



The Cooperative Way

The Newsletter of Cooperation Jackson



VOLUME 4, ISSUE 3

APRIL 2018

ECO-SOCIALISM:

An Idea and Movement Whose Time Has Come



COOPERATION JACKSON maintains that there are two primary interrelated and interconnected problems threatening Mississippi and the world at large: (1) deepening social inequalities and inequities along the lines of class, race, nationality, gender, and legal status, and (2) capitalist-induced climate change and the advancing 6th mass extinction event.

These two problems are leading humanity to the brink of destruction. In order to avoid this calamity, we need system change and we need it now, as the threat of climate change is accelerating with each passing day. The systems that we must upend and eliminate are the interdependent systems of capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, white supremacy, patriarchy, heterosexism, and anthropocentrism—the belief that humans have a right to

dominate the Earth and all the life forms on it. The system that we believe we need to save humanity and restore climatic and ecological balance to our planet is **Eco-Socialism**.

WHAT IS ECO-SOCIALISM?

Borrowing from our partner organization, **Eco-SOCIALIST HORIZONS**, we offer this brief but incomplete vision of what Eco-Socialism entails:

Eco-Socialism is a vision of a transformed society in harmony with nature, and the development of practices that can attain it. It is directed toward alternatives to all socially and ecologically destructive systems, such as patriarchy, racism, homophobia and the fossil fuel-based economy. It is based on a perspective that regards other





species and natural ecosystems as valuable in themselves and as partners in a common destiny.

Eco-Socialism shares with traditional socialism a passion for justice. It shares the conviction that capitalism has been a deadly detour for humanity. We understand capitalism to be a class society based on infinite expansion, through the exploitation of labor and the ransacking of nature. Eco-Socialists are also guided by the life-ways of indigenous peoples whose economies are embedded in a classless society in fundamental unity with nature. We draw upon the wisdom of the ages as well as the latest science, and will do what can be done to bring a new society, beyond capitalism, into existence.

Expanding on this further, we draw from the first Eco-Socialist Manifesto, produced in 2001, which states:

The generalization of ecological production under socialist conditions can provide the ground for the overcoming of the present crises. A society of freely-associated producers does not stop at its own democratization. It must, rather, insist on the freeing of all beings as its ground and goal. It overcomes thereby the imperialist impulse both subjectively and objectively. In realizing such a goal, it struggles to overcome all forms of domination, including, especially, those of gender and race. And it surpasses the conditions leading to fun-

damentalist distortions and their terrorist manifestations. In sum, a world society is posited in a degree of ecological harmony with nature unthinkable under present conditions. A practical outcome of these tendencies would be expressed, for example, in a withering away of the dependency upon fossil fuels integral to industrial capitalism. And this, in turn, can provide the material point of release of the lands subjugated by oil imperialism, while enabling the containment of global warming, along with other afflictions of the ecological crisis.

No one can read these prescriptions without thinking, first, of how many practical and theoretical questions they raise, and second and more dishearteningly, of how remote they are from the present configuration of the world, both as this is anchored in institutions and as it is registered in consciousness. We need not elaborate these points, which should be instantly recognizable to all. But we would insist that they be taken in their proper perspective. Our project is neither to lay out every step of this way nor to yield to the adversary because of the preponderance of power he holds. It is, rather, to develop the logic of a sufficient and necessary transformation of the current order, and to begin developing the intermediate steps towards this goal. We do so in order to think more deeply into these possibilities, and at the same moment, begin the work of drawing together with all those of like mind. If there is any merit in these arguments, then it must be the case that similar thoughts, and practices to realize these thoughts, will be coordinatively germinating at innumerable points around the world. Eco-Socialism will be international, and universal, or it will be nothing. The crises of our time can—and must—be seen as revolutionary opportunities, which it is our obligation to affirm and bring into existence.

Eco-Socialism retains the emancipatory goals of first-epoch socialism, and rejects both the attenuated, reformist aims of social democracy and the productivist structures of the bureaucratic variations of socialism. It insists, rather, upon redefining both the path and the goal of socialist production in an ecological framework. It does so specifically in respect to the “limits on growth” essential for the sustainability of society. These are embraced, not, however, in the sense of imposing scarcity, hardship, and repression. The goal, rather, is a transformation of needs, and a profound shift toward the qualitative dimension and away from the quantitative. From the standpoint of commodity production, this translates into a valorization of use-values over exchange-values—a project of far-reaching significance grounded in immediate economic activity.

THE PRACTICE OF ECO-SOCIALISM

COOPERATION JACKSON, from our beginning, focused on developing a program and practice that would aid in the construction of an Eco-Socialist future. But, Eco-Socialism is not and must not just be just an ideological construct it is and must be a practice. The practice entails developing new methods of producing, distributing, consuming, recycling and regenerating the essential resources, goods, and services needed to sustain and advance human civilization. These new methods must not only stop the extraction and emission of climate-altering fossil fuels, they must also serve to reverse the impacts

of the last two centuries of fossil fuel-driven industrialization with explicit ecological restoration projects, including in our case constructing new urban commons projects that aid in urban reforestation.

For Cooperation Jackson, our emerging practice of Eco-Socialism is manifold. For starters, it entails the gradual development of to-scale urban farming and urban composting systems to build food sovereignty, local self-sufficiency, and the reduction of carbon emissions by reducing the need for long-distance transportation and preservation systems for our food. For us, Eco-Socialist construction also entails experimenting with new methods of industrial manufacturing through community production based on digital fabrication, which we aim to interlink with sustainable materials and carbon-neutral energy sources. This combination of local food production, community production, communal ownership and cooperative management forms the basis of the **Eco-Village** that we aiming to construct over the course of the next 5 years. Lastly, for Cooperation Jackson the construction of Eco-Socialism also entails changing public policy, which is a core focus of our **JUST TRANSITION PLAN** advocacy work that aims to make Jackson a zero-waste and zero-emissions city by 2030.

However, none of this is possible without shifting the balance of power in our city, our state and throughout the entire world. So, we must be clear that the practice of Eco-Socialism must entail engaging in the struggle for political power. This involves changing the government structures that control how societies are managed, and the transformation of the capitalist system and its vehicles of domination over the processes of material production that reproduce society. We are also committed to this critical dimension of the practice and struggle for Eco-Socialism.

ADVANCING THE PRACTICE

In the ongoing struggle to improve our practice, enhance our capacity, broaden our reach, and form strategic alliances to build power the Executive Committee of Cooperation Jackson made the commitment to join the emerging **FIRST ECO-SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL IN NOVEMBER 2017**. We think this decision will be key to the long-term development of Cooperation Jackson and the fulfillment of its program and mission.

In the effort to advance our long-term programmatic work, particularly building on our recent Just Transition advocacy work as a building block to our **TRANSITION CITY INITIATIVE**—which entails our combined vision and program towards building an eco-dynamic municipality—we are hosting an **Eco-SOCIALIST CONVERGENCE IN JACKSON FROM FRIDAY, APRIL 20TH THROUGH SUNDAY,**

APRIL 22ND in partnership with Eco-Socialist Horizons and various adherents of the recently founded First Eco-Socialist International. The Convergence is to be held at the **CENTER FOR ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT** located at 939 W. Capitol Street, Jackson, MS 39203.

THIS CONVERGENCE will be a strategy and plan of action development session. A primary practical aim will be to start identifying, recruiting, uniting, and mobilizing the strategic forces necessary to build a political force that can unite around building a coherent Eco-Socialist program and practice to emancipate oppressed people and the working class, save our species, halt the sixth extinction event, and liberate our Mother Earth from the terrors of capitalism and imperialism. There will also be a programmatic training around the **TRUEKE** system—a practice of solidarity economics being widely practiced in Latin America—a producers exchange, often without the transfer of currency, but the exchange of products, time and labor services similar to old-school notions of “swap meets” utilized in many of our communities over the generations.

PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS CONVERGENCE. PLEASE EMAIL [KALIAKUNO@GMAIL.COM](mailto:kaliakuno@gmail.com) BY MONDAY, APRIL 16TH.

