Germany at a More Real Climate Crossroads

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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More vital news from Germany: besides the creation of a car free city (Vauban), Chancellor Merkel is holding Obama's feet to the fire to do more to halt greenhouse-gas emissions -- even as she faces domestic protest regarding sacrosanct coal power.

Germany's entire society enjoys a better quality of life than the U.S. thanks to generous vacations while using half the energy per capita used by U.S. citizens. But all is not well in Germany due to economic and demographic stress combined with unsustainable energy dependence.

At the same time we in the U.S. often feel quite behind certain western European nations. So we can be fooled into thinking that taking modest measures to cut energy use is enough. Enough for what, and for whom?

Germany is still a capitalistic nation with powerful industrial forces catering to the good life of civilization: power consumption cannot be questioned below a certain comfort level. Sound familiar?

Press reports say Germany's environmental groups take the position that renewable energy is the answer for climate protection. It must be as hard to tell what the grassroots are really up to there, as it is in the U.S., when, for example, the bicycling do-it-yourselfer in both countries doesn't need much power -- she or he just wants to save the planet and have some kicks in a healthy world. Little press attention is given to such folk.

The real grassroots movement treasures sharing rather than individualistic consuming. The scaled-back lifestyle is a disaster for profits and the so-called American Dream. No refrigerator in every household? Oh my god! Not having one's own computer, television and car? Corporate profits can't handle that. When they're slightly limited by legislation to require more "green" power or to take back manufactured products for recycling, such steps are heralded as wondrous. Now, however, a monkey-wrench has been thrown into the "clean coal" scheme for Germany's CO2 sequestration, as demonstrated by protests and a standoff on energy requirements.

Some of us gladly accept the non-materialistic life, but it's discouraged everywhere by the Powers That Be. So sometimes the suppressed grassroots are only glimpsed by others when protests or street theater occur. When the World Naked Bike Ride happens, the song may come to mind: "There's somethin' happening here..." (Buffalo Springfield).

The climate protection goals of the industrialized world -- or what it's willing to consider -- are far from "acceptable" if ecological reality is considered first and foremost. Almost two decades ago the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change called for an up to 80% cut in greenhouse-gas emissions from 1990 levels. Didn't happen; instead the transnational corporate state and its national components prevailed. Don't you feel better that they protected you from having to use energy more like a "developing country" or "Third World nation" as the world hurtled toward peak production, peak consumption and peak money?

The new emissions standard from the U.N. is that "a 25 percent to 40 percent reduction by industrial countries is necessary to avoid catastrophic consequences stemming from global warming." Because climate change is out of control already, due to positive feedback loops, it is time to slash emissions by 90% now. "What!", you say, "there's no political will to do that."? Well, consider that we may be suddenly forced to get to such a base level when the petroleum supply may be interrupted. Peak oil is here, and petrocollapse has commenced. Therefore what's required is to live the future now, with "new" cultural values.

To illustrate what's going on in Germany in these areas of climate politics and new policies, we offer more news articles from the Global Warming Crisis Council listserve:

TWO DIFFERENT WORLDS: Merkel Wants More on Climate from Obama"

spiegel.de

At the beginning of June, Merkel told an audience in Berlin that she was "very skeptical" of the policies currently being followed by the US Federal Reserve and called for a "return to rational policies."

Now, it appears as though Merkel is planning to confront Obama head on when it comes to his administration's environmental policies. According to Thursday's Süddeutsche Zeitung newspaper, citing German government sources, Merkel plans to "discuss at length her climate goals," in an effort to get Obama on board. Germany is concerned about indications that the US may not be quite as serious about combating global warming as Obama's speeches make it seem.

POPULAR OPPOSITION: German Carbon Sequestration Plans Stall - activists block highways By Michael Fröhlingsdorf, Sebastian Knauer and Christian Schwägerl

spiegel.de

But the German electricity supply could not cope with a phase-out of both coal and nuclear power, warns Vahrenholt. "To avoid a power gap, the only option would be to extend the lives of nuclear power plants," he says. Germany currently plans to take the last nuclear power plant from the grid in the early 2020s.

Auto-ban: German town goes car-free
By Tony Paterson - The Independent - UK

culturechange.org

Vauban hopes to forge a model community without that great staple of modern life – the car. Now the sound of birdsong has replaced the roar of traffic and children can play in the street

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