Taking Responsibility for the Climate Crisis

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
22 December 2009

The unnatural dominant culture, coldly spewing its noise and heat, subjecting us to dirty machines and pavement, no longer makes sense in terms of our needs as humans. But don't let it get you down and make you give up. Play your guitar, enjoy the company of friends, or whatever else restores your humanity. Perhaps the songs and the conversations will lead to some liberation and justice, alleviating the pain of this senseless system running our lives into the ground. But we must do even more. Finding a "better job" is no solution long-term, however much we think we need money to survive.

Taking responsibility for our own lot and the climate crisis means we must first reject an unworkable system and culture. I hasten to clarify; this does not mean there aren't a lot of nice people caught up in it. But if they believe elections and voting with their consumer dollars are going to save them from the ecological crisis and the slide into societal chaos of collapse, they are of no help to themselves or to the countless species being driven extinct by modern civilization.

In complaining about the failure of the Copenhagen COP 15 meeting, and continuing to beseech the Barack Obamas of the world to "please take good care of us," we are behaving like overgrown children who have no business coming back to helpless, hopeless parents to save us when we are reluctant to take matters into our own hands for our survival.

Except, the Obamas and Merkels and other corporate front men say to us, "Yes, there there, we're here for you. And we're trying to be green. Now be good and stay out of our way." So we go off and brood, get a bit more frustrated, and then we come back with more proposals, only to be disappointed -- as our graves are dug deeper by the technological war-for-profit growth-is-essential system. To legitimize a fixed game by continuing to play by its rules is foolish and tiresome to those of us who see though the sham and self-delusion.

Blaming the Copenhagen fiasco on... ?

Some activists, such as the "global web movement" Avaaz.org, blame "big polluters" such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce for the U.S. stance on climate protection, while sparing Obama significant criticism. Avaaz probably did not read
Naomi Klein's recent Guardian- UK article that made a good case for blaming Obama. The deeper problem is that many activists want to hope Obama is their guy, not the polluter's guy. Sure, sure.

Still another progressive environmentalist view finds Obama still heroic as a constrained realist facing a tough Congress: a Grist.org column stated, "Instead of directing our frustrations at Obama, let’s direct them at the paralysis of vision and understanding among the American people."

When we face the fact that we are on our own and must build an alternative society, it would seem wise to look at the only

sustainable model humanity has known: indigenous, traditional society based on tribes. Except for a few experiments in civilization that eventually failed, such as the Mayans and the Mississippi culture, the cultures of revering nature and the universe as it is -- not as our technology could remake it -- succeeded for millennia.

Now we are up against the wall, trying to create ecovillages and implement permaculture before we are crushed. It's ironic that so few people see the need. This is one reason it is so hard to jump to a safe haven where these sound practices are followed. It takes a good deal of sacrifice or luck in being able to make major changes in one's life under the yoke of the vicious economic system. Even so, there's really nowhere to run to, when we're all in this together. But we can and should each improve our situations in a responsible way.

So keep your eyes peeled for opportunities to exit the corporate economy, or at least to become more self-sufficient while creating more community. Someday a tribe will form around you, or you'll have to go find one. Driving to the supermarket and shopping online, and in other fashions not working closely with family or neighbors, has no future. It is antisocial as well as ecocidal.

* * * * *

Related reading: Evils of False Progress Interfere in Fight for Climate - Now It's up to Us, by Jan Lundberg

Email alert by Avaaz.org -
The People vs. Polluters to raise money for Yes Men-like climate activists busted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The Guardian, UK - Copenhagen's failure belongs to Obama "The American president has been uniquely placed to lead the world on climate change and squandered every opportunity."

Grist.org - Why is everyone so pissed at Obama?, Dec. 18, 2009

Grow up, America! - Sept. 11th analyzed in Jungian terms by Cal Simone, Culture Change, 14 September 2006