Shake up and Direct the Collapse: the Macroeconomic and the Body

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
18 March 2009

Personal cars must be outlawed. Auto manufacturing jobs are disappearing in the U.S. anyway, so why allow imported cars to drain our wallets and worsen the balance of trade? This rudderless nation needs to veer toward sense and wake up from the manufactured "American Dream," and find healing for both nature and personal health.

The benefits from outlawing personal cars or bringing about their earliest demise will stimulate a great deal of economic activity of the sustainable kind. The sectors to benefit would be in all forms of alternative transportation that offer sustainability: low-tech, inexpensive, and using local resources. The work created would be local as people give up the jobs down the highway (these jobs are disappearing anyway) that are far away from one's neighborhood.

Three quarters of U.S. commuters go by car, in a single-occupant vehicle. If these planet-killing citizens would give that up voluntarily, they would be liberating themselves in several positive ways, and we would all be better off ecologically. But since doing the wrong thing is rewarded as a feature of the dominant culture, an extreme response to change habits is required.

Oil and car infrastructure doomed

As motorists are presently opting to fix rather than buy cars in order to save money, the trend is that of ending up with a jalopy fleet. But what would the cars run on? In a collapsing economy the oil industry will not be refining and shipping unlimited supplies of petroleum products as before. Meeting demand sounds simple and the pace of depletion of crude reserves seems surmountable, but the industry isn't able to ratchet down and provide all products to all sectors according to many peak oilists' energy-descent assumptions. This I learned as an oil-industry analyst serving major oil companies and government for 13 years.

Additionally, as we know from Matt Simmons, oil industry investment banker and author, the petroleum infrastructure is rapidly rusting into a state of eventual and enforced disuse. So the car as mass transportation will be history, despite technofix-dreams of switching the means of propulsion.

Who might conceivably pull off such a ban of personal cars? It's hard to imagine it now, but we can imagine the ban on smoking in public buildings being almost accomplished across the U.S. -- seemingly unlikely a couple of decades ago. As cars increasingly appear to be the financial and environmental drain that they are, and the economic picture only worsens, more radical steps at restructuring will come to the fore. It could be that national pride pushes major transformation, as U.S. car companies completely collapse and leave the field to imports. Many may ask, why let that happen?

The pleasant surprise of working more locally is that it will be more for oneself and one's community. Local people know each other and cannot ignore each other's problems and needs if they are front and present. Cars are isolating socially, and serve competition between neighbors that only benefits corporations that keep people in hock with unnecessary purchases.

How to heal while getting ahead financially

Car-free living is a start. If I hadn't sold my car, my last one, in 1989, my health would be much the poorer. After a number of months after ditching my Buick Behemoth, I was surprised to notice in the mirror that I had developed my leg muscles markedly. And the money I saved on gasoline, insurance, repairs, registration, etc., was as satisfying as learning that I had not slowed down my mobility whatsoever: Ivan Illich calculated in his book Energy and Equity that the average speed of the U.S. motorist, when taking into account most of the hours associated with car ownership -- compared to miles traveled -- is adjusted to just 5 MPH (five miles per hour).

Personal transformation is needed to cope with the unfolding global crisis. To come out better for the experience, we must address our health and our personal responsibility in a way that adds to our own power and capability to improve ourselves. In so doing, we improve the lot of our families and communities. It comes down to healing. The question is how.

Taking care of one's health became relegated in the U.S. to primarily visiting doctors, hospitals and taking medications. None of these practices had to do with healing by the individual in a natural fashion. Sensing this, and in an effort to become healthier and regain our self control, the health food movement, self-help and alternative healing methods became more popular. Chiropractic and massage, for example, have started to make inroads for mainstream and corporate respectability.

But those 1960s and '70s-era developments did not do enough. Health care in the capitalistic, insurance dominated, drugged-out U.S. must be addressed in a radical way, if only for cost control and affordability.

To detoxify the body and reduce stress is to heal and avoid major health crises and the costs they claim. Fasting is always effective, contrary to fears held by the uninitiated. One benefit is not having to buy food during the fast, and when eating resumes, costly processed foods or restaurant fare is not only ill-advised but repugnant.

The top fasting author, the late Herbert M. Shelton, wrote in Natural Hygiene: Man's Pristine Way of Life

We are not Reformers; we are Revolutionists. Medical reform -- the world has had quite enough of that. Reforming the drug system by substituting one set of drugs for another is a ridiculous farce. It may, to be sure, substitute a lesser for a greater evil, in many cases, but is like reforming big lies with little falsehoods.

The health benefits of not driving are tremendous, whether you spare yourself a fatal crash or killing others, or you're just

escaping the sedentary lifestyle whereby you breath plastics and other petrochemical poisons. During a fast, one's meditative perception makes clear how much of a strain driving is on our health and spirit. If it should be avoided during a fast, that should call driving into question as normal or harmless.

The Depression and health

One of the hardships of this Depression is that medical costs are keeping constant during income loss and disappearing credit. "Health care is weighing down income," reported the Associate Press in an article syndicated starting March 9, 2009, titled "Recession on track to be longest in postwar period" and sometimes as "Recession closes in on postwar record".

Our mental health as a people and individually is pushed to the breaking point as stress mounts and "the way home" is obscured by fear and vested interests. Fasting and liberating oneself from the onerous car improves our frame of mind and reduces the discouraging tendencies of watching material security evaporate at the hands of the big corporations. Those profiting off greed and destruction are happy to see people remain discouraged and disempowered. All this can change rapidly, as we are seeing.

When those who care about the Earth and seek fundamental change see this newspaper headline for February's Depression statistics -- "Industrial Output Declines for a 4th Month" -- it would prompt an eco-jihadist to shout, "God is great!"(or rather, "Goddesses are great!") Rather than being extremist, this exuberant stance actually embraces the inevitable and welcomes an historic departure for wayward modern humanity. Lest anyone be thought of as insensitive or elitist for advocating revolutionary change -- defined as changing consciousness rather than replacing rulers -- there is no employment on a dead planet.

The Associated Press reported on March 16th, "Industrial output dropped 1.4 percent last month and the factory operating rate dropped to the lowest level in more than a half-century of record keeping, the government said." Indeed! Highly entropic activity is calming down -- healing to our bodies, spirits, and nature.

This essay is Culture Change Letter #242

Activists are a threatened species, but there's safety in numbers. If you can't be active, please $upport your local Earth activist.

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Further reading:

"'Cars were a bubble' – General Motors" by Jan Lundberg, March 17, 2009

culturechange.org

Energy and Equity; Ivan Illich; 1974

webs.lanset.com

"Fasting for healing and inner peace"

culturechange.org

Natural Hygiene: Man's Pristine Way of Life; Dr. Shelton's Health School; 1968

chestofbooks.com

"Industrial Output Declines for a 4th Month"

nytimes.com

"Recession on track to be longest in postwar period"
March 9, 2009

wtop.com/Associated Press

Graphic of noose-pump is from Sacred Planet Trust.

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