

The BLACK C o m m e n t a t o r

An independent weekly internet magazine
dedicated to the movement for economic justice,
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October 22, 2009 - Issue 347

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The Next Nasty Attack from the Right Left Margin

By Carl Bloice

BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board

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"So, have you enjoyed the debate over health care reform?" Paul Krugman asked in late September. "Have you been impressed by the civility of the discussion and the intellectual honesty of reform opponents? "If so, you'll love the next big debate: the fight over climate change." the *New York Times* columnist wrote.

Sarcasm aside, the discussion – if one can call it that - of global warming is going to be painful, particularly if the make-Obama-fail crowd has its way, and if the major media does its usually sloppy job of defining the issue. Nonsense like "death panels" come to mind.

The whole world is anticipating the U.N.-sponsored climate talks in December in Copenhagen where another attempt – post-Koyoto – will be made to reach an international agreement on cutting greenhouse gas emissions by sharply reducing carbon emissions into the atmosphere. Washington observers say the original plan was for President Obama to go to the Danish capital with a pledge from the U.S. to do its part, backed up by new "cap and trade" regulations enacted by the U.S. Congress. Now there is speculation he may not go to Copenhagen at all. And the probability is that if he goes, it will be with empty hands.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel spelled out the problem in clear, unmistakably, and probably undiplomatic, clarity. The European Union can get together in advance and proceed to the Copenhagen talks with a unified position, she said, the U.S. cannot. What U.S. negotiators can present is subject to U.S. politics. Therein lies the rub. The European Union Environment Council met this week in Luxemburg for further work on

its common front. Meanwhile, Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said Monday Brazil wants to arrive at a common position among all Amazon basin countries for Copenhagen and is considering inviting presidents of all Amazon states to discuss the issue November. 26. "The issue of climate change is seen in Berlin as one of the most important facing the world this year as the effort continues to come up with an agreement to succeed the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012," says the German magazine *Spiegel*. "Germany, together with the European Union, has set a target of a 20 percent reduction in CO2 emissions by 2020 relative to 1990 levels. The EU has said it would up that target to 30 percent if other major polluters join them. A panel of United Nations scientists has said that a 25 percent to 40 percent reduction by industrial countries is necessary to avoid catastrophic consequences stemming from global warming."

Legislation is currently before Congress for a 17 percent reduction in this country's CO2 emissions by 2020 relative to 2005 levels, with an 83 percent reduction by 2050. German Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel "has been quick to criticize the proposal," telling *Spiegel* the US needs to do more and that when it come to dealing with the climate claim threat, "the US and Europe live in two different worlds."

The U.S. House of representative has already passed a cap-and-trade climate bill, the Waxman-Markey act – which the Europeans say is not strong enough – but which if it were enacted would lead to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. As with the healthcare debate the biggest problem is the Senate and there, the political right and the Republicans are geared up for a knock-down-drag-out fight.

In a very real sense, the fate of the world's deliberations on climate change and probability of failure at Copenhagen is being held hostage by the volatile politics of the U.S. The political rights is geared up to take the President down on this issue and any others they identify.

The naked attempt to undermine the Obama Presidency is becoming more shrill each day. Last week, the cat dragged in none other than Alan Keyes, a 2008 presidential candidate who is a plaintiff in a lawsuit challenging Obama's citizenship. "Obama is a radical communist, and I think it is becoming clear. That is what I told people in Illinois and now everybody realizes it's true," Keyes told a radio interviewer. "He is going to destroy this country, and we are either going to stop him or the United States of America is going to cease to exist."

And the shock troops are ready. In come the "tea bag" people. A few days ago, the internet web publication sent out an appeal to its readers to "join the conservative revolution. "Just before the 2008 elections, the conservative economist and commentator Thomas Sowell warned that a Barack Obama presidency would prove a 'point of no return' for America." said the appeal. "Why? Because once in power, Dr. Sowell explained, President Obama and the Democratic majorities in Congress would effect such radical changes in our nation's economy, legal structure and social fabric that there would be no rolling them back. Today, we stand on the brink of Dr. Sowell's predictions coming true."

The appeal went on cataloging things on the brink of happening, like healthcare reform, a "wise Latina" on the Supreme Court, and progressive income taxes. Among them is the charge that we are on the brink of "enacting 'cap- and-trade' legislation that will cripple American competitiveness in the global economy, double home utility bills, add thousands to the cost of new cars, and cost U.S. workers an estimated 2.5 million jobs per year - while doing next to nothing to impact a 'global warming' problem that is largely fictitious to begin with."

The "conservative revolution" says, "here in the conservative underground you're free to speak your mind" even if (among other things) "... you don't believe that Barack Obama is the Second Coming of J.C. (unless that J.C. is Jimmy Carter) and "... you don't believe that man-made "global warming" is a proven fact - much less an excuse for destroying the U.S. economy - just because Al Gore says so, especially when hundreds of respected scientists publicly disagree with him."

"Barack Hussein Obama is actively pursuing cap-and-trade legislation," says the CR. "Ironically, instead of taxing the very air we breathe, it would instead, in a manner of speaking, tax the air we exhale and give the government unprecedented control over the economy and American businesses."

Admittedly, Human Events and the people activating the "conservative revolution" are the far right. However, as has been demonstrated clearly in the campaign against healthcare reform, the efforts fit right in with the political objectives of the broader political right and the current Republican Party leadership

Consider the views of Sen. James Inhofe (R-OK), the ranking Republican on the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, who says he plans to be in Copenhagen in December as a "one-man truth squad." He recently told an interviewer "God's still up there. We're going through these cycles.... I really believe that a lot of people are in denial who want to hang their hat on the fact, that they believe is a fact, that man-made gases, anthropogenic gases, are causing global warming. The science really isn't there."

Inhofe recent reiterated what he told the Senate back in 2003, that "much of the debate over global warming is predicated on fear, rather than science," global warming the "greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people" and that "environmental extremists exploit the issue for fundraising purposes, raking in millions of dollars, even using federal taxpayer dollars to finance their campaigns."

The Right has added new elements to its propaganda this time around. In addition to claiming the Obama Administration is out to wreck the economy they are attempting to convince black people that action on climate change is not in their interest (witness black "conservatives" Thomas Sowell and Alan Keyes). As if African Americans and other peoples of color should somehow have less concern than other people for the future of life on the planet. Or, as if many people recognize that those communities most immediately and directly threatened by rising sea levels are in the delta areas of Africa and Asia.

Actually, all working people have ample reason to support early and effective action on climate change. U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu recently joined in the call for meaningful action by Congress.

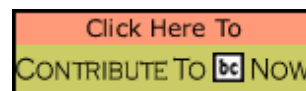
"Comprehensive energy legislation will unleash the American innovation machine to create new industries and clean source of energy to power our economy," he said. "It is the single most important step we can take to secure our economic prosperity and leave a healthier planet for future generations." A national commitment to resolutely confront the climate change challenge will facilitate the development and deployment of new technologies, creating a cleaning environment, refurbishing the nation's physical infrastructure and helping to alleviate the unemployment crisis. We all have a stake in this.

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