



## ***Calum MacKenzie's View From The Shore:***

### **What About a Green New Deal?**

(Suggested Readings at the end of this piece cover Calum's thoughts)

Neo-liberals denigrate the outcomes of the New Deal as socialism, conveniently forgetting that their adherence to the unregulated, laissez-faire, unfettered, free trade economics, brought the economy crashing about their ears in 1873, 1929, and 2008. The original proponents of fairness in global capitalism, Adam Smith<sup>1</sup> and John Maynard Keynes<sup>2</sup>, offered a different path to equality of opportunity and outcomes. Socialist or not, their wisdom and altruism has been largely ignored by the latter day corporate saints who run business schools and mega corporations and tout the culture of greed.

**Is it time for a refreshing new perspective which will solve multiple problems simultaneously?** Just as the New Deal<sup>3</sup> of yesteryear brought in an era of growth and prosperity, is it now time to wonder, given the similarities to pre-new deal conditions, whether a post-2008 stock market crash new deal is in the offing? Is it time to set aside traditional ways of thinking as practiced by the Treasury Dept. and its offshoots which cater to corporate giants and their necessity to show increased profits every 90 days?

Two major problems which we all face are climate change and massive unemployment. Should we just sit on our hands and like lemmings, go with the flow? Let's take a preliminary look at each problem and then take a stab at solutions.

**Climate Change/Global heating**, which the scientific community views as a fact, is already with us and is increasingly annually. Those scientists supporting this notion outnumber those in denial by some 1500 to 1. That those in denial, devil's disciples all, receive equal time in government hearings and in the popular media, only skews the data and allows confusion to thrive. Further investigation has shown that human activity is largely to blame for magnifying the problem. This would not be a problem if we could easily reverse it (which we can't). Consider the following:

"In the meantime environmental news continues to bring new warnings of threats to the planet. The rise in carbon dioxide emissions has outpaced even the most dire scientific projections. The Global Carbon Project says CO2 emissions rose nearly 3% last year, at the high end of projections. The scientific leaders on global warming, the Intergovernmental Panel on Global Warming, are warning of a massive environmental catastrophe if carbon emissions are allowed to increase beyond 3%."<sup>4</sup>

Burning fossil fuels to create the energy required to underpin our human activities is the major cause of the Climate Change problem. The thinning of the ozone layer that protects

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1 - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam\\_smith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam_smith)

2 - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Maynard\\_Keynes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Maynard_Keynes)

3 - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Deal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Deal)

4 - Democracy Now.org. 28 Oct 2008, <http://www.democracynow.org/>

all living things is a direct cause of our activities. It also gives us an albedo effect, where formerly white areas near the earth's poles melt and turn dark. The darker areas absorb more solar energy, warm up, and exponentially increase melt. That colder ice water then moves south -- in our case -- to disrupt fish habitat and affect the track of ocean currents. That in turn causes further climate change.

The results are not just disruptions of climate. Evidence is mounting for the northward movement of species, including pests and diseases. Millions of acres of pine forest in Columbia have succumbed to an invasion of pine beetles. Certain parts of the once tropical rain forest in the Amazon Basin are now deserts, a condition previously unheard of. Desertification elsewhere on the planet is expanding rapidly. Coincidentally water tables are falling and aquifers are drying up. Other regions see an increase in wild fires and more intense hurricanes. Areas of eastern British Columbia have shown that these conditions can be reversed. The audacity of hope is such a fine turn of phrase.

**Certain western economies have seen the loss of as many as 800,000 jobs this year alone.** If the unemployment figures are totaled for the entire developed world we have the loss of many millions of good paying, manufacturing jobs. The results of unemployment are personal in the loss of self worth and human dignity of individuals. The buoyant happy face of the fully and gainfully employed gives way to unhappy depression on the faces of the jobless. All family members and their way of life are negatively affected.

The loss to all levels of governments are lowered tax income and the subsequent curtailing of services leading to a further cycle of lay-offs. Repair and maintenance of community infrastructure moves to the back burner and eventually run-down disrepair is evident. Small businesses and trades also feel the affect as the unemployed cut back on unnecessary purchases. Eventually those who can't make ends meet move away to stay with relatives, giving up equity in their homes as well as a way of life. The American dream gets flushed away.

Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, was heard to say that the ideal plant would be one on a barge that could be towed around from one low-cost labour site to another. As labour unions tried to provide a living wage for their members, or additional skills sets were required, or environmental concerns became oppressive, the barge would simply float away to less restrictive regimes, leaving its base work force and the home community destitute. Had he put the union leaders and the environmentalists on his board and worked to meet them halfway, a completely different outcome might have been the result. Currently GE is looking for a bail out.

Both of those problem areas, global warming and the environment, are addressed in a new book "The Green Collar Economy" by Van Jones<sup>5</sup>. As a community activist and attorney, Mr. Jones lays out a plan for a green economy which offers a solution for climate change and unemployment. During the on-line news program, Democracy Now of 28 Oct.2008<sup>6</sup>, he

5 - <http://vanjones.net/page.php?pageid=2>

6 - [http://www.democracynow.org/2008/10/28/van\\_jones\\_on\\_the\\_green\\_collar](http://www.democracynow.org/2008/10/28/van_jones_on_the_green_collar)

suggested that the capitalist system as we now practice it must change. The changes proposed would see production emphasized over consumption, creativity over credit, restoration over destruction, clean energy over easy credit, all done in order to provide a green Keynesian economy.

**Alternatives to the fossil fuel economy are found on every continent** but their installation and application requires political will. Individuals can make a start by weatherizing their homes, or improving their home insulation but the tactics for getting off oil or off the electrical grid often require government help. That help can take the form of advice, or subsidies for the various forms of energy savings.

Denmark has long been a leader in creating wind towers and wind farms at sea for electrical energy production. Certain communities love the idea until the NIMBY<sup>7</sup> syndrome kicks in. In Germany, government offered subsidies to homeowners and businesses who installed solar panels for hot water production and photovoltaic panels for electrical energy production. Those same homeowners were encouraged to sell excess electricity back into the grid by making the buy back rate hard to refuse.

Huddersfield City in England encouraged all homeowners to install roof top panels for hot water and hydro by providing subsidies for the capital cost and subsequent reduced taxes after installation; a win-win-win situation. Van Jones comments that everything that's good for people is green, and he offers a plan to fight pollution and unemployment at the same time. He offers the polluters a choice of cleaning up their act or paying some form of carbon tax, carbon exchange or carbon cap. Polluters should pay! Despite the myriad commercials on every TV station, there is no such dog as clean coal now in operation and the technology, should it ever arrive, is decades away.

His scheme would encourage businesses to re-power, re-tool and stimulate development in producing a green collar economy. This might involve restoring some of our damaged landscapes and rebuilding our communities in a sustainable way. His business perspective falls back on the theories of John Maynard Keynes, especially those advocating government monetary and fiscal programs designed to increase employment and stimulate business activity. His green Keynesian notions have actually found other voices on the present presidential campaign trail.

**There is a great deal of work to be done in the environmental field.** Unemployment could be drastically reduced if industries which are now struggling to survive could be persuaded to make the change. A new era of sustainable business could be developed to provide geothermal technologies, solar panels, photovoltaic panels, wind turbines, and tidal turbines to harness the natural energies of the sun, wind, tides and the earth's ambient temperatures in a non-polluting way. The industrial benefits from those core industries -- using free energy sources -- would mushroom to provide additional employment in ancillary goods and services.

Mass transportation also holds reason to be encouraged for the future. Even individual

7 - *Not In My BackYard*

modes of transportation are becoming more energy efficient although they have a long way to go in down sizing, becoming lighter and more sustainable in the energy they use. Electrification of rail transportation for freight and passenger service is more often the norm in countries that are pushing ahead. In this area there is a great deal of work left unfinished. It is not rocket science. It is easily attainable but where is the political will? Do the failed corporatists still rule?

As battery cell technology improves the cells last longer, are easier and faster to charge and do not hold the limiting memory of earlier models. Lithium titanium batteries and fuel cells are still very expensive making their inclusion for autos untenable. Yet the British are reported to have developed a battery that can propel a car at 100mph, go 0 to 60 under 10 seconds, is almost silent, recharges in one hour and has a working range of 200 miles. Detroit used to produce an electric car but it was recalled and trashed although it worked well and was very popular. Will Detroit buy the British patents and trash them too?

**If ever you holiday in Cuba**, you will meet a delightful people but you will not be impressed by the 1950s electrical grid. Here in North America, we have little reason to be complacent over our own grid system. It took only two sub stations to fail at the same time a few short years ago for the entire north east seaboard and much of central Canada to be plunged into darkness, relying on emergency back-up sources for electrical energy. The up-grades required to modernize that aspect of infrastructure will employ thousands for many years.

The wonderful thing about the above ideas is that they can all be practiced and bear fruit here at home. There is no need to off-shore production to some third world sweat shop or contract out ancillary work just because the WTO and NAFTA allows for it. The technologies and parts can all be worked out and made here and assembly can happen next door. We're not advocating rocket science or neurosurgery here but good common sense in order to kill two birds with one stone. Should the tax code change to provide the necessary incentives for business and individuals, giant steps would be forthcoming.

France has reduced much of its reliance on oil by building nuclear power stations to produce electrical energy. As much as 80% of the country's needs are met in this way. If we put aside Chernobyl<sup>8</sup> and Three Mile Island<sup>9</sup>, if we forget about mutating fish stocks near the outflows from nuclear plants, if we forget that there is no safe way to dispose of spent fuel rods and no safe secondary industry in which to recycle them, if we forget that nuclear plants never pay for themselves, then nukes are the way to go (Attention McCain, Harper and Obama).

**Sure we would get off oil**, but not at that price. Depleted uranium used in hardened ammunition may well do the job of slicing through armor like a hot knife through butter but DU ammo is still radio active and a carcinogen.

The above ideas spell out many of the risks we face by not addressing the Climate Change issue and it's associated environmental impacts. Also covered are the pitfalls associated

8 - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chernobyl>

9 - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three\\_Mile\\_Island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Mile_Island)

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with capitalism as usual and top down structures for democracy that have led to the lowering of employment statistics and the concomitant abrogation of the American dream. Van Jones' notion for solving both problems at the same time is simple; Join a large sector of forward thinking stalwarts who advocate for a clean, healthy environment through sustainable employment opportunities.

### Suggested Readings

Bill McKibben<sup>10</sup>  
Van Jones<sup>11</sup>  
Lovins and Lovins<sup>12</sup>  
David Suzuki<sup>13</sup>  
Democracy Now<sup>14</sup>

We hope you enjoyed Calum MacKenzie's **View From The Shore** article. To be notified when Calum or our other authors enter an article, please go to

<http://www.hungrypeasant.com/remindme.cfm>.

You can contact Calum with questions or thoughts about what you've read at

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10 - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill\\_McKibben](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_McKibben)  
11 - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Van\\_Jones](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Van_Jones)  
12 - <http://www.natcap.org/>  
13 - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David\\_Suzuki](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Suzuki)  
14 - <http://www.democracynow.org/>

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