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Environment in 2013: You can't fool Mother Nature

By Marc Brodine

There may not yet be the political will in Congress to pass significant climate change legislation. But we can be sure that any and all efforts to address this issue will continue to get strong support from Mother Nature.

Just as Hurricane Sandy helped convince millions that climate change was indeed real and already affecting us, weather and climate events in 2013 will reinforce that message. The resonance of the climate change deniers' message is receding, in large part due to declining receptiveness to anti-science claims. Millions are learning from their own experiences that predictions of climate-change-induced weather disasters are not some far-off futuristic unlikely event: they are coming true in the here-and-now.

We can't know for certain whether there will be another massive, unexpected hurricane, nor where any of the hurricanes to come this year will strike with greatest force. But we can be certain that this year and for many years to come, at least some hurricanes will be larger and more intense, and will hit ground in unexpected places. And we can be sure that storm surges will continue to start from higher and higher sea levels.

We can be sure that the intense droughts that have swept different parts of the globe, including more than half of the continental United States, along with major agricultural areas of Russia and Australia, will continue. Again, we don't know ex-



actly where or exactly how intense they will be, but there is no doubt that droughts (and desertification) will spread.

Similarly with forest fires. They have grown more numerous and more intense for decades, and their upward trajectory shows no sign of slowing down. Some fires are now so intense that instead of requiring a few decades for the land to recover, it will take over a century.

Every study of the Greenland ice fields is concluding that they are melting at rates hitherto thought impossible, adding more fresh water to

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the oceans, slowing the Gulf Current and threatening a massive increase in sea levels. Arctic ice sheets are melting faster than predicted, and the

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“Northern Passage” is becoming a reality - and decreased ice means the darker, underlying water will absorb more heat from the sun, increasing even further the warming at the poles, which is much higher than at more temperate latitudes.

Global warming is, at the very least, contributing to excessively hot summers in different parts of Europe (from France in 2003 to Russia in 2010-11). This not only affects the weather, it also affects the water supply, the growing season, the cost of food worldwide, the spread of drought, increases in health disasters from smog to premature death, in addition to the direct effects on humans and on the demand for energy.

One big environmental battle this year will be a renewal of hostilities over the proposed U.S.-Canada Keystone XL pipeline. President Obama first postponed a decision until after last year's elections, then, when pressed by Republicans for an immediate decision, said “No” to the pipeline since there was insufficient time for the State Department to fully evaluate the proposal.

This may result in another pitched battle between congressional Republicans and the White

House. Environmentalists are nervous about the position the Obama administration will take, and are watching closely.

But the role of human action is to work to ensure that environmental conditions don't get so much worse that human life is threatened on a mass scale. A healthy humanity needs a healthy planet, and every step we take to heal the planet, or to keep it from getting hit harder, is a contribution to humanity's ability to survive and thrive.

This requires the combined efforts of the environmental movement, the labor movement, the peace movement (war and preparations for war are among the most environmentally destructive things that humans do), the civil rights movements, and youth, rightly worried about their future. Environmental issues are not just other issues we ought to do something about if we can get around to it.

Environmental problems affect us all, and will continue to do so in 2013.



Marc Brodine writes for the People's World.

Fix the economy: only way to erase debt

PW Editorial

They are trying to tell us that the problem with the economy is the “debt.”

It makes sense because “they” are the billionaires who are doing very well in today's economy. In order to continue doing so, however, they have to make “debt reduction,” not fixing our broken economy, the focus of national attention.

The billionaires don't need jobs. For the 99 percent, however, fixing the economy means creating a good-paying, family-sustaining job.

Republicans have reluctantly agreed to higher taxes for some of the richest folks. But now, they say, we have to make spending cuts, particularly in Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. What they really mean: More workers need to be thrown out of work providing these services.

But, you can't rebuild a broken economy by dismantling key parts of it (in this case Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare.)

When World War II ended, the U.S. debt was at a historic high - larger than the entire Gross Domestic Product - and has never been that high since then. That debt was ended, not by cutting budgets, but by passing massive jobs bills for returning veterans, massive spending bills to subsidize housing for millions and construct interstate

highways from one end of the country to the other, and by spending billions on a Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe. (That, by the way, was how they created a big overseas market for U.S. goods). It was those moves, not cuts to Social Security, that balanced the post-war economy and thereby ended a historic “debt crisis.”

Investing trillions of dollars in modernizing our infrastructure, our schools and our communications systems, and in developing green energy, would put untold millions to work. They would be paying taxes, patronizing businesses and keeping the economy cooking.

So when the Republican billionaire frontmen tell you we need “shared sacrifice” or a “balanced approach,” don't listen. Should sacrifices be shared by the criminal and his victim? How can you ask everyone to sacrifice when, last year, the top 1 percent grabbed 93 percent of the growth of the entire economy? How can you ask everyone to sacrifice equally when, over the last 30 years, the working people are the ones who have made all the sacrifices?

The big long-term deficit is driven by our broken job-shedding economy. Fix the economy to benefit the vast majority. End the jobs deficit, and the “budget deficit” will be a thing of the past.

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Thousands take to streets to mourn Delhi gang-rape victim

Special to the People's World

Thousands poured onto the streets of India over the weekend to mourn the death of a pre-medical student who was subjected to a brutal gang rape.

The 23-year-old woman, still unnamed but dubbed "Nirbhaya" meaning "Braveheart," was cremated in a private ceremony in New Delhi, the city where she was viciously assaulted Dec. 16, 2012. Media reports say she bravely fought her attackers, and just as courageously fought for her life, before succumbing to her injuries on Dec. 29.

Six men arrested for the attack have now been charged with murder.

Protests have rocked India since the horrifying rape became known two weeks ago. The young woman was returning home from a movie, accompanied by a male friend, when men on a passing private bus urged the two to board, suggesting the bus was going to their neighborhood. There were six men on the bus, including the driver.

When the young woman's companion demanded they be let out, the men beat him with an iron rod. As the young woman defended her friend, the men turned and attacked, beat and gang raped her.

Doctors said the men must have used the iron rod in the rape as the young woman suffered extensive damage to her intestines and other organs. She died from her injuries after being flown to a Singapore hospital.

The attack became a protest flashpoint for pent up anger over the sexual harassment and assaults that Indian women face daily, across class, religious and caste lines. The protests evidently caught the government by surprise. And police use of tear gas on peaceful protesters was widely condemned.

Veteran Communist Member of Parliament Brinda Karat said it was a shame that it took "a death of such a brave healthy woman to wake India and wake up this government."

The rape and subsequent death of the woman has "shaken the conscience of the nation," Communist Party of India leader D. Raja said, adding that society has to challenge itself to change its



laws as well as its consciousness and culture regarding women.

"This is not an isolated incident. Sexual assault cases are the fastest increasing crimes in India," the Communist Party of India (Marxist) said in a statement.

Left parties and women's organizations have a program to prevent violence against women, "which the government has failed to accept and implement," the statement said. Such measures include police and legal reforms that could guarantee rapists are arrested and prosecuted.

Because of the broad and spontaneous nature of the protests, multiple demands have emerged. Some have demanded the death penalty or castration for rapists. Others say the death penalty does not guarantee justice, nor does it prevent sexual assault and violence.

Prosecutors have "fast-tracked" the case and reportedly will seek the death penalty.

In announcing the Jan. 2 inauguration of a fast track court to try sexual violence cases, India's chief justice, Altamas Kabir, cautioned against lynch-mob mentality.

"Now these kinds of sentiments, which are emotional, are rather dangerous sentiments. But these emotions will continue until the matter comes to us and we deal with them expeditiously," he said.

The new court is just the first of five fast-track courts that will hear cases of sexual offenses against women.

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Wilmington Ten forty years later

By Scott Marshall

Forty years. Damn it's been a long time. When I first heard the news that Gov. Bev Purdue of North Carolina had pardoned the Wilmington Ten, I was so torn. Ecstatic and angry. So glad that finally, finally, justice denied was being corrected. Most importantly the Governor made it a "pardon of innocence." She said it was a racist, illegal prosecution. Now the record is almost straight.

Still those forty years saw all of the Ten spend years in prison, and they were innocent. There has never been a real investigation into KKK influence in the frame-up and prosecution of the Ten, and they were innocent. Some of the Ten and some of their family members have passed away without ever knowing the "pardon of innocence," and they were innocent.

The fight for the freedom of the Wilmington Ten was a critical part of the civil rights movement of the 1970's. It also helped form a whole generation of young activists, especially in the South.

We learned how to take the case to unions, churches, neighborhoods, campuses, and to rural communities Black and white. We watched and learned as experienced fighters took the case to the world and gathered international support.

As I look around the movement today, I see lots of my old friends from that struggle still fighting the good fight in so many different ways; in labor, in civil rights, in peace, in faith based coalitions, in the environmental movements and more.

Then this victory for the Wilmington Ten really comes home to me. The victory of the Wilmington Ten, for these ten freedom fighters, glows in a brighter light.

Dr. King famously said, "the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice." And the Wilmington Ten and their fight for justice has greatly helped it bend in the right direction.

Obama retoma agenda presidencial tras descanso

Por Prensa Latina

El presidente de Estados Unidos, Barack Obama, retorna hoy a sus actividades ejecutivas, tras su descanso navideño en Hawaïi, con una agenda centrada en la conformación de su gabinete y los preparativos para la toma de posesión.

El dignatario demócrata regresó la víspera a la Casa Blanca y promulgó una ley aprobada por el Congreso para desbloquear 9,7 millones de dólares y entregarlos a territorios afectados por el huracán Sandy en octubre pasado.

Según medios informativos, Obama prevé nominar en esta jornada al exsenador republicano Chuck Hagel como secretario de Defensa y anunciar al nuevo director de la Agencia Central de Inteligencia (CIA), luego de la renuncia de David Petraeus.

El sitio digital Politico augura una fuerte batalla en el Senado por la confirmación de Hagel, por oponerse en algunas ocasiones a imponer sanciones contra Irán y al apoyo de Estados Unidos a Israel, principal aliado de Washington en el Oriente Medio.

Respecto a la designación del nuevo director de la CIA, el presidente norteamericano baraja los nombres de John Brennan, asesor en temas de seguridad nacional y antiterrorismo, y de Michael Morrell, actual jefe interino de ese organismo federal.

El general retirado Petraeus, el jefe anterior de la CIA, dimitió en noviembre pasado tras conocerse que mantenía una relación extramarital con su biógrafa, Paula Broadwell.

Por ese caso salieron a relucir acusaciones de tráfico de influencias y sobornos típicos de la alta política estadounidense.

La agenda del mandatario para esta semana incluirá una reunión con su par afgano Hamid Karzai, de visita

en Washington con el fin de discutir un plan para recibir apoyo logístico y asesoramiento militar para su Ejército tras el retiro de los efectivos extranjeros desplegados por la Organización del Tratado Atlántico Norte.

Obama también prestará atención a los últimos preparativos de su segunda investidura el próximo 21 de enero.

El mandatario de Estados Unidos rompió sus propias reglas y acepta contribuciones ilimitadas de corporaciones y ciudadanos para cubrir los gastos de la ceremonia, que será privada y reservada para pocos invitados.

Dicha decisión es opuesta a una orden anterior de Obama, quien en 2009 prohibió a la Comisión de Investidura Presidencial aceptar fondos privados y estableció un tope máximo de 50 mil dólares por donante.

El PIC recaudó entonces casi 45 millones de dólares para la primera ceremonia de investidura del dignatario demócrata, reelecto el pasado 6 de noviembre para el periodo 2013-17.

Obama nominó a John Brennan para dirigir la Agencia Central de Inteligencia (CIA).

Brennan, de 57 años, un especialista en contraterrorismo, sustituirá en el cargo al general David Petraeus, quien dimitió en noviembre luego que una investigación del FBI aireara una relación extramatrimonial que mantuvo con su biógrafa Paula Broadwell.

Asimismo estimó que en lugar de promover al autor de una estrategia fallida, Washington necesita un director de la CIA que detenga la militarización progresiva de la agencia y restaurare lo que mejor sabe hacer: recoger la inteligencia humana.

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