Where We Stand on the Cusp of Tremendous Change: Month Two of Fukushima

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
11 April 2011

Note: see protest flier at bottom.
As we plod along daily in this time of great change, we activists for the Earth often feel paradoxically that nothing is changing. More and more of us fear the clock is ticking faster and faster toward extinction. At the same time there are clear signs we should soon expect a better way of living in balance with the Earth to come about fairly soon.

No one has hit the right lever, it seems, to allow everyone to "break on through to the other side," as the Doors exhorted. We see tragic trends of destruction persisting at the same time that small bursts of awareness often illuminate a growing number of people paying attention. Some needed an impact in their personal lives to be brought low off their material cloud, while others have steadily kept learning and expanding their awareness of the big picture. The question for those asking is: "What will it take?"

As any anti-nuclear activist from way back knows, dating prior to our movement's defeat of Diablo Canyon -- situated as it is right near one more California earthquake fault, unknown when the reactors were approved and built -- the Fukushima disaster ought to be the wake-up call for critical mass (pardon the pun). But not so far; one has to almost admit to insanity to have dared imagine that Japan's obvious catastrophe was not enough of a global body blow to galvanize the public to demand an end to a clear threat. The leakage and spewing of massive radiation is still underway, while the public is deceived so the wheels of commerce can grind on. A docile population would rather not really know, or wants to believe that an event worse than Chernobyl is something we can withstand again and again. "Maybe if we ignore the environment, it will go away."

For one to remain focused on what needs to be done has increasingly meant taking care of just oneself -- for to fight another day, we need to get through this one. The System we are up against is finely tuned to stifle resistance and encourage consuming as the only game in town. Isn't there something we can do to stimulate positive action before the next BP-Gulf gusher or Fukushima?

I don't have a definitive answer, but I feel confident that as we ride this wave of unprecedented, precarious historic change, we can ascertain guiding forces as well as appropriate responses on various levels. My gut feeling and dream is that a mass awakening and movement will be from the heart, with music and other art forms becoming central in our lives. Until that becomes obvious, most citizens feel forced to continue the commute or the job search, for often meaningless work, increasingly wondering how the future will provide for them and their children.

What happens when the screens go black? Answer: the art of conversation will return, although shouts and violence may drown out level-headed thinking if we are not prepared to work together. It would help if everyone first realized that the specialized, isolated function for the consumer economy may soon be obsolete.

For the average citizen, it doesn't seem possible for life to radically slow down and become centered around meeting basic needs in our communities through our own local resources. After all, the (imploding) economy runs much of our lives, even as it makes itself increasingly clear as a mere house of cards. It is built on dwindling, once-cheap oil. The much vaunted "clean energy economy" is still just an idea. So we are all extremely vulnerable to a geopolitical "surprise" involving oil supply passing through the Persian Gulf and Suez Canal. A disruption of the flow can usher in sudden failure for the work force to get to jobs and for goods to arrive by cargo ship and trucks to the stores we take for granted. Our so-called leaders don't acknowledge that failure of the oil infrastructure/economic collapse and Nature Batting Last are the overwhelmingly huge forces to heed.

Get ready. Add those extra skills, meet your neighbors, bring your family back together, and simplify your lifestyle. The

benefits outweigh the apparent sacrifices. Waiting until you get that additional college degree for a better job may soon be seen as the strategy of yesteryear -- back when competitive upward mobility ruled. It's probably time to sing a song for others to hear and join in, and feel the beat of the Earth. Leave the car behind deliberately; you'll have to sooner or later anyway. Can you imagine towing a bike cart or hoisting a sail?
We can be more proactive than simply anticipating the faltering system's accelerated collapse.

Picking up the gun is a somewhat popular "solution" for both the individual survivalist and the revolutionary fantasizer who are anticipating either a breakdown of social order or an eco-warrior uprising. Let us rather take note of Gandhi's and King's evolved wisdom for social change: live now the transformation in human social behavior we need to see, so as to replace ethically the dominant system of oppression and exploitation.

Envisioning a better world than what Western Civilization has wrought means letting go of cherished assumptions, such as mastery over nature and the "march of progress." It is hard for modern people to picture themselves living as their great-grandparents did, let alone the way displaced tribal cultures managed for many thousands of years. It's worth debating and speculating on lifestyles in the post-peak oil epoch, but whatever the future holds will depend on an open-minded, pragmatic approach that takes "the Seventh Generation" into account.

Until the next dam bursts as part of our industrial folly, I'm afraid we'll have to wait to see how well we come together and ensure that what is left of our battered, fragmented world can be salvaged for an age of peace and harmony.

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Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant Photos

Previous photos and documents

Could our upcoming protests this week in San Francisco at the Public Utilities Commission and in San Luis Obispo have swayed the nuke owner to take a step back? Headline: "PG&E wants Diablo Canyon nuclear plant license delay for seismic study"

By Michael R. Blood

Associated Press

Posted: 04/11/2011 02:56:45 PM PDT

Protest the dangerously placed nuclear power plant midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco: Pacific Gas & Electric's Diablo Canyon nuke.
Two protests this week: April 14 and 16:

MASS DEMONSTRATION at CA Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) Meeting
CLOSE ALL NUCLEAR FACILITIES ON FAULT LINES!

gather, speak and protest

It Happened in Japan, It can Happen HERE! Close Diablo Canyon BEFORE it does.

Event 1: April 14 in San Francisco 9am-Noon at the California Public Utilities Commission Building.

505 Van Ness Ave. SF CA 94102 See Map

The Public Utilities Commission is in charge of approving the budget for Diablo Canyon Nuclear Facility. Let's show them how the public feels about funding Nuclear Power on Fault Lines!

Guest speakers will include Starhawk and others TBA.

You can also sign up to speak at the meeting. Stand for the safety and health of our communities!

Event 2: April 16 in San Luis Obispo -- Mothers for Peace and allies will demonstrate against the nuke on the coast.

Front side of latest flier announcing protests:

Back side of flier: ADDITIONAL Sacramento event at the same time as the San Francisco event: