

Sorry I'm Late

Let me begin by apologizing to readers for the long silence since *Campaign Strategy Newsletter* 55 in September 2009.

It's not that I've been incredibly busy: I've finished a book on values (which lacks a publisher and probably needs rewriting - any suggestions for the former are welcome), and have been updating *How to Win Campaigns* for a Second Edition due out in 2010 and have done some work for OSF (www.soros.org) on campaigning and other matters, and for the British Trust for Ornithology on marketing strategy and looked at the ICT sector for Greenpeace amongst other projects but I've not been as 'flat out' as many of you.

I've become an unpaid adviser to Global Cool who I like for their chutzpah and because they are an unusual example of an NGO targeting one particular psychological group - the 'Now People' (see www.globalcool.org), and an equally unpaid director of 1010 (see www.1010uk.org) which is young and enthusiastic and optimistic and the central idea is I think, simple and elegant. And I've been talking to some young voters who might take up Bryceson's "Spartans Strategy" in the forthcoming UK General Election (see Newsletter 45). I hope to write more about these initiatives in a future Newsletter. My main reason for not producing a newsletter though was trying to avoid writing anything else about 'Copenhagen'.

I said much of what I had to say about 'Copenhagen' in previous newsletters (eg 50 and 55) and we have been so swamped in comment and 'messages' about the Copenhagen event, that I didn't want to add to your inbox while the circus was in town. I didn't feel I had anything urgent to say to you, so I'm sorry for the gap.

Many years ago I was told that one of my professors had two old-style in-trays on his desk, one labelled "Things That Time Has Solved" and the other, "Things That Time Has Yet To Solve". The empty Newsletter still glowered reproachfully from my in-tray, and so here now are some thoughts to start off 2010.

A Tale of Three Epics

The Accord

As an exercise in global governance Copenhagen - the Fifteenth Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change - undoubtedly failed. If that is, you thought, as many apparently did, that the Bali twin tracks etc etc were literally going to deliver a "result" in terms of targets and timetables and so on, to rescue us from the undoubtedly disastrous effects of greenhouse gas pollution.

If it was an exercise in politics rather than governance - the jury is still out, at least for me with my limited understanding. The 'Copenhagen Accord' seems to me to have marked the arrival on centre stage of the two biggest elephants in the room, which had previously stayed in the corner, although whether sulking or simply blithely indifferent, it's hard to tell. China and the US played old style power politics in Denmark and not surprisingly, a lot of others got sidelined [1] or used as pawns [2]. This is not new - in the Cold War and in trade negotiations it happened

all the time. Even in environmental negotiations there have been examples of vote buying, and not just on the side of the forces of darkness.

An optimistic analysis might be that it was the best available outcome and it was domestically better for Obama to be seen to ignore the Europeans and wring what looked like a concession from China, in order to create political space with the Senate, rather than appear to sign up to something which reduced his chances of making progress when he returned home. By the same token China needed to become a player without losing face to developed countries, or in particular the US. Leaders of both countries are constrained by national egos of the sort that do not greatly trouble contemporary Europeans, or even perhaps, Russia. That's an optimistic reading: optimistic because there is movement, and optimistic as it supposes Obama has a plan.

The epic here is the attempt at unsurpassed global governance. The effort is not yet dead - it will rise again though whether it does so in time is open to doubt. It will rise because physical realities from melting glaciers robbing cities of drinking water or advancing deserts enveloping farmland or a host of other climate effects will convert the theoretical or diffuse into acute political realities which demand a bigger response but of course that may be too late. And it may yet rise because of campaigns and civil society, and/or because technological and social innovation change what seems impossible, into the possible.

One of the biggest failures of governance and of campaigns has been the failure of imagination. In 1990, as the ICT industry is fond of repeating, there were 8 million mobile phones. Now there are 4.6 billion, more than the number of watches in the world, and the relative cost has shrunk from \$3,000 to \$1. Ten million such phones are sold each month in India. Mobile communications is transforming the world but has barely registered in the Business as Usual 'thinking' of the climate negotiations, which effectively started with a declaration at the Toronto Conference back in 1988, that emissions should be cut 20% on 1988 levels by 2005.

A host of technologies exist which could solve the climate problem as captured by the thinking of the climate convention. What we lack is of course the political machinery - from drivers through to fuel, cogs and wheels - to apply those to the objective. One of the reasons that machinery is not assembled is because political thinkers can't imagine what technology can do, and campaigners and others can't imagine how to get people to demand it. Campaigns need to connect motivational values to behaviour to politics [3].

Those pressing for greater action also need to signal the end of 'Business as Usual'. The Copenhagen Conference should be the last of its kind. So long as the old Bretton-Woods era model persists: national negotiators fly in to gather in one capital after another on the UN 'buggins turn' system, accompanied by increasing numbers of lobbyists and protestors, followed by late night deadlock micro-text-dramas resolved by the late arrival of national leaders, so we maintain a dysfunctional piece of global theatre. Fuelled by a cocktail of kerosene and adrenalin, it frames 'climate' as about intractable high level 'talks' conveniently wrappable for the news media but which keeps the reality of climate change unreal, at a distance and disconnected from change to real lives. It sends the misleading bottom line signal: 'world still arguing' about climate change.

The NGOs attending such events are largely wasting their time and resources, for their influence is not in numbers or utterances made during the sessions but in how they have stacked the national cards through campaigning back home, that took place years or months in advance. Yes have signs of mass public concern: people gathered in the streets, are important but they need the legitimacy of being popular expression, not just protests by foreign activists assembled for the purpose. In the case of the build up to COP15 the moment to send such a signal was not at Copenhagen itself but in New York, around the UN 'Climate Summit' held in September 2009.

The jet-set climate-talks format generates episodic news bites but keeps 'climate' (or any other topic consigned to the UN other-world) as a subject whose progress must wait for the 'next time'. So long as NGOs persist in supporting this model, it will survive. After Copenhagen I read a blog from an activist which signed off "see you in Mexico". Next stop for the circus. It would be better to have a more continuous negotiation, much more transparent, differentiated regionally and by subject and mainly run online through remote communication such as 'telepresence', videoconferencing, even skype, with drastically slimmed down physical climate talks.

The second epic, I saw at a cinema in Norwich, England, the other night. No it was not the story of some hacked emails from frustrated climate researchers desperate to evade scientific philibustering by vexatious sceptics, it was the movie *Avatar*.

Avatar

If you haven't seen it and you have any interest in how entertainment culture might affect matters of state and the great games of global politics by influencing unreached audiences or creating new reference points for formerly esoteric ideas, or if you like me were ever concerned with trying to express the inter-connectedness of ecological systems - then see this film. It is a technical tour de force of film-making and perhaps the first eco-epic, albeit in the guise of a CGI fantasy, off planet sci-fi adventure movie.

Avatar rolls up themes and references from *Aliens* to Anglo Saxon nature worship [4], from Tolkein to Gaia to Pocohontas, in other words the full gamut of 'western' eco guilt. Ignore its bad reviews - it annoys reviewers but it has been filling cinemas [5].

Mainstreaming into popular online culture via gaming and cinema, *Avatar* stands the best chance yet of subtly 'greening' those 'Golden Dreamers' so hard to reach with arguments of 'ethics' [6] - not least because it is carried by the values of its protagonist, a US Marine. This operates not at a different level but at in a different universe from *The Inconvenient Truth*.

Before *Avatar* started my family and I sat in the cinema watching a series of rather dull advertisements designed to show off "3-D". One of the two-dimensional offerings was the British government's current climate advertisement shown in theatres and on tv. You can see this "Act on CO2 Bedtime Stories TV ad" at www.decc.gov.uk. This ad shows a father reading his small daughter a story about how people realised that "CO2" was changing the weather for the worse.

Well good for DECC (Department of Energy and Climate Change). Their research showed them that if the 'climate message' was framed as about children then it had a much bigger effect on parents than if it was, say, just about boiling kettles or saving money or rising sea levels. It's a shame that at the end of the ad, the message is simply to 'search online' for the UK Government's rather bland campaign 'Act on CO2' and it utterly fails to engage families or parents as messengers, the author, source or the channel for follow up. NGOs ought to do that globally in 2010 [7]. But it's a try.

Anyway back to the story. Most of the audience received this missive in a silence broken only by chomping on their popcorn but behind me a group of young people who had until then been discussing which terrible movies they had seen in 3D were moved to comment. "Oooh" said a woman "they're saying it's wrong to heat childrens bedrooms" - well not quite but strike one against the ad. Then as it ended, a young man hissed quite loudly "it's the sun, stupid". And it struck me - this is what's most wrong with the ad as a campaign piece. It makes the audience feel stupid. It does not equip them to identify with anyone in the ad who is portrayed as doing something right, something clever. So to feel clever he had to diss it.

Fortunately I think he felt better at the end of *Avatar*, perhaps as the lead character says (a piece of script I suspect was inserted so as to make a pull quote for the trailer): "*out-standing*". The point for campaigns Start from where your audience is. If they need to feel clever, to gain esteem or self-esteem, then design campaign communications that enable them to do so.

China And The Rest of the World

Perhaps the best piece of advice in Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* is to adopt a 'strategy of tactical positioning'. So how should the rest of the world now apply the advice of this ancient Chinese strategic genius to the case of China and the climate ?

To state the obvious, I would not try to coerce China into a more progressive stance on climate. I guess this is why so many NGOs seem intent on blaming anyone but China - the US, Australia, the EU for example, for what happened in Copenhagen. Many in China no doubt feel they have gone quite as far as they ought to at this time but the planet - that is everyone on it and future generations - clearly need them to go further. Professor Ron Inglehart has shown [8] that because of values shifts he expects China to become a democracy within twenty years but we cannot wait for that, which in any case might only produce something as progressive as the US but much bigger.

So I would start by looking at what might influence China by looking at how others could change themselves. Most of all this means the Europeans - and the Americans once they have sorted out their domestic difficulties as they are new to this business. According to an analysis by the ever-prescient Stockholm Environment Institute in 2008 [9], the 'West' can be blamed for much of China's recent rapid rise in CO2 emissions. Apparently around one third of China's emissions are down to producing goods for export: China has become the Industrial Estate of Europe and North America, which have outsourced or displaced much of their carbon pollution. The climate policy wonks call this 'carbon leakage' but it simply means that a lot of China's lamented CO2 emissions could be avoided if we in the 'West' weren't importing so many clothes, electrical goods, toys, food and so on, from China.

The Guardian newspaper noted of this research:

Under Kyoto, emissions are allocated to the country where they are produced. By these rules, the UK can claim to have reduced emissions by about 18% since 1990 - more than sufficient to meet its Kyoto target.

But research published last year by the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) suggests that, once imports, exports and international transport are accounted for, the real change for the UK has been a rise in emissions of more than 20%.

And 'about 9% of total Chinese emissions are the result of manufacturing goods for the US, and 6% are from producing goods for Europe'.

If campaigners and western politicians are serious about cutting global emissions and putting pressure, albeit indirectly, on China, this is their battleground: the third epic. They claim to have the motive, here is the opportunity. Of course China could export elsewhere but there are still no other markets as valuable as the EU and the USA, and they can start with the EU. The possibilities are plenty - China is not the only place interested in Foreign Direct Investment: there are numerous other countries where deals could be done to couple cheap labour and low carbon production. This would, after all, be a form of free market carbon trading.

A strategy of tactical positioning requires you to plan your strategy so as to allow you to make use of your best tactic. And in the case of Europe and the US, what are they better at than consuming ?

Conveniently, this carbon transfer also arrives in Europe in a spectacularly obvious way, in giant container ships. And as one of the doyens of policy wonkery, Professor Dieter Helm of Oxford University, told *The Guardian* last February: *"It's complicated but there are ways of taking consumption into account, such as a border tax on carbon transfer."* Something for everyone then, even for the hair-shirt brigade who like a bit of self-flagellation. We could after all, simply go without some of these things, or pay more to make them in a lower carbon manner, closer to home.

As others almost said [10]: *"the skies are darkening with the wings of chickens coming home to roost"*.

And Finally

www.campusactivism.org A compendium of how-to organise campaigns resources, many drawn from the Change Agency

Cultural (not motivational) values - see great material at www.geert-hofstede.com

A leading edge behaviour www.swishing.org

Commentaries worth reading <http://paulgilding.com/view/cockatoo-chronicles>

<http://www.wheredoesmymoneygo.org/prototype/> great money graphics

Where environmental grant funds go (UK) and more internationally at www.greenfunders.org

www.killercampaigning.com excellent simple and practical American website on how to do effective political campaigning - with content widely applicable outside the United States. Look beyond the home page.

www.peopleandparticipation.net Run by Involve (<http://www.involve.org.uk/>) and funded by UK government departments this is how-to site for encouraging public engagement and participation, aimed at central and local government officials and community workers but contains examples of over 60 different participation methods and more than 100 case studies which will be of interest to many campaigners. Useful for designing community research.

[1] eg the EU, along with Latin America and many others

[2] eg some African countries <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/dec/22/copenhagen-climate-change-mark-lynas>

[3] See VBCOP model http://www.campaignstrategy.org/articles/VBCOP_unifying_strategy_model.pdf

[4] if you doubt this read Brian Bates, *The Real Middle-Earth: Magic and Mystery in the Dark Ages*, pub Pan, 2003

[5] <http://www.inentertainment.co.uk/20091228/holiday-weekend-box-office-results-%E2%80%98avatar%E2%80%99-stays-at-top/>

[6] see the power versus universalism axis

- for example http://www.campaignstrategy.org/articles/int_values_campaign.pdf

[7] see *Campaign Strategy Newsletter* 50, "It's The Children Stupid"

[8] see *Campaign Strategy Newsletter* 55 Maslow goes To War

[9] see report at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/feb/23/china-co2-emissions-climate>

[10] Malcolm X and Lord Callaghan

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http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/1853839620/ref=ed_ra_of_dp/202-6151204-2796606 or from www.earthscan.co.uk/?tabid=698