Honest Coverage and Commentary in Copenhagen - Follow Albert Bates

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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Albert Bates, well known to Culture Change readers, is in Copenhagen for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). His daily blog is probably the most reliable source of news and analysis because of his personal, philosophical balance. And, he wrote Climate in Crisis in 1990 with a foreword by Al Gore.

Day 2 (excerpt): Klimabundmode is dansk for “Climate Bottom Meeting”
(as opposed to the top-down meeting which will be happening across town beginning Monday).
Our program is called “Windows of Hope” and began with a ceremony out around the fire that was kindled at sunrise by a Bolivian shaman. There are 50 or 60 hardy souls who gathered with us for the circle, a small number perhaps, but it represented nearly that many countries and peoples — Laplanders, Hungarians, Nepalese, Venezuelans, Aussies; scores more. Medicine Story, a familiar Wampanoag who used to live at The Farm, gave a sweet invocation and then we shifted to the Big Top for the first day’s circus...

The official delegate from Greenland, Tove Sovndahl Pedersen, said that the warming of the climate represents both challenges and opportunities. For them, hydropower, agriculture and forestry are improving. Greenland potatoes are more flavorful and disease resistant. Mineral resources are more exposed and Greenland has lots of valuable ones, especially well suited for high technology.

Sure, as sea ice melts, coastal flooding and loss of hunting areas of marine mammals and halibut are problems of survival for indigenous rural settlements. But new sea routes will open from North America and Europe to Asia, and shipping routes could be greatly reduced. While commerce may improve, it is a concern to Greenlanders because all of that new oil and toxic materials will be carried through their treacherous and vulnerable coastal waters. She wrapped up by paying homage to the God of status quo: Greenlanders know from their own eyes that weather is changing and also becoming more unstable, but we need a COP-15 agreement that allows us economic progress, and allows us to make improvements in food, and health and education of our poor. All the time she is saying this we are thinking, it is so easy to spot the elected officials here.

Day 1 (excerpt):

The news buzz is about India pledging to cut emissions per GDP percentile by 20-25% by 2020. That seems at first glance to be a huge leapfrog over Obama’s pitiful pledge of 4% of 1990 levels (17% of 2005 levels), until you realize that India has every intention of growing its GDP by 9% per year, so what their pledge actually represents is a net increase. This is a game China invented, and it seemed like it might suck in some easy marks, so India set up a table and started hawking the idea too. We expect to run into more of these three-card Monte games in coming weeks.

Saudi Arabia, always the shill for the climate deniers, has latched onto the purloined email Swiftboating and proclaimed the issue will have a "huge impact" on next week's summit, with countries unwilling to cut emissions if climate change does not have a human cause. Those Saudis. What kidders.

Jim Hansen, on the other hand, was not kidding when he said it would be better if the Copenhagen summit failed. "I would rather it not happen if people accept that as being the right track, because it's a disaster track," he told The Guardian. Hansen’s assessment is bolstered by the most recent research findings from around the world that IPCC underestimated the pace and extent of global warming. A report — titled “The Copenhagen Diagnosis” — finds that in several key areas observed changes are outstripping the most recent projections by the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and warns that “there is a very high probability of the warming exceeding 2 °C unless global emissions peak and start to decline rapidly” within the next decade.

Jan Lundberg's comment on James Hansen:

He is indeed a hero. Getting arrested for civil disobedience in a blockade of a coal facility endears him to us, and opens the way for scientists to do more than sit back after making observations. But maybe Hansen and many activists have a lot further to go in their thinking and understanding aside from scientific issues:

When the report on Hansen says "However, Hansen argues that world leaders can prevent the worst predictions of environmental damage coming true" it's like he's only half way to understanding the obstacle to climate protection. Yes, he's right that Copenhagen's heading in the business-as-usual direction. But if we rely on governments -- that Hansen thinks can be pushed and reformed -- which means relying on their most powerful constituent, corporations, then all may be lost.

The answer is for a mass movement for lifestyle change that aims to quickly dismantle the global economy of petroleum trade, to create local economies that use much less energy. As writer Adam Sacks pointed out recently on Global Warming Crisis Council, crash may be the only positive, workable development for the climate. Fortunately crash is not all bad, as people start working for themselves and their communities more than they do today especially in the capitalistic strangleholds.

Read the whole Hansen interview in Spiegel Online's Climate Countdown at

Climate Pioneer Hoping for Copenhagen to Fail
Many fear that Copenhagen won't result in a binding deal. One climate pioneer says he is hoping for failure."

Read Copenhagen Is Supposed to Fail. DIY! by Jan Lundberg, 20 October 2009.

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Follow Albert's adventures in Copenhagen and Hopenhagen on his blog. For more on his peak oil work, see the Culture Change article Albert Bates, guide for our post-petroleum, globally warmed future. For more articles on or by Albert on this website, visit this listing

For official news from the UNFCCC, visit their website starting with their Fact Sheets page. More than 15,000 participants, including delegates from 192 countries, are
expected to take part in the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen (7
to 18 December).

Making the rounds:

Fella walks into a bar, says, "Say I want to cheat on my wife but then at the last second I decided not to and to maintain

fidelity. I will sell my cheating credit to you and you can cheat on your wife. Any takers?"