Evils of False Progress Interfere in Fight for Climate - Now It's up to Us

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
19 December 2009

Although one yearns for global warming to indeed not exceed 2 degrees Celsius (or less, as African countries demand), the take-home message from the Copenhagen COP meeting is that polluters and growth mongers, large and small, will not let up. This is because they are not being forced to -- whether by their own peoples or by natural forces such as ecological or economic collapse. Most diabolical is the intention to switch energy as the main strategy for climate protection, when it will not work.

What has happened in Copenhagen -- is it really a matter of degree and the lack of strong measures? Or is it a matter of kind? Most technofixers are clever enough not to call for endless growth, but they may as well say there's unlimited, infinite growth through resource exploitation somehow made "green." Here's the revealing part of World Resources Institute's statement trumpeting the pathetically inadequate COP climate deal:

The political agreement struck today has immediate operational effect, including the mobilization of finance to build the clean energy economy in developing countries... The dealt "does provide the framework for countries to move forward with ambitious national action. Action that will build clean energy markets, create jobs, enhance energy security..."

These ideas are admissions of the determined business-as-usual reformist wing of the industrial elite to preserve, if they can, mass consumerism that feeds megaprofits.

Why should a few more months of negotiating do anything but buy some time for those who refuse to "get it"? Ongoing failure will continue to be dressed up as good-faith efforts within the vicissitudes of statecraft.

The real state of affairs is truly, "It's up to us." From personal lifestyle change that's openly shared and publicized, to concerted and individual direct action, to local initiatives toward weakening corporate power including via boycott, it's all up to us. Nations and global institutions have failed to honor life itself, and they're taking us down -- not unlike the uncounted species going extinct daily. It's hard to face our true challenge when it's easier to wait until the next election and pretend again that one is doing one's bit.

As long as any climate deal or eventual treaty is in reality a realignment of industrial investment, toward the renewable-energy Holy Grail regardless of oil reality, then the accepted story is a fraud:

"billions in financial commitments from rich countries to the developing world to help in the fight against climate change. It is hoped that all countries will agree to a control mechanism -- meaning that each country agrees to allow its progress toward emissions reduction targets to be internationally verified." [Spiegel, Dec. 18 -- 'The Search for a Deal']

This constitutes a fraud in terms of slashing emissions, when the "energy market" programs and budgets mainly exist for still more funding, as opposed to immediate action that the Earth's crisis demands.

Take the poor countries' situation: their main root problems include cash crops and associated damage, and infrastructure boondoggles that resulted in major debt and concessions to privatization. Meanwhile these societies' strengths -- local indigenous knowledge and strength of community in acceptance of nature -- are being eroded by the transnational corporations and their lackey international lenders and "developed"-nation governments.

Therefore, money for the "developing nations" is not the real answer. It would be nice if it happened, if it went for the right things such as environmental restoration (e.g., tree planting = jobs and food plus carbon sequestration). But the intended big money -- assuming it happens when redistribution of wealth normally doesn't come about without revolution -- will be wasted to a great extent on corruption, cronyism, and the belief in industrial progress. A modern myth is that energy technologies and fuels are all the same -- just "energy" -- and can be somehow maximized and interchanged for

continued "growth." Not to completely dismiss energy-technology aid, the distribution of some community solar panels for shared refrigeration and shared computer access, for example, would be helpful. But an unprecedented mass movement to slash emissions is what has to happen.

Let's be real: "$100 billion (€69.5 billion) annually for developing countries by 2020" is just talk, and is not going to happen with any more certainty than the world's population can go up and up indefinitely. The global economy cannot be sustained, let alone grow, with the loss of cheaply extracted petroleum that has already hit. Crash has begun, including petrocollapse, and the great unravelling is in motion.

There's very little evidence that President Obama gets much of this. Post Carbon Institute's Asher Miller's statement on Obama's Copenhagen contribution says it well: "US President Barack Obama has chosen political expediency over truth and justice." One might go further and wonder why one should have expected much from someone who turned out to be another war-machine Uncle Tom.

It is appealing that Chancellor Merkel says ""We have to change our lifestyles," but does this mean what it should: sharing appliances, ceasing commutes, establishing local economics to the exclusion of corporatism? Or does she mean "greener cars" and flicking switches in every home that burn a different form of energy than at present?

A culture change is overdue. It is underway, but it must become everyone's life purpose.

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Song
"It's Up To Us" by Spring Lundberg - released during her successful U.S. pepper-spray torture case against Humboldt County, California's law enforcement (Lundberg et al v Humboldt County et al)

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

The Search for a Deal
Merkel Pushes for Minimum Consensus at Summit

By Roland Nelles, Christoph Seidler and Markus Becker

"Few expect a far-reaching climate deal to emerge from Copenhagen. But German Chancellor Angela Merkel is doing what she can to help erect the political framework for a future agreement. Her experience and the respect she enjoys are proving invaluable."

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For Immediate Release

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Statement of Asher Miller, Executive Director of Post Carbon Institute, on "Meaningful Agreement" (sic!) Announced in Copenhagen

COPENHAGEN--Despite dire warnings from his own nation's leading scientists, and over the cries of millions of voices in hundreds of countries across the globe, US President Barack Obama has chosen political expediency over truth and justice.

The so-called Copenhagen Accord is merely the repackaging of old and toothless promises, which holds no one accountable and utterly fails to reflect the urgency of the moment at hand.

Less than one year ago, President Obama took the oath of office on a cold winter day in our nation's capital, calling upon each of us to summon a new spirit of patriotism, of service and responsibility where each of us resolves to pitch in and work harder and look after not only ourselves, but each other.

Now, on another cold winter day, our President appears to be more concerned about saving face and avoiding sacrifice than honoring his own lofty words.

It is now time for the American people to lead, to demand action, and to show the way, as Obama himself said "block by block, brick by brick, calloused hand by calloused hand."

The world can no longer wait.

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Post Carbon Institute is a nonprofit think tank of 28 Fellows joined to lead the transition to a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable world.

PCI can be found online at postcarbon.org

From: "Paul Mackie"

Date: December 19, 2009 3:23:42 AM PST

To: info@culturechange.org

Subject: Global Climate Pact Reached After Marathon Talks End in Copenhagen

December 20, 2009

Location: Copenhagen, Denmark

Tough negotiations have finally yielded an important climate agreement today at the UN climate conference. The deal, which for the first time commits developed and developing countries to action on emissions and adaptation, removes the final obstacle to the adoption of binding climate policy in the United States.

“This is a important moment. Much more is needed, but today marks a foundation for a global effort to fight climate change,” said Jonathan Lash, President of the World Resources Institute.

Victory was snatched from the jaws of defeat. As a small group of countries threatened to block the deal, the vast majority of countries elected to go ahead without them.

“In the end, countries recognized that this is an issue of survival,” Lash continued. “Rather than let their survival be held hostage by a handful of obstructionists, they concluded an agreement with significant emission cuts and financial pledges. These countries must now work without delay to make good on these commitments.”

“This deal provides a solid foundation for international action, including emissions targets, a new financial mechanism and transparent reporting and review to assess countries’ performance,” said Jennifer Morgan, Director of WRI’s Climate and Energy Program. “But more is needed to ensure a functioning legal instrument, and the ambition of the emission cuts still falls far short of what the science indicates. The agreement will need to be strengthened over time.”

“The pledges that have been brought forward this year include emissions targets amounting to a significant reduction in industrialized country emissions, ambitious developing country actions, finance and commitments to transparency,” said Rob Bradley, Director of WRI’s International Climate Policy Initiative. “These need to be inscribed in the Annexes to this agreement early in the New Year and viewed as international commitments. The U.S. Senate can and should follow through by passing strong domestic legislation.”

“Actions to cut emissions will be reported transparently, and subject to review within international guidelines. This provides a basis for countries to take action at the domestic level in the confidence that others are also playing their part.”

The political agreement struck today has immediate operational effect, including the mobilization of finance to build the clean energy economy in developing countries and to protect the poorest from severe climate impacts. These funds will amount to $10 billion annually from 2010 to 2012, increasing to $100 billion by 2020.

“Nobody would claim that this is a total solution to the climate challenge,” Morgan added. “But it does provide the framework for countries to move forward with ambitious national action. Action that will build clean energy markets, create jobs, enhance energy security, protect the world’s forests and help the poorest to deal with a changing climate. Now we need to focus on fulfilling and surpassing the promises made in Copenhagen.”

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The World Resources Institute (www.wri.org) is an environmental think tank that goes beyond research to find practical ways to protect the earth and improve people’s lives.