Climate Protection Movement Coming Together - From 350.org to Pachamama's Children

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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There is good news on the climate activism front, based on first hand information coming in to Culture Change. But first, some necessary background:

The global struggle to save the climate and ensure our common survival takes various forms. The movement is not limited to just a few well known approaches, such as "politically realistic" legislation, conferences, or boosting renewable energy. As an example of a new force post-Copenhagen, there is momentum from last month's Bolivia gathering, particularly since the title of it included the Rights of Mother Earth.

It's a good sign when folks can look beyond their own areas of emphasis and bond with others offering something else that also holds promise. Networking and coalescing have always been a priority, but the growth of the grassroots movement has been hindered somewhat by separate groups sprouting up and vying for attention to themselves. That trend may no longer hold sway.

The climate protection movement includes millions of diverse people fighting for a better world: better than what we will end up with if big industry and big money have their way. And better socially than the unjust, oppressive system that has prevailed and given us "oil company weather."

Those involved in this movement embrace or anticipate a less materially wealthy lifestyle. Some see advancement of technology as an indispensable source of convenience for more comfortable living than humanity's salad days of tribal, natural living. A Green Party activist and professor once told me, "I'm not gonna live in a f---in' teepee."

The climate movement does not include those who feel that maximizing technology represents life itself -- they may suffer from fear of nature, and they cannot resonate with simple living that relies on basic skills in a close community context. Such attributes for sustainable living go hand in hand with some affinity for Mother Earth, or Pachamama as she is known here in the Andes.

Many players in the climate change field are intent on appearing concerned, constructive and part of “the solution” but are in reality pushing the status quo of fossil fuels -– as if rejecting them would be as absurd as denying themselves forever the need for water or sex. The U.S. government is in this camp, blithely driving along into petrocollapse. Some of us resist being taken along for that ride, and are jumping out.

The real climate movement has had divisions (analyzed by Culture Change for two decades), but there is no more time for disunity. One reputable nonprofit organization continues to promote “clean cars” while knowingly accepting coal as the primary electric energy source for years to come. Some prominent activists have excelled at describing the real threat of climate change while turning around and falling far short in their approach for a cure: simply cutting energy use takes a back seat to trying to convert the present petroleum-oriented infrastructure for a

“greener” consumer economy. This contradictory tendency cannot endure, as the greenhouse effect keeps accelerating and the arrival of peak oil trims expectations for limitless growth of the economy.

But there is a larger wing of the climate protection movement that engages in what can be termed purity and soul, despite the emphasis on the technological fix.

Bill McKibben´s 350.org has drawn a line in the sand for anyone to understand and defend or abuse. If Earth’s atmosphere does not stabilize at 350 parts per million CO2, we are all cooked. 350.org’s growth and public support reflect both renewable energy industry goals as well as individuals’ dreams of a cleaner environment. 350.org has proven to be about a goal rather than an agenda influenced by a bias for a particular means. The group has embraced energy curtailment and lifestyle change as a key element for climate activism. To this veteran campaigner, there just might be a closing of ranks for the struggle to save the planet from a fate like that of Venus.

The Global Climate Race is 350.org’s latest push to involve youth in a new direction for energy production. The kick off date is May 5. The point person is Talia R., who wrote in the April 28 announcement via email that students in “competition between America, China and India will rise to the challenge of the climate crisis with the most, and the most creative, clean energy action.”

After receiving the announcement of the program, I wrote back right away in favor of cutting energy use as the preferable means of slashing greenhouse gas emissions. After some back and forth, wherein I made some points about petroleum issues that impinge upon planning for a “clean energy” future, T.R.’s initial reassurances to me about the program’s commitment to energy curtailment were proven real:

Hi Jan,

We'll definitely find a way to include using less energy as part of the competition. In fact, based on your comments we slightly revised the press release:

See the new version here:

prweb.com

And, yes, I've passed on your great letter to our team.

For those interested in the background-issues I raised, here is the correspondence. I had informed T,R. I was going to do this article. As "Volunteer" with 350.org she corresponded with professional capability and passion for the cause. My first

message was:

Dear Talia,

Could energy curtailment please qualify as one of the competing methods of slashing greenhouse gas emissions in the Global Climate Race? We could help with organizing and publicizing this enhancement.

Perhaps it's not too late to push hardest for curtailment of energy use when it is so much more effective and faster than enlarging upon or installing new systems for renewable energy. The climate crisis demands quick action rather than trying to modify the existing system and culture. I wish you luck with your program, but we need a race such as you are launching to unplug the global warming machine, be it cars, appliances, long-distance food, etc. What do you think?

Renewable energy systems depend on petroleum in various ways, especially when they are for adding power to the grid. As you may know, peak oil is about here now globally, and the implications are that economic growth is about to end and go into reverse.

This will affect the food security system (although there might not really be one) as well as transport. These factors should dictate how we respond to the climate crisis: most rapidly as well as structurally. Collapse of the petroleum-dependent economy is ahead. The need to enhance local economics means we must primarily pursue energy curtailment, especially of corporate or petroleum products, and we must envision renewable energy as a strictly local endeavor for the bare essentials of living (not for a computer/TV/refrigerator in every home). If through such an approach, and planting many more trees, we somehow get below 350 ppm CO2, that´s not just a bonus, but rather essential for our common survival.

One problem with proceeding as if we need more and more energy for a constantly rising population size is that it sets us up for being susceptible to the schemes and propaganda of dirtiest power industries, nukes, coal and tar sands and their politician friends. They argue we need the energy. But do we? Do we really need cars and oil, when bicycles and walking suffice for daily life? I have heard that renewable energy systems for the grid simply enhance the load at certain periods, allowing more consumption, rather than replace base load of dirty fuels.

When Bill McKibben stated, "If we can't get the biggest polluters and the biggest economies to change, then we'll never win," I submit that they probably will only "change" when fuel is no longer available, or when people are starving and rioting. At that point, changing the infrastructure (that is based on cheap oil) can´t happen, as made clear in the Hirsch Report on peak oil for the Dept. of Energy in 2005. But there is hope, because curtailment can put the dirty corporations out of business rapidly, if enough people try.

When I read "Projects are likely to include light bulb exchanges, lowering

thermostats, education events, installing solar panels on campus, having a campus president sign on to a climate pact, and more" I believe the "more" must aim at low-hanging fruit, such as car-free campuses immediately, holding classes outside when weather permits so that buildings can shut off all energy systems, and sending the students out into the community to curtail energy use -- via civil disobedience as one method of many. Depaving, in order to install food gardens, removes space for cars, thus reducing traffic congestion (it's true), and cuts down on the urban heat island effect. Doesn't the climate require these strong actions?

I look forward to hearing from you. Please feel free to pass along these ideas to your students and your colleagues, including Bill McKibben. As a former petroleum industry analyst I would be happy to assist further.

For more information on peak oil and alternative lifestyles visit www.energybulletin.net and www.postcarbon.org, as well as the sites below with which I am affiliated.

Thanks in advance,

Jan Lundberg

in Bolivia post-climate/Mother Earth conference

www.culturechange.org

www.sailtransportnetwork.com

Pledge for Climate Protection circulated in Cochabamba:

culturechange.org/cms/content/view/201/52/

This is the announcement she and 350.org had sent out:

Competitive Web 2.0 Global Climate Race Begins for Students Competitive

Web 2.0 Climate Race Begins for Students Worldwide

April 28, 2010 (Los Angeles, CA) -- On May 5, 2010, 350.org will launch the Great Power Race, a clean energy competition between America, China and India. This web 2.0 race will reveal who can rise to the challenge of the climate crisis with the most, and the most creative, clean energy action.

Read the full press release here, or, copy and paste the following URL into your browser:

prweb.com

350.org, 2017 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103 United States

Her response to me on April 29, 2010:

Hi Jan,

Thanks so much for your email. You are right on about energy curtailment, and I'd like to let you know that it is the backbone of our competition.

As you suggested,

"holding classes outside when weather permits so that buildings can shut off all energy systems, and sending the students out into the community to curtail energy use -- via civil disobedience as one method of many, depaving, in order to install food gardens, removes space for cars, thus reducing traffic congestion (it's true), and cuts down on the urban heat island effect"

- these are the actions and projects we're expecting students participating in the Great Power Race to develop, execute on campus and promote using social media.

We think that through the excitement of competition, the game-like aspect of social media, along with global encouragement and collaboration, students will in many ways define a strategy for communicating and enacting daily lifestyle changes like rethinking their methods of transportation, and dictating where their food comes from within their respective communities.

The climate crisis requires strong actions. And it also requires organization, and "on the ground" media attention. We look forward to students in the Great Power Race becoming journalists for their efforts.

Please let me know if you'd like to discuss the Great Power Race further. I appreciate you taking the time to write to me. I found your words encouraging and inspiring.

Thanks!

Best,

Talia R.

The press release on the web:

Competitive Web 2.0 Climate Race Begins for Students in America, China, and India

On May 5, 2010, 350.org, in collaboration with global partners, will launch the Great Power Race, a clean energy competition between America, China and India. This web 2.0 race will reveal who can rise to the challenge of the climate crisis with the most, and the most creative, clean energy action.

"Youth across India are already working on solutions to the climate crisis. The Great Power Race will be an opportunity for us to highlight and build on their efforts." - Roselin Dey, 350.org Indian Organizer

Los Angeles, CA (PRWEB) April 28, 2010 -- Students in America, China and India leverage social media and take to the streets in the first ever Great Power Race, a clean energy competition pitting country versus country to reveal who can rise to the challenge of the climate crisis with the most action.

Marchers for 350 take to the streets of Hong Kong. The HK 350 Rally is part of the hundreds of actions taking place in China coordinated by Chinese Youth Climate Action Network. This was one of over 5,200 events happening around the world as part of the 350.org International Day of Climate Action on October 24, 2009.

350.org announces that on May 5, 2010, the Great Power Race will begin with a registration round where America, China and India compete to see who can recruit the most campuses for the race. 350.org is coordinating the project with major youth organizations from each respective country: the Energy Action Coalition (US), the Indian Youth Climate Network, and the China Youth Climate Action Network.

350.org expects over 500 campuses in each country to register, marking this as the largest competitive international environmental movement for clean energy and climate action.

When the race is on, campus groups in America, China, and India must develop their clean energy projects, recruit the most students to get involved, and launch the effort on their campuses. Projects are likely to include light bulb exchanges, lowering thermostats, holding classes outside, education events, installing solar panels on campus, having a campus president sign on to a climate pact, starting food gardens, and more.

The clean energy industry claimed $162 billion in global investment in 2009. The three countries competing in 350.org's Great Power Race each

made investments towards clean energy.

"Every nation is not created equal in this climate crisis," explains 350.org Founder Bill McKibben. "If we can't get the biggest polluters and the biggest economies to change, then we'll never win. "
China's clean energy investments equaled $34.6 billion in 2009, while America's totaled $18.6 billion, and India dedicated $2.3 million, according to data released by the Pew Charitable Trusts.
"We're going to focus some particular attention on China, America, and India with a Great Power Race — campuses will compete to see who can come up with the most, and the most creative, climate solutions projects," continues McKibben.

350.org recognizes that citizens around the world now have access to technology that allows for a revolution in grassroots organizing.
The web and social media will play a vital role in the Great Power Race. Students can sign themselves up, register their university or college, and recruit others online and on mobile.

"Youth across India are already working on solutions to the climate crisis. The Great Power Race will be an opportunity for us to highlight and build on their efforts," says Roselin Dey, 350.org Indian Organizer.

Students can also track registrations and other Great Power Race statistics on 350.org's Great Power Race website launching May 5, 2010. Students will leverage Facebook , Flickr, YouTube, Twitter and other websites to compete, organize and collaborate.

350.org uses a novel approach when coordinating global campaigns like the Great Power Race, combining the web and SMS networks, distributing lightweight Flip video cameras, training young people in climate workshops on multiple continents, and advertising in hot spots like Times Square.
Stay up to date with the Great Power Race at 350.org's blog.

About 350.org
350.org is an international campaign dedicated to building a movement to unite the world around solutions to the climate crisis—the solutions that science and justice demand. Their mission is to inspire the world to rise to the challenge of the climate crisis—to create a new sense of urgency and of possibility for our planet. Join 350.org on Facebook by searching for 350.org, and on Twitter @350 and #350ppm.

Media Contact:

Find hi-res photos and videos of clean energy and climate action around the world along with complete contact information at 350.org/media.
prweb.com

www.350.org

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Further reading:

Bolivia's Evo Morales: Capitalism and Plastic No, Mother Earth and Indigenous Products, Yes

Bolivia in Contrast: Feeding the Petroleum Industry amidst Local Resilience

Culture Change articles on petrocollapse:

culturechange.org

This report appeared May 1, 2010 and was revised May 2.