"Climate Deal Likely to Bear Big Price Tag" - Critical Comment

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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For decades the nations of the southern hemisphere have asked for -- or have been portrayed by social justice activists as needing -- a piece of the industrial pie. A related theme has been the drive to not have to pay for the overconsumption of the North. "Development" often meant World Bank projects to facilitate power consumption for spreading the use of appliances and cars. In the run-up to Copenhagen the idea of funding poor countries for climate mitigation has gained popularity, but it may really be about corporate business. How feasible this is with the global economy's imploding -- from the end of cheap energy and peaking of funny money -- is forgotten as plans count on just more growth.

For those seeing continuity of the industrial pollution economy, or business as usual with some concessions to efficiencies and cleaner technologies, it all comes down to money. Or, call it climate aid (to replace what used to be "foreign aid"). The New York Times represented this tendency most recently with its report "Climate Deal Likely to Bear Big Price Tag" on Dec. 8, 2009. (It's in the Environment section, but ought to be in the Business section. Online a Shell Oil ad flashes around.)

This widely accepted concern about future climate-mitigation costs is way off base. I'm not referring to the familiar argument that renewable energy and energy efficiency pay though savings and job creation, or that carbon reductions ultimately save money. Or that there's monetary value in saving forests that provide oxygen and sequester carbon.

Rather, several assumptions go into the typical analysis captured by this New York Times story, such as that there will be the technical and geological ability to maintain a semblance of the present economy way into the future, and that there will be the financial wealth to even attempt such an approach for replacing high-emissions infrastructure. But most of all, the idea that buying our way or engineering our way to a viable future is absurd when we just look at ecological trends.

To understand my view, one would have to roughly share my values about simplicity and natural living, as well as my view on the unavoidability of collapse. I won't rehash now what I've written about these things, including the brighter future promised when the present system falters completely and is replaced by not another system but by eventual bioregional diversity of human cultures. The end is really a beginning. The reflowering could be swift. Nice if industrialism's destruction of the life support system could cease sooner rather than later.

Cultural change through upheaval and termination might be the main silver lining in the unlikelihood of poor nations not getting the hoped-for global industrial aid to "modernize" (that passes for climate-crisis solutions instead of immediate slashing of emissions). There should be more justice regarding past and present fossil-fueled materialism, but perhaps waiting for the check in the mail is bone-headed and an insufficient strategy. The "free market," global trade and inflated funny-money aren't the future.

Looking at the future through the lens of the past, as the
New York Times and the banksters do, can result in distorted perceptions. The defenders of the status quo can only continue attitudes that result in impossibilities, such as (1) money being an answer to a health crisis brought on by out-of-control technology and overpopulation, and (2) population growth itself as something that can keep happening based solely on trends upward.

Rather than consider those overarching issues, expectations for business as usual run along the lines of starting with a "developing"-nations fund of "$10 billion in so-called quick start financing... now on the table [as] adequate but that such spending had to rise to roughly $80 billion and as much as $150 billion a year by 2020. 'That is not very much compared to the size of the world economy or the financial crisis bailouts,' said the leader of Costa Rica’s climate delegation." (New York Times) Sure, in their dreams.

Am I being unfair? Well, consider the source of funds: largely intended from a scam. The same New York Times article said, "...roughly $100 billion will be needed by 2020 to finance climate-change programs in the developing world. About half could come from the growing global market in carbon emissions credits under a cap-and-trade system, which would be worth an estimated $2 trillion a year by 2020."

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New York Times
Climate Deal Likely to Bear Big Price Tag,
by John M. Broder, Dec. 8, 2009

Copenhagen Is Supposed to Fail. DIY! by Jan Lundberg

"It's as if someone is in dire need of swimming across a raging river, but he will not let go of his bag of gold (or TV set, or refrigerator, or computer, what have you) in order to save his own life. Modernity is thought to count as much as life itself; hence the primacy of the technofix mindset." - from Climate Changegate: Setting the Record Straight, by Michael Poremba and Jan Lundberg

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