

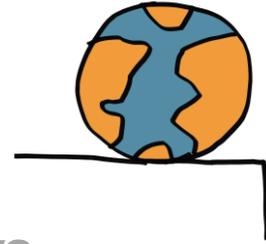
SEIZING AN ALTERNATIVE

Toward an Ecological Civilization

June 4-7, 2015

Section I: The Threatening Catastrophe:
Responding Now

Track 6: Political Collapse and the Alternative
John Culp, organizer



Track Summary for Political Collapse and the Alternative

By John Culp

Evidence confirms that multiple catastrophes are upon us. Responding to that crisis requires more than passive acceptance or agitated confrontation. Part of an adequate response involves careful analysis of what led to our current catastrophes so that responses are more than reactions to the crises. And yet, analysis of the various factors leading to the crises by themselves will not bring constructive change. Proposals for action based upon analysis of the sources of the problems are especially crucial. While the Political Collapse track in the “Threatening Catastrophe: Responding Now” section seeks to identify the political structures that have contributed to the catastrophes, it also seeks to identify ways in which those political structures can be changed to bring about a constructive response to the ecological crisis.

Our sessions will involve consideration of the way economic practices have contributed to the destruction of well-being by reducing the effectiveness of democratic structures that enabled more creative responses to ecological problems. The first three sessions will discuss the general problem of the collapse of political structures making a constructive response to the ecological crisis difficult. The following four sessions will be devoted to discussing what we can now do to reduce the suffering resulting from collapse and to lay the foundations for an ecological civilization.

The specific sessions of the track:

Session One: A brief introduction to the destructive effects of American imperialism, the financial control of the global economy, corporate interests including especially oil, and national interests, especially, of Israel and the United States. John Cobb presented the historical context, Ellen Brown talked about the role of money in the destruction of nations, and Thomas Greco updated the current situation in Greece.

Session Two: The destruction of African nations by imperial, corporate, and financial powers (Joint session with Just Peacemaking track). Andre Vltchek showed clips of videos graphically demonstrating destruction in African nations and Kenneth Cousens commented on the structures making causing that destruction.

Session Three: The destruction of democracy within the United States. It is now evident to almost everyone that the “security state” takes precedence over human rights and that public opinion is heavily influenced by media beholden to the money power. What can we do to encourage positive actions at these levels? Joe Hough presented Chris Hedges’ analysis of the situation in the US and Olav Bryant Smith,

Carl Herman, and Sheila Collins responded to Hedges' analysis.

Session Four: What can be hoped for from the United Nations and national and state governments? Yoshishiko Wada from Japan and the Global Footprint Network presented "Ecological Footprint and its impacts to the mainstream economic organizations." Mark Whitlock spoke about the impact of The Cecil Murray Center for Community Engagement on low income neighborhoods. James Waterhouse talked about the Carbon Fee movement. Michael Brackney, Ashley Mazanec, and James Long described the organization and work of San Diego 350.

Session Five: What can be hoped for from towns and cities and local organizations? Tina Clarke and Kevin Clark described the Transition Towns Network and its Port Townsend, WA chapter's work. Former mayor of Richmond, CA, Gayle McLaughlin presented how Richmond organized to resist the control by Chevron and former mayor Joe Lyons and Freeman Allan talked about the Sustainable Claremont, CA program.

Session Six: Local self-sufficiency. As we consider the likelihood of the collapse of the larger structures on which towns now depend, we focus on relative local autonomy and self-sufficiency. Sarah Nolan from Abundant Table presented how local communities can provide food; David Stone described a new building material that avoids the climate cost of concrete; and Kevin Clark talked about Port Townsend's purchase of the local electricity utility.

Session Seven: Often local communities are destroyed because of their economic dependence on distant centers. The strongest dependence is often financial. We now know that local communities do not need to rely on external powers for money. They can create their own money or operate without money in the traditional sense. Breaking now from control by the global banking system can facilitate other needed changes and prepare the way for rebuilding during and after the disasters we face. Ellen Brown presented the public banking movement, and Thomas Greco spoke about community credit and local currencies.

Session Eight: This session considered what we have learned that is worth sharing widely and how such sharing can be conducted.