

# Davos jet set get Greta greenwash

Leigh Nin, Red Flag 33, January 2020 Tue, 28/01/2020 - 10:20

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The annual gathering of the global business and political elite formally known as the World Economic Forum met at the Alpine ski resort of Davos from 21 to 24 January. Among the 3,000 attendees networking with key players from politics, NGOs and academia, were 119 billionaires worth \$500 billion between them.

An Oxfam report, timed to coincide with the forum, revealed that the world's 22 richest men are wealthier than all the women in Africa. The world's 26 richest people own as much wealth as the poorest 50 per cent of humanity. The 12.5 billion hours of unpaid care performed by women and girls each and every day amount to some \$10.8 trillion a year – three times the value of the global tech industry.

Oxfam India CEO Amitabh Behar told his Davos audience: 'Our broken economies are lining the pockets of billionaires and big business at the expense of ordinary men and women. No wonder people are starting to question whether billionaires should even exist.'

The perennial publication of statistics detailing the massive concentration of wealth in fewer hands does not usually trouble Davos attendees, or cause them to question their own right to the untrammelled accumulation of wealth. But this year's theme was climate change and, inevitably, the thin alpine air was thick with the fumes of corporate greenwashing.

Greta Thunberg, attending for a second time, was typically outspoken:

'The fact that the U.S.A. is leaving the Paris accord seems to outrage and worry everyone, and it should. But the fact that we're all about to fail the commitments you signed up for in the Paris Agreement doesn't seem to bother the people in power even the least? Any plan or policy of yours that doesn't include radical emission cuts at the source, starting today, is completely insufficient for meeting the 1.5-degree or well-below-2-degrees commitments of the Paris Agreement?.'

From the opposite side, US President Donald Trump was equally frank. He thundered: 'We must reject the perennial prophets of doom and their predictions of the apocalypse?' and jeered at environmental activists and scientists as 'the heirs of yesterday's foolish fortune tellers.' Instead Trump praised fossil fuels and deregulation, which he claimed had led to a booming US economy.

He boasted that as a result of the US becoming the 'number one producer of oil and natural gas?', it had freed itself from dependence on the Middle East, advised Europe to do the same and 'use America's vast supply?', in other words, become dependent on him. Condemning all attempts at regulation and carbon cuts he proclaimed, 'We will never let radical socialists destroy our economy.'

Meanwhile, Davos founder Klaus Schwab, was touting a manifesto for 'stakeholder capitalism'. Making 'private corporations trustees of society' is, according to Schwab, 'the best response to today's social

and environmental challenges? and to be recommended as an alternative to ?shareholder capitalism? (USA) and ?state capitalism? (China).

Essentially, Schwab is proposing that the banks and industries owned by his audience should take responsibility for the welfare of workers and the environment, not through regulation or taxation, but as a voluntary act of charity to stave off the kind of social breakdown which is bad for business.

Davos certainly assembles many of the world?s most powerful people. But it is worse than useless when it comes to addressing ? let alone solving ? social inequality and poverty, never mind climate change. The capitalist elite cannot solve the world?s problems because these problems are generated by the normal functioning of their system: the competitive profit-driven exploitation of humanity and nature which creates the vast wealth they appropriate for themselves ? and the tiny fraction they convert into charity.

### Resistance

Nearly 20 years ago, Davos was the trigger for demonstrations in the alpine resort and around the world against globalising capitalism. This anticapitalist movement targeted environmental destruction, third world debt slavery, and the privatisation of public health, education and social welfare systems.

From Davos, the movement spread to the summit sieges of the IMF and WTO meetings in Prague and Genoa. It gathered hundreds of thousands of activists at the World Social Forums in Brazil, India, Africa, and the European Social Forums in Florence and Athens. It reached its peak in the 20 million strong worldwide demonstration against the invasion of Iraq, a bloody imperialist adventure whose results continue to drive wars and revolutions across the region today.

Whilst awareness of capitalism?s crimes has intensified in the last 20 years, and although the world economy teetered on the edge of breakdown in 2008-09 and could soon do so again, this international coordination of resistance has dissipated, or fragmented into single issues. Since capitalism is the root cause of all these problems, we cannot afford this dislocation.

Appealing to the elites inside their mountain top conference centres is a waste of time. We need a gathering of activists from all fronts of struggle: climate change, exploitation and inequality; war, sexism and racism. Our aim must be to create a pan-global movement to put an end to capitalism.

### Name the enemy

Unfortunately, once the speeches are over and the real fight begins, the millions of climate strikers around the world must dare to go where Greta Thunberg will not. In her speech she claimed:

?? this is not about right or left. We couldn?t care less about your party politics. From a sustainability perspective, the right, the left as well as the center have all failed. No political ideology or economic structure has been able to tackle the climate and environmental emergency and create a cohesive and sustainable world.?

Her audience at Davos will have been more than content to listen to a moral lecture and to put a few million in the collection box in return for Thunberg?s refusal to name the enemy in the room ? and its alternative on the streets, among the movements she has done so much to inspire.

Walking out of school or glueing yourself to a bridge may be a brilliant way to draw the attention of great numbers to the issue. But what if the masters of the world go no further than the greenwashing they have been indulging in at Davos?

If they are causing the catastrophe, then the question must be how to break their economic and political

power for good. This question ? how to go from protest to power ? does require a political answer.

It requires naming the system that is the problem, and naming the political ideologies and parties ? reformist or conservative, religious or secular ? that prop it up. It means turning to class politics and the abolition of the ?economic structure? called capitalism. It means fighting for the socialism that Trump and his friends at Davos are so terrified of.

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