

Putting the Cart before the Horse*

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Cowardice asks the question, "Is it safe?" Expediency asks the question, "Is it politic?" Vanity asks the question, "Is it popular?" But conscience asks the question, "Is it right?" And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular but one must take it because one's conscience tells one that it is right.

Martin Luther King

All the resources for economic growth originate in the biosphere (natural capital). Hawken et al. (1999) list four types of capital: (1) natural capital, on which the other types depend, (2) financial capital, (3) manufactured capital, (4) human capital. Why then, at the recent G20 meeting (Climate Change Summit in New York), attended by Chinese leader Hu Jintao and US President Barack Obama, was the upcoming December 2009 meeting on climate change sidelined (Corcoran 2009)? Andrews (2009) reports: ". . . leaders from both rich countries and fast-growing powerhouses like China agreed on Friday to a far-reaching effort to revamp the economic system." If economics is judged more important than the environment by world leaders, then the important relationship between economics and the environment will be ignored at any systems-level, global conference. However, the biosphere should be the key component in all global conferences – after all, it is the life support system! Not connecting all the dots can be fatal in any undertaking – especially one that is global!

The biosphere is already endangered by global climate change. However, Krugman (2009) states:

So the main argument against climate action probably won't be the claim that global warming is a myth. It will, instead, be the argument that doing anything to limit global warming would destroy the economy. As the blog Climate Progress puts it, opponents of climate change legislation "keep raising their estimated cost of the clean energy and global warming pollution reduction programs like some out of control auctioneer."

The claims of the deniers (of global climate change) appear to inhabit a different planet. How can they possibly believe that ignoring the damage to the biosphere will somehow protect them? Or, in the unlikely event that they could flee to another planet, would they, as destructive new arrivals, be welcomed? Krugman (2009) believes, as I do, that bogus claims of immense economic damage are as bogus, in their own way, as climate change denial.

The biosphere is not only the source of the resources that are the foundation of the human economy, but is also Earth's life support system. The biosphere cannot be excluded from discussions on human economy.

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