

## Capitalism's Climate COP-out

Ursula Rozum and  
Frank Cetera

*Authors' note: Our goal is to provide an analysis of recent local and global developments in addressing the climate crisis from an ecosocialist perspective, one that seeks an alternative to the current global model of capitalist exploitation—a model that respects democracy, cooperation, and a preservation of the commons.*

“We’re in survival mode.” You’d expect those words to be part of a report from the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan last November. This was actually the mindset of golf course operators in Syracuse during the drought of 2012, which lasted for over a month.

In the US, despite worsening conditions of resource scarcity, golf courses continue to operate during a drought because public policy and private behavior are tied to an economic model fueled by burning the fossils of dead dinosaurs. We live on a planet with finite resources. Capitalism, a system predicated on endless growth and consumption, is proving to be unsustainable and increasingly violent.

On November 8, Typhoon Haiyan’s 195 miles per hour winds left more than 5,000 people dead and four million displaced. “If Not Now, When?” Those were the tearful words of Philippines’ climate negotiator Naderev Saño at the start of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Warsaw, Poland, known as COP19 (Conference of the Parties). Naderev was desperately pleading for an international agreement among the nations of the world to finally address the climate crisis.

Every year, climate negotiators



Forward on Climate Rally in Washington DC, February 17 2013. Photo: Mark Dunlea

representing the countries of the world gather to discuss the future of the planet. And every year, it’s more obvious that the richer countries—those who have polluted their way to economic growth and development and are responsible for the bulk of historical greenhouse gas emissions—are unwilling to adequately reduce their emissions to the levels necessary to prevent a rise in global temperatures.

Meteorologists point out that human factors, like weak infrastructure, high population density, and poverty contribute greatly to the level of devastation caused by extreme natural disasters. However, scientific research suggests that global warming is contributing to increased intensity of storms and to rising sea levels that can worsen a storm’s impact.

In the US, we’re far from immune to the negative impacts of a changing climate. Examples include Hurricane Sandy’s devastation on the Rockaways,

increasing food prices related to the droughts hitting the midwest, and stronger winds and extreme wave heights during more frequent cold season storms. In 2012, the US government spent more taxpayer money on the consequences of climate change than on education or transportation—nearly \$100 billion. When all federal spending on last year’s droughts, storms, floods, and forest fires are added up, paying for the effects of climate change accounted for one out of every six dollars spent on non-defense discretionary programs. Meanwhile, in 2012, the world’s five largest oil companies—BP, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobil, and Shell—made a combined \$118 billion in profits. The profits from extracting fossil fuels are largely privatized, and the burden of paying for the negative impacts of a

# SPC INFO

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## peacecouncil.net

Read the *PNL* online (issues dating to 1936!). See all our projects and events.

## SPC Committees & Projects

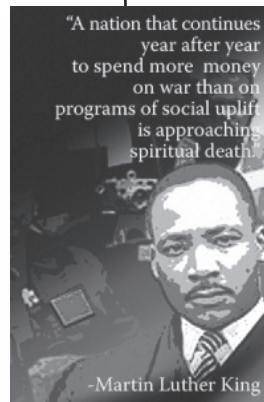
- Bikes 4 Peace:** fixing bikes and working cooperatively with youth
- Radical Reading:** reads & discusses timely books
- CNY Working for a Just Peace in Palestine & Israel:** education, action
- Ground the Drones & End the Wars:** education, demonstrations, outreach
- Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation:** education, hydrofracking ban, Two Row Wampum campaign
- Military Alternatives Education Project:** counter-recruitment in high schools
- Youth RIOT:** Resisting Imperialism & Oppression Together (youth organizing)
- Fundraising:** overall planning to raise funds to support SPC's work
- Event Committees:* Birthday, Bowlathon, Plowshares
- Finance:** analysis, reports, budget, general oversight
- Peace Newsletter:** produce SPC's monthly newsletter

## Affiliated Projects & Coalitions

- Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse:** faith & secular groups
- Caribbean Latin America Coalition:** sister communities, solidarity, SOA
- United as One:** working for justice in the local justice system
- We Are NY:** labor and community activists working for the common good

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## The Syracuse Peace Council (SPC),

founded in 1936, is an antiwar/social justice organization. We are community-based, autonomous and funded by the contributions of our supporters.

## Peace Newsletter

- Sponsored by the Syracuse Center for Peace & Social Justice**
- Article submission criteria:** Contact [pnl@peacecouncil.net](mailto:pnl@peacecouncil.net) or 472-5478.
- Advertising:** Call 472-5478 or visit our website for rates and sizes.
- Calendar:** Submit items for the February *PNL* calendar by January 20.



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# Educate, Agitate, Organize: SPC IN ACTION

compiled by Jessica Azulay

## No Eyes in the Skies!

On December 16, the Syracuse Common Council voted on SPC's Resolution to protect our privacy in this age of drone surveillance. The unanimous "yes" vote declares that "no agency of the City of Syracuse, nor any agents under contract with the City, will operate Drones in the airspace over the City of Syracuse until federal and state laws, rules and regulations regarding the use of Drones are adopted that adequately protect the privacy of the population as guaranteed by the First and Fourth Amendments to the US Constitution" and that the Council "urges our Federal and State officials to create and adopt such laws, rules and regulations regarding the use of Drones which ensures Constitutional protections of individuals." Thanks to Councilor Jean Kessner who sponsored the legislation and the many activists who made phone calls, signed petitions and attended the Council meetings. Special thanks to Ann Tiffany, John Brule, John Murray and Jerry Lotierzo for shepherding the Resolution through a very long process. Check SPC's website for the full text of the final Resolution.

While we savor this victory, we understand that it is only a step in a process to protect our civil rights and civil liberties from drone surveillance.

## Frack-Free Future

On **January 8**, New Yorkers will converge outside of Gov. Cuomo's State of the State address to call for a frack-free, renewable energy-powered future. Sign up for one of the buses going from Syracuse to Albany for the protest. Organizing is also underway to prevent the construction of a gas pipeline running from Broome to Onondaga County. To learn more and to get involved, contact Emily Bishop, [emily@nyagainstfracking.org](mailto:emily@nyagainstfracking.org).



People show their support for the anti-surveillance drone resolution at the December 16 Syracuse Common Council meeting. Photo: Frank Cetera.

## Interns Wanted

The Peace Council is accepting intern applications for work on a variety of projects in 2014, including Website Development, Database Management, Event Organizing and Community Outreach. Internships can be developed to meet the interests of applicants—most importantly, we love to have new people working, learning and sharing their skills with the Peace Council. Internships are currently unpaid. Hours are flexible, typically between 5-12 hours per week. To apply, visit [www.peacecouncil.net/intern](http://www.peacecouncil.net/intern) or contact Ursula.

## Winter Open House

**Wednesday January 22, 6-8 pm.** Come find out about what's happening at the Peace Council in the Winter of 2014.

Meet with SPC activists to learn about the various ways you can get involved in our ongoing campaigns and organizing efforts for peace and social justice. Light refreshments served. RSVP appreciated but not required. Contact Ursula.

## Upcoming Trials

The trial of seventeen nonviolent activists arrested at Hancock Air Base for protesting weaponized drones piloted from Hancock has been rescheduled. They were arrested on October 25, 2012 and are scheduled to go to trial on **Friday, January 3 at 5 pm** at the Town of DeWitt Courthouse (5400 Butternut Dr., East Syracuse).

We strongly encourage people to come out to support them—this is the first trial of activists who, in addition to being charged with trespass and disorderly conduct, were given "temporary" orders of protection directing them to stay away from the base commander. Violating an order of protection can result in a serious charge, so this in

continued on page 7

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warming planet falls on public coffers.

People of the world are desperate to see political action to begin turning the clock back on climate change. Fifty-four percent of respondents internationally (compared to only 40% in the United States) rank climate change as the top major threat to their country, above financial, political, and military instability. A difference is seen in New York, where 45% are opposed to hydrofracking and only 37% are in support, but then again, this is in our own backyard and the prevailing concern tends to be protecting our water rather than preventing runaway climate change.

### Systemic Change vs. Piecemeal Reforms

Climate justice activists have our work cut out for us—greenhouse gas emissions are increasing, the clock is ticking, and there's no agreed upon plan of action in sight. However, there are some solutions on the political horizon.

#### Ending fossil fuel subsidies.

According to the International Energy Agency, the amount of support given to fossil fuel industries internationally by governments may be more than a trillion dollars per year. Why can't we stop the giveaway of tax dollars to companies that are literally destroying the planet? US fossil fuel companies are currently getting \$59 dollars in subsidies for each \$1 they donate to election campaigns—a 5,800% return, that's why.

**Divestment.** College students are demanding a withdrawal of fossil fuel investments from college endowments. Cities, states and the federal government

also need to divest public pension funds for city employees, teachers, police, and firefighters from the coal, oil and gas companies. Why should the people's money be used to fund a system generating violent and expensive disasters?

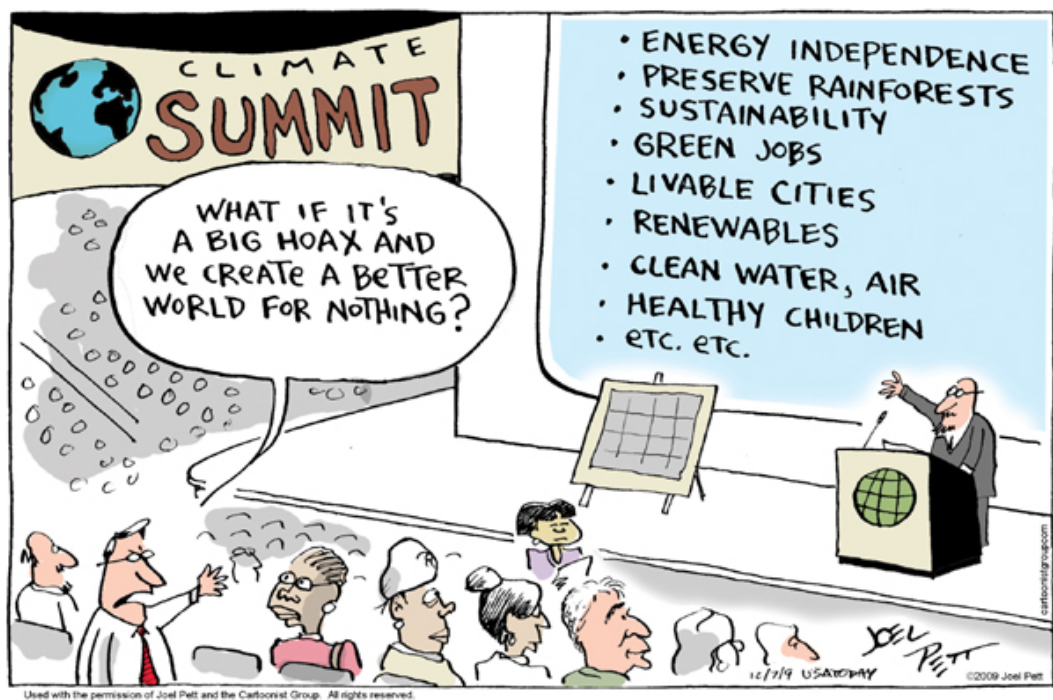
**Carbon tax.** Advocated for locally by the Citizens' Climate Lobby, a carbon tax would apply to the burning of fossil fuels in order to discourage the production of greenhouse gas emissions. The tax would be refunded to rate payers so that fossil fuel companies aren't passing off the costs to the public (especially the poor). While not dismantling capitalism, a carbon tax forces companies to pay for the negative impacts of their operations.

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*A staff organizer with SPC, Ursula is passionate about organizing to build democracy and overcome corporate rule. Frank applies his personal mantra of "lion-hearted and thorn-pawed" to activism on issues of ecology, cooperative business, politics, and community.*

**Planning.** All levels of government must commit to emissions reductions and start planning for a clean energy future. This would include public investment in jobs transitioning to a carbon-free and nuclear-free economy, known to climate activists as a Green New Deal, that addresses the climate crisis with the same urgency that the US scrambled to put a man on the moon.

In order to keep global warming below the tipping point for climate catastrophe of a 2°C rise, 80% of proven global fossil fuels reserves must remain in the ground and unburned. It is inconceivable that 80% of fossil fuel reserves will remain unburned as long as they are controlled by profit-seeking corporations. It is therefore crucial that the climate justice movement also raise the demand to socialize and democratize the energy sector. Public ownership lets citizens, through elected local boards, decide on rates and sources. Across the US, there are now over 2,000 municipalities with public power where people



pay less for heating their homes and businesses because they don't have to pay shareholders. Municipal ownership of power utilities combines climate concerns with concerns about costs. Therefore, it has the potential to bring together diverse groups of people to take stewardship of our energy needs away from the profit-seeking corporations and into collective management for the greater good.

The people of the world are demanding climate action. It's not unlikely to think that water could be diverted from maintaining green golf courses to irrigating crops during a drought. It is entirely possible that the misaligned rootstock base of power will be enough to prevent the fruition of a sustainable tomorrow; without a switch to decentralized power rooted in democratic ownership and ecological wisdom, and an accompanying equalization of resources and labor, the economics of the 1% will suppress the just, peaceful and sustainable future we deserve. Advances in systemic political leadership and resource management are needed to ensure our collective survival. ♻️

# Maffei and the Ongoing Bank Bailouts

Howie Hawkins

Dan Maffei's first TV campaign ad in 2012 proclaimed, "Dan Maffei opposed the Wall Street bailout." But it wasn't true. I knew that well as Maffei's Green Party opponent in the 2008 election. On the eve of the first House vote on the \$700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), the *Post-Standard* published statements by all three of us running for Congress in that race: "Maffei, Sweetland back bailout; Hawkins says investors, not the taxpayers, should eat the losses" (Sept. 26, 2008).

That \$700 billion appetizer was just the beginning of an ongoing bailout banquet for the big banks that now totals many trillions of dollars in loans, discounts and "cash for trash"—when the Fed purchases toxic mortgage-backed securities, known as Quantitative Easing or QE. Totalling over \$4 trillion since 2009 and continuing to this day with an \$85 billion a month bond-buying program, QE was recently called "the greatest backdoor Wall Street bailout of all time" by the Fed official who ran the program from 2009-2010.

Almost all of this bailout is flowing to the top 10 US banks that own 84% of all US bank assets. Small, locally-owned community banks, like Solvay Bank in our area, have only seen their Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) insurance premiums go up to cover for the big banks that got bailed out after their risky investments in the housing market failed in the collapse of 2008.

## Maffei Continues to Support Bailouts

When banks act as mortgage servicers, they make more money by foreclosing than by modifying mortgages to reflect post-housing-market-crash values. So,

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*Howie is a Teamster and Green Party activist.*

policies that encourage foreclosure are another form of bank bailout. That is just what the Obama administration policies did by withholding 90% of the \$50 billion Home Affordable Modification Program (HAMP) allocated under TARP to subsidize home mortgage modifications.

The Treasury Department's General Inspector overseeing TARP has explained



Image: occupy.com

that Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner refused to spend that money because he was didn't want to reduce the profitability of the big banks. The US has had 14 million home foreclosures since 2008, with 11 million out of 49 million US homeowners currently with mortgages underwater (i.e., owing more on their mortgage than the house can be sold for at today's values).

Although Maffei had cited money in TARP for mortgage modifications in his statement in support of the TARP bailout in 2008, Maffei has said nothing against the impoundment of HAMP funds, nor about bank bailouts in the form of QE.

The latest bailout Rep. Maffei supported was the so-called Swaps Regulatory Improvement Act, which he voted for on Oct. 30, 2013. The Act repealed Section 716 of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010. Section 716 required banks to put certain kinds of derivatives trading into separate units that are not covered by the FDIC. So, now your insured deposits can be used by your bank to make speculative bets on derivatives,

and if the deals blow up, as they did with housing-related derivatives in 2008, the bank will be bailed out by the FDIC.

## Who Is Influencing Maffei?

Maffei's October 2013 vote reflects an earlier flip-flop on financial regulation in 2009. In October 2009, Maffei voted for and issued a statement in support of an overhaul of derivatives regulation to be included as part of what became Dodd-Frank that required over the counter derivatives swaps to be traded on exchanges.

But by December 2009, as a member of the "moderate" corporate-sponsored New Democrat Coalition (NDC), Maffei joined with his fellow NDC members and Republicans on the House Financial Services Commission to vote for many Wall Street-sponsored amendments to weaken regulations in what became Dodd-Frank, a sad story chronicled at the time by David Dayen on FireDogLake.com and by Public Citizen.

Maffei's votes in favor of the bailouts are not surprising considering that the FIRE (Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate) sector has consistently been his biggest single source of campaign funding, according to the OpenSecrets.org campaign donations database.

Citigroup was deeply involved in the writing of the Swaps Regulatory Improvement Act, according to the *New York Times* (May 23, 2013): "Citigroup's recommendations were reflected in more than 70 lines of the House committee's 85-line bill. Two crucial paragraphs, prepared by Citigroup in conjunction with other Wall Street banks, were copied nearly word for word." Maffei received Citigroup PAC contributions in the current and two recent election cycles: \$2,000 for 2014, \$2,500 for 2010, and \$2,000 for 2008.

Visit [www.peacecouncil.net/pnl](http://www.peacecouncil.net/pnl) for information about progressive financial and banking policies designed to bailout Main Street instead of Wall Street. ♻️



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Saturday, February 8  
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**M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence**

**929 South Plymouth Avenue, Rochester, NY**

People are strongly encouraged to attend the full gathering.

This gathering is sponsored by the Conscience and War Committee, a western/central New York Regional Quaker committee.

→ Please contact Tom Joyce – [tomjoyce51@aim.com](mailto:tomjoyce51@aim.com)  
(put war tax witness in the subject line) or **607-277-7426**  
to register, for overnight housing in Rochester, directions to the Gandhi House, or further information.

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## SPC in Action / from page 3

effect denies them their First Amendment rights of assembly, speech and redress of grievances. The trial of the Hancock 31, arrested in April 2013, is expected to begin sometime in January. Before going to either trial, check SPC's website or contact Carol—dates can change unexpectedly.

### GMO-Free NY

Did you know that 93% of the US population supports labeling foods that contain genetically modified organisms (GMO)? Back in November, SPC signed on to the GMO-Free NY campaign, which aims to pass GMO labeling legislation in New York State in 2014. If you are interested in reigning in corporate influence on food policy, join this growing campaign! Also, please call your New York State representatives and ask them to support GMO labeling in NY. Learn more at [www.gmofreeny.net](http://www.gmofreeny.net) or contact Ursula.

### Plowshares!

The 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Plowshares Craftsair and Peace Festival was all we'd hoped for and more. CNY's peace-loving community came together in connection, celebration, and commerce. With good weather for traveling and robust pre-event publicity (thanks Carol Baum and intern Brianna Shetler!), we saw a huge crowd pass through the Festival on Saturday, followed by a respectable size crowd on Sunday! SPC's Marketplace, Crafts Table, Raffle, and Silent Auction all raised money to sustain our year-round antiwar organizing, and many vendors reported high sales and good times had by all.

## PEACE OUTREACH

Show your opposition to war and the reaper drones! Bring your own sign or use one of ours.

**First Tuesdays  
December - March  
4:15 - 5:00 pm**

Hancock Air Base Entrance  
(E. Molloy Rd., between Thompson & Townline Rds.)

Contact Ed or Ann, 315-478-4571

Thanks to the all-volunteer Plowshares Committee that does so much throughout the year to make Plowshares the successful and heartwarming event it is every year. Additionally, special thanks go to all of the volunteers who helped with set up, clean up, and general staffing; Syracuse City School District and Nottingham High School; Mission Restaurant for providing the delicious and nutritious Plowshares menu; all of the many generous donors to the Raffle and Silent Auction; and, of course, the wonderful vendors and visitors!

### Travel to Colombia

The CNY-Cajibio Colombia Sister Community Project is planning a delegation to Colombia this coming July. Participants will learn about the impacts of US foreign policy in Colombia and will spend time with the Small Farmers Movement of Cajibio learning about issues of sustainable agriculture, food sovereignty and human rights. The estimated cost of the delegation is \$900, though subject to change based on airfare. Contact Ann, 478-4571.

### Make Your Own Humus

CNY Working for a Just Peace in Palestine and Israel was a new presence this year as part of the SPC contingent of tables at Plowshares. The focus of the table was the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign (BDS), which was initiated at the request of Palestinians several years ago. The campaign is designed to put economic pressure on Israel to reconsider its policies regarding occupation of Palestinian lands and oppression of Palestinian people. We are committed to bringing the boycott to central New York and had many excellent conversations with politically aware people who were not aware of this effort. The companies identified for boycott are SodaStream, Sabra Humus, Tribe Humus, Hewlett Packard, and Motorola. To bal-

### Activist Appreciation: Brianna Shetler

Brianna Shetler joined SPC this semester as an intern, and quickly became a partner in organizing the Birthday Dinner, publicizing Plowshares and bringing out people to support the anti-surveillance drone Resolution. She also cheerfully participated in those mundane, but necessary, jobs like counting buttons and coloring signs. Her positive, enthusiastic energy is coupled with intelligence, courage and skill, making her a joy to work with. She supported anti-drones activists at a court appearance and became motivated to drive down to the Drones Summit, bringing two friends with her. We are thrilled that she has decided to intern another semester with SPC. Thank you, Brianna!



Brianna (right) and Karen Kerney at SPC's 77th Birthday Dinner.  
Photo: Edurardo Sanine

ance the "don't buy" message, we offered tastes of delicious homemade humus, and offered olive oil and olive oil soap for sale, made in the West Bank and imported via Canaan Fair Trade. Expect to hear more about BDS—and start your personal boycott with the New Year! Contact Jessica.

### Drones Summit

SPC and Upstate NY were well represented at CodePink's "Drones Around the Globe: Proliferation and Resistance" Summit. Ten activists from the Syracuse area, along with nine from Upstate NY joined hundreds of others converged in Washington, DC November 16-17. During a weekend of learning and action, we were gripped by personal stories from members of the Yemeni delegation, inspired and educated by many speakers, protested in front of the White House and at Sen. Schumer's office, and connected with activists throughout the US and rest of the world. ☸

