
Is This It? Collapse and a New Dawn Triggered from Japan

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
15 March 2011

Society appears to be exiting the age of extreme economic competition and entering the transformation to a culture of cooperation. Nature and humanity must start getting along together, as our ancestors did for so many millennia before the dominant order started its relentless take-over several thousand years ago.

But before we can reach a new equilibrium and attain a sustainable coexistence, our civilization seems to have guaranteed a transition from orderly competition to desperate individual and small band competition.

This phase is temporary, but will feel like a long dark night of unspeakable troubles. An indication is this week's cleaning out of iodine supplies in much of the U.S. West Coast stores and online sources. The phenomenon points to the desperation and inevitable breakdown of the relatively false calm we have heretofore known.

In addition to the public health and ecological catastrophe brought to us by the technocrats and our own complicity in using nuclear power, the global financial system is taking a hit that will rock the average consumer. The debt that Japan will be taking on to try to repair and reconstruct after its earthquake, tsunami and nuke explosions will make debt more costly elsewhere such as for U.S. seekers of loans for houses and cars. This is a body blow to hoped-for economic growth. Consider this headline from the New York Times in its Breaking News Alert, March 15th: U.S. "Stocks Off Sharply at Open After Slide in Tokyo; Dow Falls 2% in First Minutes"

We have been predicting collapse of the petroleum-based infrastructure and global economy since 1992, based on unsustainable oil dependence and the rapid erosion over the decades of local self-sufficiency. We knew from 40 years ago the threat from nuclear power and nuclear weapons. But without a nuke crisis in our face, save for the Three Mile Island and Chernobyl events, we have been forced as activists to focus on other matters (albeit related, as the destructive Waste Economy has facets that are linked).

So this is it. Collapse must come from a massive impact on Japan, now unfolding, and its effects beyond that island nation. Such as, the air-borne radiation about to visit the West Coast of North America. Not only will people get sick, but much economic activity will fade, and export products such as vegetables for the rest of the continent will be worthless. The extent of time and severity of the damage is hard to say now, but at this point when the Fukushima reactors and other facilities are abandoned by emergency workers, as has happened, it is clear things are out of control. Meltdowns and fires are apparently underway, although the Japanese high authorities are trying to suppress the real news.

We'd love to be wrong, and imagine that the damaged, unapproachable nuclear facilities will take care of themselves. Before the third and fourth nuclear explosions in recent days, observers and activists were discounting the first alarming speculations such as a lethal 750 RADs of radiation coming to the U.S. West Coast. But those reassurances were just hopes based on no meltdowns or fires.

Our previous column renewed our prediction from 2003 that said the next major "accident" would sink nuclear power and bring about a related ban on nuclear weapons. This is the silver lining we offered in the March 12, 2011 article on Culture Change, "The End of Nuclear and Its Timing." We stand by this prediction, but with diminished abilities of nations and their citizens to decommission and babysit the nukes, through general economic collapse, more "accidents" are on tap.

It is time to take care of oneself and loved ones first, and put the usual routines and obligations into the past. For we are

rapidly entering an uncertain new era. By all means, work with others: take quick forays to the coast to collect seaweed, a source of iodine to ingest so as to fight radioactive iodine from Japan. This is best done in cooperation with friends, family and neighbors. As the economic system crumbles from people missing work and not making the usual consumer purchases, and radiation sickness may become prevalent, the local community becomes paramount.

This change in dominant culture has been called for and anticipated. Now, this is it. It seems the Japan disaster has dealt North Americans (and the planet) a game-changing blow from the other side of the world -- just when we were looking intently once again at the Middle East's geopolitically vital oil export capabilities at a time of global peak extraction.

Get together, organize, share, and rebuild human society out of the failed modern experiment in industrialism. The prevalent toxic orientation for mere profit has never been for the great mass of people, but was foisted on them by the top accomplished greedsters. Their day is ending though general collapse, and we may have Japan's misfortune to thank. It is time to walk away from the competitive Waste Economy, its consumerism, and the hype of Western Civilization and its disastrous record of mass exploitation. Your bioregional culture, protected by local sovereignty, is making its return as you read this.

A real-time map is forwarded to us from Roger Herried, Culture Change writer and archivist for the historic anti-nuclear group Abalone Alliance, San Francisco, California:

"As yet folks are attempting to find out more details about this map, its rather dramatic in terms of presenting an image of radiation leaving the facility:

spiegel.de" -- see the advancing plumes of radiation from Fukushima drifting east over the Pacific Ocean.

We are not alarmists. But we have been sounding the alarm for reconfiguring society's unworkable structures and jettisoning the harmful supremacy of technology. Looking at the severity of today's situation from Japan, the Los Angeles Times today offered this news-analysis that can be extended to our overall condition:

"The fast-moving developments at the Fukushima No. 1 (Daiichi) plant, 150 miles north of Tokyo, catapulted the 4-day-old nuclear crisis to an entirely new level, threatening to overshadow even the massive damage and loss of life spawned by a devastating earthquake and tsunami."

[One must keep in mind the overriding tendency of corporate news reporters to serve their employers' status-quo interests. So read between the lines.]

A centuries-old Spanish expression is *Sal si puedes* (get out if you can). Get out of the Waste Economy, but first get out of harm's way -- will iodine be enough, assuming you have some?

The worst-case scenario has come. People overwhelmingly trusted the "experts" and their claims. Concerned citizens were called alarmists instead of visionaries. We have seen that "alarms" over climate change, from findings by the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, were too conservative, as events keep overtaking our reasoning and planning. To be an "alarmist," then, can be a false label, or we all need to be alarmists.

Time to shut down all nuclear power plants and defuse nuke bombs

Let us sound an activist note and do our duty as never before. I posted the following comment on the New York Times website on March 14th, regarding their Breaking News Alert "Japan Faces Prospect of Nuclear Catastrophe as Employees Leave Plant"

One can react, "Why didn't we jail all nuclear proliferators decades ago?" -- but we must move forward, better late than never, to close down the nuclear power/weapons industry globally. There is a silver lining to the present disaster: it takes a wake-up moment to spark massive civil disobedience and electoral change. For more information, see our new report on CultureChange.org, The End of Nuclear and its Timing

Don't have a nuclear power plant in your area to shut down? Then shut down some other major source of pollution. Our common survival, and that of all species, depends on it.

In solidarity, Jan Lundberg, independent oil industry analyst

If Germany Shuts 7 Reactors for Review, so should the rest of the industrialized nuke world follow that country's prudent example.

General Electric is not your friend

GE-designed reactors in Fukushima have 23 sisters in U.S.
From
openchannel.msnbc.msn.com:

The General Electric-designed nuclear reactors involved in the Japanese emergency are very similar to 23 reactors in use in the United States, according to Nuclear Regulatory Commission records.

The NRC database of nuclear power plants shows that 23 of the 104 nuclear plants in the U.S. are GE boiling-water reactors with GE's Mark I systems for containing radioactivity, the same containment system used by the reactors in trouble at the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant. The U.S. reactors are in Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Vermont.

Commentary from the SFBayOil listserve today:

In case you were wondering why NBC and MSNBC are screaming about the "Bad Japanese", remember that those reactors at the Fukushima Dai-ichi power plant are all made by General Electric ... which owns NBC and co-owns MSNBC! 23 General Electric reactors of the same design are in operation inside the United States.

How much worse can things in Fukushima be when, as the Los Angeles Times concluded (or buried) at the end of its extensive coverage today, "U.S. nuclear experts said they were particularly concerned about the Unit 3 reactor because it is fueled in part with plutonium, an element used in hydrogen bombs that can be more difficult to control than the enriched uranium normally used to fuel nuclear power plants." Too bad Unit 3 exploded on Saturday. See this video: Second Explosion Rocks Japanese Nuclear Facility

Plutonium is the most poisonous substance on Earth. Its half life is 24,000 years. You can imagine my disgust when Al Gore defended this aspect of nuclear power when I challenged him on this at a Washington, D.C. Climate Institute meeting in 1988: "I'm sorry, I'm sorry!" he said. Sounds like an epitaph for the discredited System he and the whole political establishment are serving so profitably.
Wikipedia.org on Plutonium

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National Radiation Map, depicting environmental radiation levels across the USA, updated in real time every minute.

Nuclear Sites around Japan

From Keith Farnish:

International Atomic Energy Agency Spinning Like Crazy!

Culture Change

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