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Hot air, cold facts clash at climate meet

By Marc Brodine

The news and views on global warming are coming fast and thick, some more thick than others. Sarah Palin has an op-ed in the Washington Post calling on Obama to boycott the Copenhagen climate change talks in the interests of “science.” Congressional “skeptics” and right-wing bloggers are spending many words on a tempest-in-a-teapot, the so-called “climate-gate” e-mail hacking furor. The developing countries’ delegates in Copenhagen are reported to be in an uproar over a leaked Danish draft which would give more power to the developed countries. Obama was first maybe going to Copenhagen, maybe not, then he was going on his way to the Nobel Prize ceremony, now he is going for the last day of the conference, where he will join the leaders of about 100 countries to hopefully provide the final push for some kind of agreement.

Bolivia’s UN ambassador calls for developed countries to acknowledge their “carbon debt.” The representative of Tuvalu, the tiny South Pacific island that is one of the first countries which will likely disappear because of sea level rise due to global warming, is prevented from fully expressing his demands for much more serious action. Al Gore admits that the proposals the U.S. is taking



to Copenhagen about its own carbon dioxide emissions are nowhere near enough but nevertheless are a crucial first step. Prominent newspapers in over 50 countries publish a joint editorial calling for action on climate change.

While some developing countries demand \$150 billion to \$200 billion a year from developed countries to mitigate the impacts of climate

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change, some developed countries are offering in the range of \$10 billion a year. As one participant said, comparing this to the over \$1 trillion spent on financial bailouts, “Ten billion will not buy developing countries’ citizens enough coffins.”

Amidst all the uproar, several things are clear. The scientific consensus about the reality of global

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warming is more solid than ever. The evidence for escalating impacts due to global warming are accumulating - from disappearing ice in the Arctic to climate refugees in Africa, from expansion of tropical diseases northward to shifting weather patterns resulting in more and longer droughts and decreasing agricultural yields.

Public knowledge and discussion of global climate change is also accumulating, from the World Meteorological Organization declaring this decade to be the hottest on record, and 2009 set to be the fifth warmest year on record, to the debates in the serious business press about which would be better for business, a cap-and-trade scheme or a carbon tax. The public is hearing that the worst predictions of a few years ago are becoming the most likely outcomes of business-as-usual industrial production and growth.

Even the most optimistic scenarios based on the current offers from all countries to reduce carbon emissions predict increases in the average world temperature of 3 or 4 degrees Fahrenheit

by the end of the century, with higher increases likely.

It is also clear that the deniers will not give up their denying. Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma is in Copenhagen trying to get press coverage for his claims of fraud in climate science. Many congress people, including many coal and industrial state Democrats, have publicly proclaimed their opposition to the climate change bill passed by the House and now before the Senate, as inadequate as those bills are. Even as some major companies leave the U.S. Chamber of Commerce over its backward position on climate change, the Chamber is even more adamant about opposing any and all efforts to limit carbon emissions.

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Marc Brodine is a writer for the PW.

New Deal 2.0

By PW Editorial Board

There are millions of unemployed ready to go to work today. The only missing element is someone to hire them.

Since private industry isn't hiring, where will jobs come from? What did the country do during the Great Depression?

In the 1930s the New Deal put construction workers on the job building infrastructure we have used ever since. Much of that network is at the end of its life, so let's do it again, but this time with "green" planning built in.

In the 1930s artists were unemployed. The New Deal hired them and they gave us the fantastic murals, mosaics and monuments in our public places. We could use a lot more of them.

Planting all those trees in our national forests and parks, and building all those lodges, cabins and trail shelters in state and national parks and elsewhere was a good idea. Only thing is, we need more of them.

Under the New Deal the Federal Writers Project subsidized play and book writing and all kinds of other literary pursuits. Advertising people and writers of all kinds are out of work today.

In the 1930s white collar workers with college degrees were unemployed. The New Deal hired many of them into the regulatory bodies it set up to control the worst excesses of capitalism and to regulate private industry. Hiring some of our college graduates to do this again, today, seems like a worthwhile idea. It certainly beats sending them to Wall Street where they work on devising methods that ruin both the economy and eventually, their own livelihoods.

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The dynamics of health care reform

By Sam Webb

The current struggle for health care reform gives us a concrete glimpse of the contours, dynamics and complexities of the issue.

It has been a pitched battle.

Across the country a movement is charging forward. Early on the mobilization was inadequate, but that changed, thanks to the so-called tea parties that were a wakeup call for many who were enjoying the afterglow of the 2008 elections and underestimated what it would take to consolidate and extend that victory.

All sides in this struggle have gone to great lengths to frame the debate and shape public opinion. In the early going the right had some success with its fear mongering — talk of death panels, socialism, Nazism, etc. — but that changed as health care supporters answered the challenge.

While many sections of labor favor a single payer system, they have avoided painting themselves into a corner. Instead they have stated their support for single payer while battling for the inclusion of the public option, and greeted the House bill with enthusiasm.

While labor differed with the Obama administration on some matters, it has done so in a thoughtful, respectful and unifying manner. It has not sought to score points, demonstrate superior wisdom, or expose Obama as a “do-nothing centrist.”

Other organizations of the popular movement — NOW, the NAACP, National Council of La Raza — as well as many of the health care organizations and coalitions take much the same approach.

The passage of the legislation by the House constitutes an important victory for comprehensive health care reform and progressive change generally. If the bill had been defeated, we would not be simply back to square one, as some suggest.

Rather, health care reform would be off the



agenda, indefinitely. Political momentum would shift to the right wing, and prospects would be bleak for a second stimulus, Employee Free Choice, climate change legislation, immigration reform, and other key battles.

Some left and progressive people dismiss this danger, but politics is not only about passing laws, as important as that is, it is also about gaining and maintaining the initiative, building on victories no matter how small, and expanding the breadth and depth of the coalition at every opportunity. It's higher math, not elementary addition and subtraction.

The Senate has yet to act and the balance of power is less favorable there. All kinds of actions are planned over the next month, from congressional lobbying to “thank you parties” for those who have supported reform, to phone banking to influence the Senate vote.

The health care reform movement has to “keep the pedal to the metal.” All kinds of actions are planned over the next month, from congressional lobbying to “thank you parties” for those who have supported reform, to phone banking to influence the Senate vote. Everyone should be a part of this.

The health care reform movement has to “keep the pedal to the metal.”

N.Y. rally highlights health care's human face

By Dan Margolis

Eric de la Cruz had a bright future. He had a girlfriend, Noelle, whom he planned to marry. He was in college and worked part time at a small graphic design company, which could not afford to offer health insurance to its workers.

After visiting several doctors, Eric was told that he had a serious heart ailment that was curable by a transplant.

Eric began calling insurance company after insurance company and was denied by each one, because of his "pre-existing condition."

But Eric was lucky enough to have a sister who loved him and began talking about Eric's condition online. They raised \$1 million, enough to cover the cost of a heart transplant.

Even with a million dollars in hand, Eric was still refused. They said he needed supplemental insurance.

But, "you can't get supplemental medical insurance if you have a pre-existing medical condition," Eric's sister, Veronica de la Cruz told the rally crowd.

After five years, Eric succumbed to his illness.

"Despite all those miracles that were happening, it wasn't enough to outweigh the damage that time waiting for insurance had done," his sister told the rally.

Democratic New York Sens. Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand sent representatives to the rally, which took place in neon glow Times Square. Both vowed to continue the fight for health care reform and implored others to keep fighting.

Conferencia sobre calentamiento global

Por Marc Brodine

Se está especulando mucho sobre las negociaciones sobre el clima en Copenhagen. Hoy más que nunca, un pacto con límites obligatorios sobre emisiones es urgente. El clima se está calentando más de lo que antes se pensaba y las consecuencias del cambio climático mundial se está acumulando e intensificando. Igualmente, cambiar a un nuevo sistema energético es una tarea gigantesca y los planes actuales necesitan ser implementados empezando ahora para mantener las emisiones a niveles manejables porque esto tomará muchas décadas para totalmente implementar.

Las principales emisiones vienen de la transportación usando combustible fósil, plantas de electricidad que queman carbón, la deforestación que incluye el quemar bosques, pérdidas innecesarias de residencias y edificios, procesos de agricultura industrial, y aumento en emisiones del sector de ganado. Controlar las emisiones significa trabajar en todas estas áreas.

Los temas principales para tratarse en la cumbre de Copenhagen son las siguientes:

Establecer límites obligatorios sobre emisiones;

Establecer metas para los países en vía de desarrollo;

Establecer un fondo de los países desarrollados para recompensar a los países en vía de desarrollo para el desarrollo tecnológico, para esfuerzos para mitigar los efectos del calentamiento global, y para poner fin a la

deforestación □ el programa pro medio ambiente de la ONU propone un mínimo de \$10 mil millones;

Si EEUU participa o no activamente.

Un argumento usado en años recientes por los oponentes conservadores de todo trabajo sobre el cambio climático es que EEUU no debe de acordar ningún límite si China e India no se ponen de acuerdo primero a limitaciones obligatorias de emisiones. Ahora que China está por delante de EEUU en muchas áreas, este argumento se hace más difícil. No obstante, China se opone a límites obligatorios para los países en vía de desarrollo, que tienen un nivel de emisiones más bajo por persona, y que necesitan desarrollarse económicamente y han contribuido menos a las emisiones que ya están en el ambiente.

Hay otros países que están más adelantados que EEUU en ciertas áreas. Alemania es el líder mundial en el uso de energía eólica. Brasil es líder en la producción de alternativas de biocombustibles. Holanda, el país que está más en peligro por el nivel del mar subiendo, es líder en formas de adaptarse, abandonando terrenos no sostenibles que ha recuperado del mar, mejorando diques y control de agua.

Los que se oponen a las actividades estadounidenses sobre el cambio de clima son principalmente, aunque no solo estos, republicanos conservadores.

