

Ecological Civilization is the Alternative

by
Roy Morrison

Margaret Thatcher's supporters chanted, "There is no alternative," to capitalism and business as usual, asserting both that our futures are pre-determined, and our imaginations impoverished.

Business-as-usual brought us to recurrent and interrelated financial and ecological disaster. Another day, another trillion dollar banking bailout, to be backstopped by the application of IMF ministrations upon unfortunate Europeans. Will the fiscally improvident U.S. be next? Oil flows unabated into the Gulf, an exclamation point upon the acidification of the oceans from carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and the creation of dead zones through mass fertilizer run offs.

The more Copenhagen meetings, the more toxic emissions. Only global recession, not global agreements, slows carbon emissions. We will all be casualties. The poor and the least developed will suffer first. But there will be, at best, only baleful survivors after ecological, economic, and social collapse.

There is an alternative. We can build an ecological civilization from the industrial present through the pursuit of sustainability. We can use our democracy and our markets to accomplish this. But we must take these steps now.

We can use our democracy to establish new market rules through ecological taxation on all goods and services to replace income taxation. An ecological value added tax (EVAT) can send price signals for sustainability throughout price chains. We can invest in building the renewable resource infrastructure capable of providing all of our electricity, power our vehicles, heat and cool our homes, run our businesses. We can help capitalize cooperative and community controlled banks to invest in jobs and sustainable businesses. For instance, the Caja Laboral

Popular, the co-op bank of Spain's Mondragon cooperatives, has prudently prospered during the financial meltdown.

For better and for worse, the current world-system of industrial capitalism is responsible. It's also clear that it's not markets and capitalists per se that are at fault. The Soviet Union demonstrated how a planned system can maximize production and consumption with horrendous ecological consequences. China with its hybrid system of state control and capitalist enterprise has become world leading carbon emitter. China is also becoming leading photovoltaic and wind manufacturer in a state that has embraced ecological civilization as the basis of development policy as it accumulates wealth as the world's factory.

We face a global moment of truth. Economic growth is essential to allow impoverished billions to escape destitution. Indeed, the World People's Congress on Climate Change declared, "All countries need to produce the goods and services necessary to satisfy the fundamental needs of their populations..." But, they continue, we can't continue along the path where "...the richest countries have an ecological footprint five times bigger than what the planet is able to support."

We need to pursue a cooperative and ecological way. The alternative is economic and ecological collapse, famine, war, mass migration of the desperate.

Leaders like Barack Obama pursuing industrial growth find themselves in a position analogous to Georgia's Howell Cobb, owner of 1,000 slaves and Speaker of the House before the Civil War. Cotton exhausted the land; expansion into new territories was essential. Cobb embraced slavery and the imperatives to buy more land, to grow more cotton, to have more slaves, to make more money, to buy more land. Free labor was a threat, secession a likely catastrophe, manumission inconceivable. Cobb was trapped by the illusion of prosperity but was bankrupt.

Let us not be trapped by our own bankrupt ideas. The time calls for creative vision and courage to embrace a new incarnation of American democracy.

Building an ecological civilization is the readily available alternative for democracy and markets in the 21st century.

Roy Morrison is Director of the Office for Sustainability, Southern New Hampshire University. His next book is *Sustainability and Ecological Civilization*, forthcoming in 2010.

Fact check:

1. TINA: The Phrase Finder:

“There is no alternative”

This is the mantra chanted by 'dries' during the prime ministerial reign of Margaret Thatcher, by which they demonstrated their belief that free-market capitalism was the only possible economic theory. It was said so often amongst them that it was shortened to TINA. The hard-right Thatcherites called themselves 'dries' to demonstrate their opposition to the 'wets', i.e. the One-Nation Tories whom Thatcher despised. Wet was the public school nickname for any boy who showed any sign of caring for his fellow beings.

<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/376000.html>

2. IMF and European Rescue Package

“Europe agrees rescue package”

By Ben Hall and Tony Barber in Brussels and Ralph Atkins in Frankfurt
Financial Times Published: May 9 2010 10:21 | Last updated: May 10 2010 09:35

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/f96a6c14-5b48-11df-85a3-00144feab49a.html>

3. Fertilizer run off into Gulf and Dead zones

How our food system is destroying the nation’s most important fishery [7](#)

BY [Krista Hozyash](#) Grist 10 FEB 2010 2:25 PM

<http://www.grist.org/article/2010-02-08-who-owns-the-dead-zone>

4. Ecological Value Added Tax

A. Brazil Example:

Using Fiscal Instruments to Encourage Conservation: Municipal Responses to the 'Ecological' Value-added Tax in Paraná and Minas Gerais, Brazil

http://www.conservationfinance.org/Workshops_Conferences/WPC/WPC_documents/Apps_05_May_Veiga_ch10.pdf

B. EVAT

Markets, Democracy & Survival by Roy Morrison 2007

<http://ecocivilization.info/id7.html>

5. Caja Laboral Popular

Caja Laboral posts a net profit of 56.5 million euros for 2009

Date: Tuesday, January 26, 2010

<http://www.mondragon-corporation.com/ENG/Press-room/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/1411.aspx>

Caja Laboral's profit after tax for 2009 came to 56.5 million euros, which is 43.8% down on the figure posted in 2008. The profit from recurring business before transfers rose by 22.8% and the institution, by means of applying prudential criteria, doubled its provisions in spite of the containment of default, which was at 2.90%, a figure clearly below the average for the sector.

Business performance: total turnover accounted for 35.4 billion euros, which was 3.1% up on the previous year.

Attraction of savings: customer deposits in the private sector increased by 7%, thanks especially to the contribution of the MAX account, which already has more than 215,000 customers.

Bank investment: total customer loans rose to 16.8 billion euros, which is an increase of 0.1%.

Family loans: the institution has exceeded by 12% the forecasts made in its Business Plan, in which it undertook to support family financing with a total of 1 billion euros. Therefore, mortgage loans for homes increased at a rate of 3.7%, which was better than the average market rate, and as far as consumer financing was concerned, loans were agreed totalling 200 million euros, in a market which has fallen by 27%.

The performance of the Dispon loans stands out especially. These are automatically granted via the Internet, ATMs and Telephone Banking and already account for 1/3 or all personal loans to customers. This has all allowed the demand for loans to be met, making them more accessible to our customers.

Business financing: in this area the Caja Laboral Liquidity facility was amply taken up, with an initial provision of 200 million euros, which was finally increased to 300 million. Funding through the Basque Government's Liquidity Agreement also stands out, in which 25% of all the loans granted in the Basque Autonomous Community were with Caja Laboral. That is to say that one out of every four businesses in the region is taking advantage through Caja Laboral of this instrument that is key to supporting and funding SMEs in the current economic crisis.

Efficiency: the contained performance of administration expenses took the Efficiency Ratio, which is the percentage of Operating Income these expenses account for, to 38%, one of the most outstanding in the sector.

Defaulting: the default rate is 2.9% which is well below the average for the savings bank sector, which was 5.26% to November.

Liquidity: Caja Laboral has comfortable levels of liquidity which are reflected by a ratio of deposits over loans granted of 86%.

Solvency: Caja Laboral has a Core Capital ratio of 10.53% which is among the top 7 institutions in the sector.

Profits: The interest margin rose by 14.5%, as a result of the rapid adaptation of financial costs to the low interest rates. The Basic Margin, which reflects the profits of the business, rose by 9.4% compared to the same period the previous year.

The operating profit before transfers totaled 255.2 million euros, 22.8% up on 2008, which shows the institution's strong capacity for generating profits in its recurring business.

In spite of default being contained, Caja Laboral decided to earmark 205.1 million euros for bad debts, anticipating a more complicated situation in the future, and taking a prudent stance in the face of the possible risk of an increase in default over the next few years. In this way, Caja Laboral will improve its doubtful asset coverage ratio compared to last year, taking it up to 71.98%, which is higher than the 57.90% average for the sector.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that for the second consecutive year Caja Laboral has been recognised as the leading institution amongst all the financial institutions in Spain in terms of customer service. This study was carried out by the independent Stiga Institute and covered a total of 105 financial institutions.

<http://www.cajalaboral.com/>

B. Mondragon in the Recession

Co-operatives

All in this together: How is the co-operative model coping with the recession?

Mar 26th 2009 | MONDRAGÓN | From *The Economist* print edition

http://www.economist.com/business-finance/displaystory.cfm?story_id=13381546&source=login_payBarrier

6. China Renewable Industry Grows

http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China_Business/KL02Cb02.html

Asian Times 12/2/2009

Fair wind blows for China's Longyuan Power

By Ryan Rutkowski

...China's willingness to raise the profile of [alternative energy](#) sources was already made clear in its 11th Five-Year Plan (2006-2010), where it committed to increase the use of alternative [energy resources](#) to 20% of total energy production by 2020, from 7.86% in 2006. Hydropower makes up as much as 5.9% of China's energy production, but extensive [water pollution](#), dwindling water resources and growing concern about the negative effects of large dams will limit expansion of traditional hydropower generation.

At the same time, massive [government investment](#) has boosted the importance of less controversial wind and solar technology and helped manufacturers in these sectors become leading players in the global market.

China now ranks fourth in the world for total wind power capacity, and installed capacity may jump tenfold to 100 gigawatts by 2020, from 10GW next year, according to a 2008 plan by the National Energy Administration.

At the core of this growth, the government in 2006 started to establish wind farms in the far-west region of Xinjiang, neighboring Gansu, northern Inner Mongolia, Hebei province around Beijing, and coastal Jiangsu province, with the aim of doubling installed capacity for four consecutive years. As a result, the country has already exceeded its 10GW target for 2010, reaching 12.2GW of installed capacity.

Solar power is also an increasingly important component of China's energy strategy. More than two-thirds of China's land area has 2,200 hours of solar radiation annually, especially in western provinces, such as Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang and Yunnan. Installed capacity to capture this is expected to reach 20GW of installed solar PV (photovoltaic) power capacity by 2020, up from only about 0.07GW in 2005. Recently, China announced plans to install more than 0.5GW of [solar power projects](#) over the next two to three years....

7. China and ecological civilization as policy guide

<http://eng.hi138.com/?i55297>

Construction of the harmonious development of man and nature, ecological civilization

Posted:2006-5-26 8:26:00

Summary: Ecological civilization in a new perspective to look at man and nature and human relationships, is the only way for the development of human civilization. Establish a comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable scientific development concept, to co-ordinate the harmonious development of man and nature as an important content, it is a profound understanding of harmony between man and nature to the man and the significance of social development.

8. World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth April 22nd, Cochabamba, Bolivia PEOPLES AGREEMENT

<http://pwcc.wordpress.com/2010/04/24/peoples-agreement/#more-1584>

9. Howell Cobb of Athens Georgis, politician & slave master. (Cobb, Georgia Gov, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Secretary of the Treasury, a presidential wanna be both in the U.S. and the Confederacy owned 1,000 slaves which made him a millionaire when a million dollars meant something. Union troops burned his plantations—sparing the slave quarters. Cobb died of a heart attack in the Waldorf Astoria)

Short Biographies of 19th Century Southerners That Include Some Little Known Facts

About the South and Southerners In This Period by Carole E. Scott

<http://member.tripod.com/~car0lesc0tt/figures.htm>

HOWELL COBB - A full time politician whenever it was possible and a lawyer when it wasn't, this son of a then wealthy planter who resided in Athens, Georgia was governor of Georgia, Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and Secretary of the Treasury in the Buchanan administration.

Despite his success, Cobb's wife was unhappy with his career because, she said, "politics" is like a "filthy pool--now and then throwing up mud and slime from the bottom." Although Cobb was the product of a Protestant family and region, he defended the rights of Catholics against the attacks of the American

Party (Know-Nothings). This Georgia Falstaff was President Buchanan's favorite, and, if political considerations had not interfered, he would have made Cobb his Secretary of State. Disappointed at failing to get this coveted post, the personally profiligate Cobb nonetheless successfully dedicated himself to being a good Secretary of the Treasury.

Cheerful, gregarious, and a talented jester addicted to talking, Cobb's fondness for fine food and wine was revealed by his physique. However, behind his jolly-fat man facade lay a shrewd and very ambitious politician who was one of several men hoping to be elected president of the U.S. in 1860. Because he often took positions popular among Northern Democrats, his opponents called him a Southern man with Northern principles. A Jacksonian Democrat, he had opposed nullification (a state's right to nullify a federal law) and its leading proponent, South Carolina's Senator John C. Calhoun. Like most Southern politicians other than Calhoun, Cobb believed that the best way to protect slavery was for Southerners to gain power in national parties and, playing on Northerners' desire for gaining national power, supporting their programs in exchange for a hands-off attitude towards what Calhoun labeled the South's "peculiar institution". (Radicals like Edmund Ruffin had nothing but scorn for this plan.)

Being a Jacksonian was very much a mainstream position in the South. But, unlike most Georgians, Cobb was able to swallow Jackson's hand-picked successor, New Yorker Martin VanBuren and his running mate, who lived openly with a mulatto woman by whom he had two children. (Cobb reportedly had some one-night stands with slave girls as a youth.)

In 1850s Southern Democrats and Whigs split over the issue of secession, and two new parties were formed, both of which included former Democrats and Whigs. Cobb became a leader in the Unionist Party, which was opposed by a secession-favoring Southern Rights Party, which was recognized at the national level by the Democratic party. (Cobb was eventually successful in getting the Democratic Party to accept Unionists, too, as Democratic convention delegates.) These parties were short-lived, and most Unionists who, like Cobb, had been Democrats returned to the fold, as did Cobb. Unlike Northern Whigs, Southern Whigs did not defect to the new anti-slavery Republican Party. Instead, Southern Whigs became Democrats.

Like many other Unionists, Cobb was propelled into the Secessionist camp by the steady rise in the popularity in the North of the Republicans, the nation's first sectional party. It was at this time that it became clear that the South was destined to become a minority in the Senate as well as the House. Some believe that Cobb's pro-secession stance was purely opportunistic, and that he was not really convinced that the South's position with Lincoln in the presidency was hopeless. To Southern Unionists dismay, Cobb resigned his post in the Buchanan administration shortly before its conclusion and returned home to campaign for secession.

His resignation did not much impress those who had long advocated disunion because they believed he should have joined hands with them years earlier. According to Clement Clay, if Cobb had resigned in 1859, instead of merely publicly dissenting from Buchanan's tariff policy, "he would have done more to reinstate himself with the Southern Rights Democracy than by any act since his defection in '50-51." Cobb's excuse was that his personal attachment for "Old Buck", as he called Buchanan, is what deterred him from resigning earlier when more radical Southerners gave up on Buchanan.

Southern opposition to the presidential candidacy of Illinois' Stephen A. Douglas at the 1860 Democratic convention led to a Southern walkout and the nomination by these delegates of a second, rival Democratic candidate, Senator John Breckinridge of Kentucky. The presence in the 1860 race of two Democratic candidates plus a Constitutional Union Party candidate made possible the election of the nation's first

Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, with a minority of the popular vote. Almost immediately the states of the deep South, which had voted for Breckinridge, declared their independence and arranged for a convention at which they would form a new confederacy. Border states, which had voted for the Constitutional Union candidate, John Bell, remained in the Union until Lincoln declared that he was going to use force against the seceded states.

At the first meeting of the Confederacy's provisional Congress in Montgomery, Alabama Cobb, by obtaining votes of both Unionists and Southern Rightists, was elected its president. His fellow Georgian and--periodically--political ally, ex-Whig Alexander H. Stephens, observed in surprise, that this legislative-selected group was the "ablest, most intelligent, and conservative body I was ever in." Edmund Ruffin, who disdained the generally demagogic types selected by voters, probably was not surprised, but he was probably disturbed by the fact that almost half the delegates at the Montgomery convention were Cooperationists or Unionists, rather than radicals who had long preached secession.

Firebrands like Alabama's Yancey and South Carolina's Rhett brought about secession, but they were deemed to be too radical to entrust the Confederacy's fortunes too; so two vastly more conservative men, former U.S. Senator Jefferson Davis and Representative Alexander H. Stephens were elected president and vice president. Stephens', who had voted against secession, only significant role during the War was a fruitless meeting with Lincoln seeking a compromise which would end the War. One of his proposals to his old friend Lincoln was rapprochement via a uniting of the North and South in a campaign to expel the regime Napoleon III had imposed on Mexico.

Because Texas' delegates arrived late, Davis and Stephens were elected by the forty-three delegates representing the other six states which had left the Union by that time. Because their meetings were secret, there are conflicting stories about why Davis was selected. All agree that Cobb was considered for the presidency. Based on Cobb's correspondence, it seems that he let it be known he did not want the office. After the convention Cobb, for the first time in his life, gave up politics in order to become a general in the Confederate army. Financially ruined by his pre-war debts and loss of property during the war, he died in 1868 while visiting New York.

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