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Deadly hazards of capitalist profit system

Global heat soars, wildfires spread toxic smoke

By Gary Wilson

The beginning of July saw the hottest days on record globally. Daily heat records were sent on July 3, 4 and 5.

"This record is the visible part of a huge amount of silent and often unnoticed suffering and dying of people and ecosystems," says Friederike Otto, a climate scientist at Imperial College London. "We live in a dramatically different world to just a few years ago."

At the same time, many parts of the U.S. are being blanketed with some of the worst air quality recorded, caused by particularly severe wildfire activity in Canada. It is likely that smoke will continue its penetrations, as Canada's fire season is expected to run until at least October.

Canada is currently experiencing its worst wildfire season on record. As of June 29, 2023, over 3,000 wildfires in Canada have burned over 19 million acres of land. This is more than ten times the average number of fires and acreage burned during this time of year.

The fires have been particularly destructive in Quebec, where over 2 million acres have burned. The smoke from the fires has made air in parts of Canada and the U.S. among the most polluted in the world.

On June 29, Chicago and Washington, D.C., had the worst air quality in the world, while Detroit and Minneapolis were in the top 10, according to IQAir.com.

The smoke from the Canadian wildfires has laid a thick blanket over parts of the Midwestern and Eastern U.S. Over 120 million people, or more than a third of the U.S. population, were under air quality alerts. It's a major health hazard. The unhealthy air quality conditions, while rising or falling on a daily basis, are expected to last for several months, if not longer.

Because the shroud of smoke, solar power generation in parts of the Eastern U.S. plummeted by more than 50%. According to the region's grid operator, solar farms powering New England were producing 56% less energy at times of peak demand compared with the week before.

Reports in the big business media generally mention weather conditions and climate change as factors, including:

- **Drought:** Much of Canada is experiencing a severe drought, which has dried out vegetation and made it more susceptible to fire.
- **Warm temperatures:** The average temperature in Canada has been above normal this year, contributing to the severity of the fires.
- **Wind:** Strong winds have helped to spread the fires and make them more difficult to control.

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