerry, tras el fin de la ceremonia y se espera que ambos efectúen una rueda prensa.

Una treintena de personalidades de la política, la cultura, la juventud, las ciencias, las organizaciones de masa y el deporte de nuestro país viajó a esta capital para unirse al más de medio millar de amigos y personalidades de la política norteamericana que fueron invitados a la ceremonia.

La secretaria asistente para los Asuntos del Hemisferio Occidental del Departamento de Estado, Roberta Jacobson, asiste también al momento en que se materializan más de tres rondas de conversaciones y otros encuentros específicos para pulir los detalles del restablecimiento de relaciones y la apertura de embajadas.

La decisión de dar este paso fue anunciada por Obama y Raúl de manera simultánea el pasado 17 de diciembre y el 1 de julio de este año se intercambiaron las cartas que fijaron la fecha oficial para el 20 de julio.

Según los líderes de ambos países, a partir de ahora se abre una etapa más larga y compleja en la que Cuba y Estados Unidos buscarán avanzar en la normalización de sus vínculos.

El principal obstáculo en ese camino sigue siendo el bloqueo económico, pero hay otros temas a tratar como la devolución del territorio ilegalmente ocupado por la Base Naval en Guantánamo, el cese de las transmisiones radiales y televisivas ilegales, la eliminación de los programas dirigidos a promover la subversión y la desestabilización internas, y la compensación al pueblo cubano por los daños humanos y económicos provocados a causa de las políticas de Estados Unidos.

Por la parte estadounidense ha trascendido que el tema de las compensaciones por las nacionalizaciones de propiedades al comienzo de la Revolución es un punto de interés.

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