

It's all connected

Fifth Estate Collective

2017

Growing numbers of people compelled to flee their homes because of ongoing devastations of wars, cataclysmic climate change, and intractable environmental crises! It's not a Hollywood sci-fi horror movie—it's the world of industrialization and capitalism. As the system grinds on, it continues to multiply threats to all living creatures on the planet.

Last year, the 22nd Session of the UN climate conference (the Conference of the Parties—COP22) issued a report delineating “the last chance our species has of halting the trajectory of environmental disaster.” It noted that, at the minimum, there needs to be massive reductions in greenhouse emissions before 2020. But, there are no significant changes in this direction because the worldwide industrial capitalist system is one that primarily engenders and rewards continued profit maximization and monopoly of wealth and power.

Without societal transformations involving major shifts in who makes decisions about the conditions of everyday life and the ways in which decisions are made, the downward spiral for the majority of the world's inhabitants and the increasing degradation of the planet can't be stopped.

The environmental crises are forcing people everywhere to focus on the roots of oppression and exploitation, reject hierarchies of domination, and figure out in the here-and-now how to create projects that can work toward making the world a truly more egalitarian and enjoyable place for all.

The extraction, transport and use of fossil fuels have long been a focus of resistance by environmental activists and native tribal peoples. These two groups have now begun to cooperate directly, and they are being joined by more and more people from all walks of life. Over the Last year, massive mobilizations and blockages of all sorts have intensified across the world.

In the fall of 2016, as corporate plans for plundering of more difficult to reach stores of gas and oil moved ahead, so too did popular resistance and obstruction.

Blocking the current and future flow of hydrocarbons became the major goal of a variety of groups in at least ten U.S. states, several Canadian provinces, and in Mexico.

Most prominent were the massive efforts in North Dakota to halt completion of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). The activities of thousands of water protectors, including native people, environmental activists and other concerned individuals and groups, interrupted construction for weeks. They were even joined by 2,000 U.S. military veterans who came to oppose brutalization of the protesters by private and public security forces.

The Obama administration, in its last days, tried to quiet protests by canceling permissions and offering alternative pipeline routes. To nobody's surprise, the incoming Trump administration reversed this, and fully approved all work for the completion of DAPL. The water protectors have vowed to continue the struggle.

Though less noticed, opposition to climate and environment-degrading actions are being undertaken in many other parts of Turtle Island as well.

In early October, ten people, known collectively as Climate Direct Action, were arrested for attempting to halt the flow of all tar sands oil coming into the U.S. from Canada by manually turning off pipeline valves in Washington State, Minnesota, Montana, and North Dakota.

In Washington State, starting in early November, and Lasting almost two weeks, a group of protesters at the port of Olympia blocked a train shipment of material required for oil fracking in North Dakota. It began with a single person blocking the tracks, but soon grew to an encampment of nearly a hundred; they organized informal assemblies and engaged in direct self-governance.

In North Florida, starting in early November and continuing into 2017, activists of the Springs Not Pipelines! action camp created multiple blockades to halt work on the Sabel Trail natural gas pipeline. The region is the home of Seminole and Miccosukee people, containing the highest concentration of fresh water springs in the world. If this pipeline is completed, it will carry fracked gas through Alabama, Georgia, and Florida, threatening wildlife and water sources.

In Louisiana, resistance is growing to the Bayou Bridge fracked oil pipeline, which is planned to run directly through the Atchafalaya Basin, the world's Largest natural swamp, crossing 600 acres of wetlands and 700 bodies of water, endangering wildlife, including fish and shellfish, as well as the water supply for 300,000 families.

This is only a partial list. Space will not allow us to describe all that is currently going on. And, given the Trump administration's support for projects to increase extraction, transport and use of fossil fuels, there will certainly be more coming soon.

Updates on these struggles can be found at the websites of the Earth First! Journal (earthfirstjournal.org/newswire/) and Its Going Down (itsgoingdown.org/).

For updates on Sabel Trail, visit sabaltrailresistance.wordpress.com

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