Tennessee Coal-Waste Disaster and a New Approach

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Notions such as "clean" solar and wind power on a massive scale for a renewable-energy panacea, and the idea that roads are a good thing, are why idiocy and tragedy continue. The doomed petroleum infrastructure is just one reason, and all are ignored by our society wearing blinders. We're the animal that errs -- the incorrectly named homo sapiens sapiens. And when we consider "clean coal" or "clean cars" homo idiotus comes to my mind (someone correct my Latin).

The Kingston power plant whose lagoon of toxic waste gave way this week, and the Tennessee Valley Authority, tell us what's wrong in the large sense in their very names, and gives us an indication of what must be abolished: "King's town" and "boss of a valley." Question authority, question "reality."

It a wrongheaded mindset that has allowed the generation of "more than 1 billion gallons of waste containing potentially dangerous levels of heavy metals including arsenic, cadmium, mercury and lead, as well as radioactive elements such as uranium and thorium, impurities typically found in coal." [from Southern Exposure's Dec. 26 report, ref. below] "A report last December in Scientific American stated that several studies show coal fly ash is more radioactive than nuclear waste... The spill is nearly 50 times bigger than the Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska in 1989." [Sustainablebusiness.com, Dec. 24]

Self-defeating reforms are the rule, not the exception: "In recent years, the technology for capturing the pollutants from stacks of coal-fired power plants has become more sophisticated, which means coal combustion waste contains even higher concentrations of toxins." The article exposed the absurdity of mining and development, as in "developers used 1.5 million tons of coal ash to build a golf course over a shallow aquifer in Chesapeake, Va." But the conclusion of the Tennessee article was only a call for better regulation. Oh, sure.

Can we really expect much from the Obama regime or the dominant culture to
directly rectify or transform the problems that plague us and the whole
Earth? Even if there were 1,000 Ecovillage Training Centers (in Tennessee at The Farm), and as many Earth University's (in Chiapas on autonomous land), plunked down from on high, there's no logical argument that can herd the "sheople" to try a new approach to living, even if we could commandeer NPR, PBS, the BBC et al for a good spell. For the boss man is too strong, and there's not an open commons where the land ain't fenced or paved, so that people can gather food and erect shelters in peace and freedom. Too many people, divided as they are -- what leader in power has ever tackled overpopulation? Doing so toppled Indira Gandhi. The Chinese have tackled it but rather too late.

Only a collapse of the entire system of industry and consumption will change the playing field. Are things finally crashing down as we speak? Being compassionate is essential. But to fight for changes on the policy level and possibly legitimize the system is in the end not compassionate if we neglect to prioritize fundamental cultural change. Meanwhile some of us on the latter track continue to develop and point to ways of sustainability. Some of us even risk getting arrested for what we believe in. May the new year make more sense to us in terms of a positive flow of consciousness.

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References and further reading:

"'EMPTY PROMISE': The broken federal commitment behind the Tennessee coal ash disaster"by Sue Sturgis, Facing South/Southern Exposure (Institute for Southern Studies):
southernstudies.org

"Environmental Disaster in Tennessee - Coal Ash Spill", SustainableBusiness.com News:

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United Mountain Defense: No Such Thing As Clean Coal:
unitedmountaindefense.org

Ecovillage Training Center:
thefarm.org

Earthe University / Universidad de la Tierra (editor's note: go visit; they're not into websites):

psicosocialchiapas.blogia.com

"Targeting coal: protest mounts" by Jan Lundberg, July 13, 2006
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