

The People's March

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I wish to persuade you (if you live close enough to make it reasonable) that you should take the trouble to join us in the great People's Climate March in New York City on 21 September. The March web page is at <http://peoplesclimate.org/>.

However, before plainly stating why the March is important, let me address several issues.

Multipath Strategy. One can readily argue that any specific action, such as the People's March, will not slow the fossil fuel juggernaut. Indeed, by itself it would have little effect, and our media has shown themselves to be quite capable of ignoring even large demonstrations.

However the March is not occurring in a vacuum. Success requires actions on many fronts, notably in the courts, on the streets, and within the political system. That's why I support Our Children's Trust, 350.org, and Citizens Climate Lobby. And that is not enough.

Getting the public and the business community fully behind effective climate action requires not simply getting them to agree that action is needed. It requires getting them to understand the fundamentals about what actions are needed, and to demand those actions by governments.

Laser Focus on Solution. Lessons have been learned on global and national levels. These must not be forgotten. We cannot let our political leaders pretend that they do not understand.

The ineffectual UN Kyoto cap-and-trade scheme was doomed from the start. A "cap" approach inevitably raises 190 fights about each nation's cap. Countries must be bribed to accept a low cap, governments at home often refute them, and even ineffectual caps are unenforceable.

Let's take one country, say India. What should its cap be? Maybe start with U.S. emissions and then multiply by the ratio of national populations? Whatever the outcome of that fight, our planet (our progeny and other species) would be cooked – and there are 189 other fights.

The way to phase down fossil emissions rapidly is via a rising carbon fee collected at domestic mines and ports of entry. Each nation can choose how to use the funds, but in most nations the funds had better be distributed to all legal residents.

The carbon fee can be made near-global, because border duties would be collected on products from non-participating nations, a huge incentive for all nations to join.

Look at India again. How will it fare with this approach? Very well. Indeed, this is the system needed to help eliminate global poverty. Fossil fuels provided abundant affordable energy to today's developed world, helping to eliminate slavery while raising standards of living. Now, as we must phase out fossil fuel emissions, a gradually but steadily rising carbon price provides the framework and the incentives for all nations to prosper. Development of clean carbon-free energies is needed especially to improve life within developing nations. As energies become honestly priced, economies strengthen, clean energy and energy efficiency are spurred, fertility rates decline. Honest pricing of energy is essential for sustainable development.

Reparations. Developed countries emitted most of the excess carbon that is in the air today, and are thus mainly responsible for human-caused climate change. Many developing countries are at low latitudes where climate impacts will be severe. Reparations are appropriate and needed.

Agreement on this may not be so difficult because, as noted in [Jeremiah's Progeny](#), developed countries will need the cooperation of developing countries in various ways. These include preservation of forests and reduction of non-CO₂ climate forcings. Fortunately, these needed actions have local benefits and the resources required to encourage them are reasonable. Reparations should be continually dependent upon demonstrated cooperation in these matters.

This topic needs to be discussed further. The point to be made here is that it cannot be allowed to diminish the laser focus on the solution, an across-the-board rising carbon fee. If agreement on a carbon fee is not achieved, there will be little ability to consider reparations for anyone.

Malarkey. We have learned that it is not enough to get political leaders to admit the reality of human-caused climate change and promise to address it. We must make specific demands, or we end up with ineffectual monstrosities such as the cap-and-trade bill in the U.S. Congress.

I recently read that a carbon tax was needed, or its “functional equivalent”, cap-and-trade. Functional equivalent? Pretentious nonsense! I hope the discussion above made clear that a “cap” approach does not have a prayer of reducing emissions fast enough.

Lesson learned: do not let big words deter you. A Ph.D. in economics is not needed. A little “horse sense” will do. My mother always used that phrase. I never asked the origin. I guess it means that even a horse can understand it. Say common sense, if you prefer.

One more trick that you need to be aware of: politicians like to avoid needed action by setting “targets” for some time in the future. It is especially annoying when they say that a “target” or “cap” is based on science. Baloney. Science actually tells us is that we must reduce emissions in the fastest way possible -- atmospheric CO₂ is already in the dangerous zone.

The fastest way is a simple rising carbon fee that makes fossil fuel costs honest, our economies more efficient, and provides incentives for the public, businesses, and technology entrepreneurs. The money that is collected should go to the public where it is needed, where it would spur the economy – not to the government to make the government bigger and more intrusive.

Why march, why you? Remember that in the prior big moral issue, civil rights, the courts and political system hardly moved until pressured by people in the streets.

Nationally, do not misunderstand the leaked Obama “plans”. They are not set in stone and there are a few people in Washington who understand what is needed. Regulations are not a solution, although the threat of them may help bring conservatives to the table. The solution needs to be based on conservative principles, because that is what will work, as we have discussed.

Internationally, an agreement among the major powers is needed for a rising carbon fee. It does not necessarily have to come at the Paris 2015 meeting, but it must be soon. The rest is detail.

Why march? You will have to answer to your children. You understood the situation at a time when it was not too late. Instead of standing up for them, did you choose to sit at home?