

The California fires and the case for socialism

Statement of David Moore—California gubernatorial candidate of the Socialist Equality Party
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As the Socialist Equality Party candidate for California governor, I call for the broadest mobilization of resources to fight the catastrophic fires that have erupted across the state. To protect future generations, we must carry out a massive redistribution of wealth from the state's billionaires and put it into integrating and modernizing electric infrastructure and protecting workers from the catastrophic impact of climate change.

The ongoing and catastrophic fires have consumed more than 1,470,000 acres in California this year and at least 2,540,000 acres nationally. They are an indictment of the capitalist system and every one of its political and media servants.

Just three years after the Camp Fire destroyed the town of Paradise, the Dixie Fire has burned through Greenville and become the largest single fire recorded in the state. Harrowing images of people fleeing their homes as beleaguered firefighters do their best to stem the blazes have shocked millions around the world.

Air quality remains hazardous or unhealthy in large parts of both California and Oregon, and states as far east as Utah and Colorado are impacted. Health experts warn that prolonged exposure to such small particulates in the atmosphere poses a particular danger to the young, elderly and those with respiratory conditions such as Covid-19, asthma or other long-term health problems.

Immediate responsibility for these disasters lies with the state's utility companies like Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), which have prioritized paying billions in dividends to investors over maintaining and modernizing the electrical grid. The courts have consistently found them criminally liable for the wildfires their faulty equipment has sparked. To escape their obligations to wildfire victims, PG&E declared bankruptcy, and the Newsom administration responded by bailing them out with rate hikes and public funds.

PG&E pled guilty to 84 counts of involuntary manslaughter after its role in starting the Camp Fire in 2018 and the destruction of the town of Paradise, which was caused by poorly maintained power lines. It has also admitted that this year's Dixie Fire, which started near where the Camp Fire originated, was also likely started by a similar problem, a fallen tree downing a power line. Yet not a single executive has been charged, much less arrested, for their role in destroying workers' livelihoods and lives.

Newsom's bourgeois opponents in the recall election are equally beholden to the interests of the ruling class. Right-wing talk show host Larry Elder has asserted that he's "not sure" whether or not climate change has caused wildfires to increase in severity, a statement which flies in the face of overwhelming scientific evidence.

Both the Democrats and Republicans are responsible for the deregulation that has occurred over decades, allowing utility companies to operate with virtual impunity while at the same time slashing funding for necessary public services such as wildfire prevention in one of the most wildfire-prone regions on the planet. At the same time, PG&E and other utility companies continue to rake in billions.

The situation is the same nationally. The budget for the United States Forest Service has largely remained static through successive Democratic and Republican administrations even as fires have grown in size. In effect, this has meant that resources previously directed to preventing fires are used to fight them after they break out, meaning that the next year's fires are even larger, in a continuous and increasingly dangerous cycle.

The fires across California reflect the broader changes resulting from global warming that will have increasingly devastating consequences. The most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

report, issued by the United Nations, has now causally linked increased global temperatures caused by human industrial and agricultural activity to specific weather events like droughts, heat waves, hurricanes, flooding and wildfires, including the wildfires in the western US.

Without a concerted, systematic and scientific response to climate change on a global scale, the Camp and Dixie fires will become normal, and even more devastating extreme weather events are on the horizon.

As with the Covid-19 pandemic, a fight against climate change is blocked by two interrelated factors: First, the subordination of social need to private profit. The continued overuse of fossil fuels and other activities that generate greenhouse gases are driven by the imperative to pump out more money for corporate executives, hedge fund managers and Wall Street bankers, as well as the politicians and media figures who defend and ultimately justify their actions.

Second, a rational and scientific response to climate change is blocked by the division of the world into competing nation-states, each beholden to the interests of their own ruling elites.

The real solution is for the working class to fight for its own independent politics. Climate change, like the coronavirus pandemic, is unsolvable without a global strategy that places social need over private profit. The massive fortunes of the ruling class must be expropriated, and the resources diverted to fight the immediate problem of wildfires and the broader problem of climate change.

The Socialist Equality Party demands:

- A massive influx of resources to fight the current wildfires and for wildfire prevention efforts.
- Full compensation for those who have lost livelihoods and loved ones as a result of the fires.
- Genuine international coordination to abate and ultimately reverse the impacts of climate change.
- The investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the fires, including PG&E executives and public officials that allowed the company to improperly maintain its infrastructure and equipment.

I urge all those who agree with this perspective to contact my campaign and take up the fight for socialism among the working class in California, the United States and around the world!

Halting climate change in the end requires the

intervention of the working class and the scientific and rational restructuring of industry and agriculture on a global scale. This can only be done through a political struggle by the working class to end capitalism and establish a socialist society.

Support the campaign of David Moore for governor!



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