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Geo-engineering is not the answer for climate change

By Blake Depp

When a recent report suggested that injecting sulfur dioxide into the stratosphere as a means of artificially cooling the Earth, many environmentalists and scientists reacted strongly against the idea. The method, a form of geoengineering, is meant to combat the dilemma of climate change, but those who oppose the idea say it is not worth the risk.

The two-volume report, released Feb. 10 by the National Academy of Sciences, posed sulfuric injection as a way to potentially reflect the sun's heat away from the planet, though they stopped short of citing it as an immediate solution. However, they did call for scientists to study and test the idea as soon as possible. It's important to note that geoengineering, or altering the weather conditions of the world, was once considered a fringe idea, but in these climatically desperate times, portions of the scientific community seem to be arguing for desperate - though not necessarily beneficial - measures.

The suggested effort would mimic the effects of a volcanic eruption and have a cooling effect on the atmosphere, supporters argue, yet experts worry about the unknown, potentially dangerous side effects that could emerge from such an undertaking. In a way, many scientists recognize it



as playing with fire, or at the very least, regard it as a last resort.

“Carrying out a geoengineering effort to modify the life support system all life on Earth depends upon - the climate - is an extremely risky undertaking that is more likely to do harm than good,” said Jeff Masters, director of meteorology at Weather Underground. “Still, at the rate we’re going, Team Earth may be down multiple touch-downs late in the game later this century, leading

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us to try this desperate ‘Hail Mary’ pass.”

Marcia McNutt, committee chair and former director of the U.S. Geological Survey, remarked, “That scientists are even considering technological interventions should be a wake-up call that we need to do more now to reduce [greenhouse gas]

The geo-engineering report boldly calls for these tests to go ahead even in the absence of any regulatory system governing them.

emissions, which is the most effective, least risky way to combat climate change.”

Ben Schreiber, climate and energy program director of Friends of the Earth, added, “While we agree that the current level of greenhouse gas emissions leaves us vulnerable to climate chaos, geoengineering will take us in the wrong direction. It serves as a dangerous distraction from the crucial discussions and actions that need to take place to mitigate and adapt to climate disruption.

“Geoengineering presumes that we can apply a dramatic technological fix, instead of facing the reality that we need to reduce our emissions, lower our consumption levels, and rapidly transition to renewable energy. Some hope to simply reengineer the climate, the land, and the oceans to theoretically slow down and reverse climate [change].

“The side effects of geoengineering interventions are unknown and untested. In order to have any noticeable impact on global temperatures, [such] projects would have to be deployed on a massive scale. These ‘experiments’ would not only take action in the absence of scientific consensus, hence violating the precautionary principle, but

could also easily have unintended consequences due to mechanical failure, human error, inadequate understanding of ecosystems, unforeseen natural phenomena, irreversibility, or funding interruptions.”

Social activist Naomi Klein, author of *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, said that the authors of the geoengineering report “boldly call for these tests to go ahead even in the absence of any regulatory system governing them. They explicitly state that ‘governance and experimentation must co-evolve,’ which is a high-minded way of saying, ‘let’s roll the dice and see what happens.’ “



Blake Depp writes for Peoplesworld.org

What’s behind Republican attacks on Social Security?

By Mike Hall

Last month Republican House members went after Social Security on their very first day at work. Some 11 million people who receive Social Security disability benefits could see their benefits cut by 20 percent in 2016 and cuts to Social Security retirement benefits for everyone could also be in store.

The coalition Social Security Works says last month’s action barring transfer of funds from the Social Security Retirement Trust Funds to the Social Security disability program-known as reallocation-unless taxes are raised or benefits are cut is “stealth attack on America’s working families.”

Like other stealth attacks against the American people’s Social Security, the groundwork is being laid in advance. It will suddenly explode sometime in the next two years. The rule change would prohibit a simple reallocation! It will require more significant and complex changes to Social Security. In other words, the Republican rule will allow Social Security to be held hostage....Hostage-taking to force changes that the

American people do not want, to a vital program like Social Security is no way to run the United States of America.

Kathy Ruffing of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities says:

“By barring the House from approving a “clean” reallocation in 2016, the rule will strengthen the hand of lawmakers who seek to attach harsh conditions (such as sharp cuts in eligibility or benefit amounts) to such a measure.”

Richard Eskow of the Campaign for America’s Future asks, “Why are they doing this?”

One reason is to please campaign contributors. Wealthy individuals, like conservative billionaire hedge-funder Pete Peterson, are committed to gutting the program. Many defense contractors and Wall Street firms are involved in the campaign through a group called ‘Fix the Debt,’ despite the fact that Social Security doesn’t contribute to the federal debt. Among other things, Social Security cuts would ensure that they’re not asked to pay more in taxes.

Ironically, all of these firms have benefited greatly from public expenditures.

Lilo Heller, 94: Holocaust victim and citizen of the world

Special to Peoplesworld.org

Lilo Heller, a Holocaust survivor, was born in Germany in 1921 and witnessed the rise of Nazism. In 1939, she and her parents escaped the Nazis - by traveling to Holland and then to Jakarta, Indonesia, where she studied to be a nurse before joining the Dutch Army - and her parents by traveling to Quito, Ecuador. All the other family members in Germany and Holland died in the Nazi death camps.

In 1942 the Japanese invaded Indonesia, and because she was a nurse in the Dutch Army, she was interned in Japanese prison camps for four years. After the Japanese surrendered in 1945, Lilo was caught up in the Indonesian War of Independence. She finally escaped on a boat to the U.S., with the help of the International Red Cross.

Settling in San Francisco, she met and married Harold Heller in 1949, and her twins Michael and Lee were born. The family then moved from San Francisco to Mill Valley, Calif. Lilo and Harold spent 50 years in the restaurant business in San Francisco, Mill Valley and San Rafael.

From the start of their marriage, Lilo championed progressive causes. She was inspired by Dr. W.E.B. DuBois' book about his life and she eventually ran the progressive bookstore in San Francisco.

Lilo was a friend of Harry Bridges and the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, the Unit



ed Farm Workers, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. In 1984, she was a delegate to an international peace convention in the German Democratic Republic.

She supported the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Congress of Racial Equality and the marches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., sending food and clothes to Mississippi and Alabama to support voter registration in the South.

Lilo also collected clothes and food to send to striking miners in Harlan, Ky., and in Idaho and Montana. She participated in peace marches in San Francisco and Berkeley to protest the Vietnam War, even picketing at the Naval Weapons Station in Concord. She traveled to Sacramento and throughout the Bay Area to support the United Farm Workers' boycotts and the march from Delano to Sacramento. Her favorite folk singer was Pete Seeger.

Lilo and Harold Heller will also be remembered for the picnics and events they held at their home for the People's World, which they helped to distribute in the Bay Area.

She leaves behind her sons, Michael Heller and Lee Heller, and three generations of grandchildren.

Lilo championed progressive causes through the inspiration of Dr. W.E.B. DuBois' book about his life.

South Dakota GOP propose decrease in minimum wage

By James Nord

South Dakota's minimum wage would decrease if the cost of living drops under a proposal that a state House panel approved against the protest of Democrats.

The House Commerce and Energy Committee voted to approve a measure that opponents argued went against the intent of voters who approved a minimum wage hike that was tied to cost of living adjustments.

South Dakota residents voted 55 percent to 45 percent in November for a proposal that raises the state's minimum hourly wage from \$7.25 to \$8.50 an hour, increases the \$2.13 hourly tip wage to half the minimum wage and tied future increases to the cost of living.

Republican Rep. Jim Bolin's proposal erases a provision from the voter-approved language that bars the minimum wage from being decreased.

Bolin successfully argued to the committee that the built-in cost of living adjustments in the minimum wage plan should have the flexibility to react to positive or negative economic news.

"If we're going to have an (Consumer Price Index) component to this measure, we should have one that's a two-way street," Bolin said.

Republican Rep. John Wiik agreed with Democrats on the committee even though he doesn't support the wage hike voters chose. He said the provisions barring a decrease were clearly explained to the public before the proposal was passed in November.

"I fought against the minimum wage increase," Wiik said. "We lost that one."

Humedal de Bahía de Panamá declarado área protegida

UICN

Con el apoyo del gobierno panameño y el impulso dado por el Comité Nacional de Miembros de la UICN en Panamá y otras organizaciones ambientalistas, el humedal de Bahía de Panamá fue declarado, por Ley, área protegida, lo que impide construcciones en esta zona hasta que se elabore un plan de manejo para esta reserva. Esta zona es importante por sus manglares, que se extienden desde Juan Díaz hasta Chimán. Las principales amenazas de este sitio son la tala ilegal, los rellenos y el desarrollo inmobiliario.

La Alcaldía de Panamá está desarrollando un diagnóstico de la situación en la zona marino costera de Juan Díaz, Tocumen y Pacora; y está proponiéndose realizar una mayor fiscalización de los rellenos y hacer estudios de suelo así como una recuperación de los manglares y su adecuado manejo con una inversión de \$1 millón.

El Presidente del Comité Panameño de la UICN, Ricardo Wong celebró la entrada en vigencia de dicha Ley en un día simbólico como el 2 de Febrero, Día Mundial de los Humedales. ¿Cuál fue el rol del Comité Nacional de Miembros de la UICN en el impulso a esta Ley?

Para hablar de la ley hay que hablar de sus antecedentes. A raíz de la suspensión temporal de la Resolución Administrativa que declaró como área protegida a los humedales de la Bahía de Panamá, organizaciones del Comité Nacional de Miembros participaron en las acciones que se realizaron para compartir información y brindar

conocimiento sobre el área, su valor, los bienes y servicios ambientales que presta y las amenazas que sobre el sitio recayeron una vez suspendida su protección. Con esta Resolución se buscaba no solo llamar la atención mundial sobre lo ocurrido con esta área protegida, sino también destacar su importancia y solicitar una serie de acciones en aras de fortalecer diversos mecanismos de conservación y de buena gobernanza ambiental.

¿Qué tantos efectos negativos sobre la biodiversidad y degradación de los manglares había ocurrido?

La protección urgía porque buena parte del área protegida es vista como polo de desarrollo inmobiliario, comercial e industrial de la ciudad de Panamá. Varias hectáreas de manglares aledañas al área protegida fueron destruidas y rellenadas, específicamente en el área inundable de la cuenca baja del río Juan Díaz, muy vulnerable a inundaciones.

Los fangales de la Bahía de Panamá son uno de los cinco sitios de mayor importancia para las aves playeras migratorias en el hemisferio occidental. Toda la zona marina es altamente productiva en recursos pesqueros y debido a que en los manglares muchas especies de peces y camarones de valor comercial realizan sus primeros ciclos de vida, es de interés especial para la economía local la conservación de estos ecosistemas.