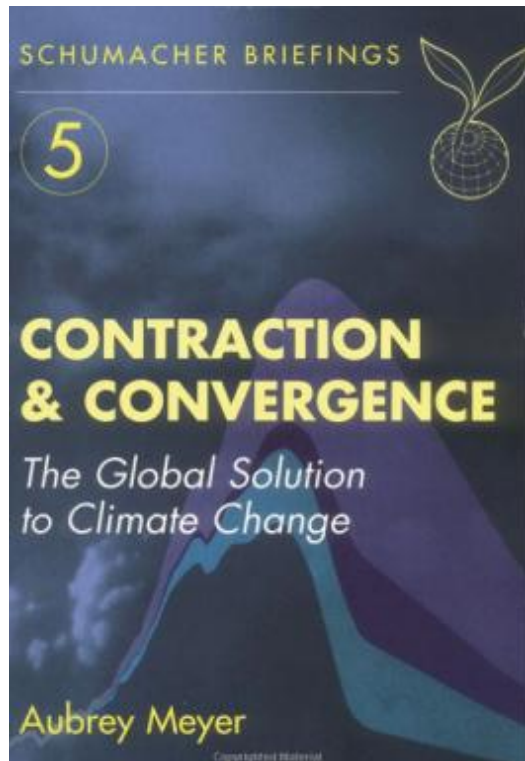


Reviews of CONTRACTION AND CONVERGENCE

By Aubrey Meyer

Green Books, 2000, 92 pp., £5 p/n



Although this book was published a few years ago, its arguments become ever more pressing and no less cogent. Contraction and Convergence is an integrated global solution to climate change based on two fundamental principles: that global emission of greenhouse gases must be progressively reduced; and that rights to emission of these gases must be based on an equal per capita allowance.

The book calls for the kind of 'structural adjustments' that are diametrically opposite to those currently advocated by the IMF and that apply to developed rather than developing countries, since their per capita emissions are so much higher. These countries would have to buy permits from developing countries if they were unable to cut their own emissions, which would lead to a transfer of wealth from richer to poorer nations.

The issue is clearest when one confronts two 'absolutes': the need for carbon contraction and the drive for economic growth, which is currently closely coupled with increased use of fossil fuel energy - China is the most conspicuous example here.

Business as usual economists have calculated on a cost-benefit basis that it is too expensive to save the planet (!) but the basis of this calculation is flawed by undervaluing the loss of life in developing countries and ignoring the mounting cost of climate change damage (using figures published by the insurance industry) in relation to wealth generation.

Long-term solutions to climate change cannot be based on existing inequalities that perpetuate 'expansion and divergence', increasing the gap between rich and poor. Contraction and Convergence provides a viable and just alternative.

http://www.gci.org.uk/Documents/Omnipedia5_July2004.pdf

Reviews of C&C on Amazon

http://www.amazon.co.uk/Contraction-Convergence-Solution-Schumacher-Briefings/dp/1870098943/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1303918154&sr=8-1

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful:

This review is from: *Contraction and Convergence: The Global Solution to Climate Change* (Schumacher Briefings) (Paperback)

Human-induced climate change is the greatest environmental threat today. Rising to this terrible challenge means overturning the global apartheid between rich and poor. For example, the United States, with a twentieth of the world's population, usurps a quarter of the global atmosphere to dump its pollution. Such inequity motivates this book's author: Aubrey Meyer, a musician who grew up in South Africa. In 1990, Meyer helped found the London-based Global Commons Institute to promote a simple and powerful concept that may yet break the deadlock of climate negotiations.

Simply put, everyone in the world has an equal right to emit greenhouse gas emissions. First, take the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change figure of 60 per cent cuts to stabilise global atmospheric carbon dioxide levels by 2100. Second, calculate the level of pollution each nation should be allowed. The book's eye-catching computer graphics illustrate past emissions and future allocation of emissions by country, achieving per capita equality by 2030. Emissions thereafter fall to reach safe levels by 2100. Climate damage will still result, but disaster should be averted. Global emissions trading of per capita shares will ease transition costs to a zero-emissions lifestyle, Meyer argues.

This 'contraction and convergence' (C&C) framework has gathered the support of a majority of the world's countries, including China and India. It may be the only approach that developing countries are willing to accept. That, in turn, may spur even the US to ratify the Kyoto protocol. However, Meyer warns that the 'sub-global framework' of the protocol with its 'guesswork' of market mechanisms and 'inadequate' cuts 'could prove worse than useless' because the public would be lulled into a false sense of security 'that something is at last being done'. Meyer's argument is powerful, fuelled by compassion for the poor.

The crux of the matter is whether grassroots support for global equity will defeat the powerful elite interests that currently enjoy the status quo. As one US delegate put it: 'We won the Cold War. Contraction & Convergence is Communism'!

Communism or not, accepting C&C would require that the developed world eschews dirty economic growth. If global weather-related damage continues its present trend of doubling every 7 years, then by around 2050 the costs of climate change could exceed the total value of everything that humanity

produced over one year. Has global capitalism finally destroyed itself by its own success? Let's hope so.

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful:

5.0 out of 5 stars An essential read on the solution to climate change, 22 Feb 2001

By A Customer

This review is from: *Contraction and Convergence: The Global Solution to Climate Change* (Schumacher Briefings) (Paperback)

CONTRACTION & CONVERGENCE: The Global Solution to Climate Change by Aubrey Meyer

Review by Dr. Mayer Hillman, Senior Fellow Emeritus, Policy Studies Institute, London, UK

Climate change caused by the greenhouse gas emissions from our past and present profligate energy-intensive lifestyles already appears to be having tragic consequences. If the reduction of these emissions to a relatively safe level is more important than the pursuit of economic growth, then it is clear that a framework for action is needed within which the reduction can be achieved.

This concise book profoundly and lucidly spells out such a framework. Its author, Aubrey Meyer, founder and director of the Global Commons Institute (GCI), logically calls it 'Contraction and Convergence'. It requires the reduction to be completed within a timetable determined by scientific evidence whilst at the same time programming it towards an end-state of per capita emissions 'shared out between people globally, equitably and sustainably'. This, he says, will deliver a clean and green form of prosperity which does not seriously prejudice the future of the planet. He argues convincingly that it is the only way of avoiding ecological catastrophe.

In addition to a devastating critique of the failure of economics to treat with the subject of the welfare of all mankind and the global environment, he provides a fascinating history of the process by which a transition has been made in the space of ten years from what was at first ridiculed as a totally unrealistic and impractical solution to a centre stage proposition at the heart of current climate change negotiations.

The effectiveness of his argument is reflected in a growing consensus around the world that 'Contraction and Convergence' may indeed be the only realistic route to ecological salvation. For instance, last summer, the Royal Commission on Environment and Pollution and Jan Pronk, the Netherlands Environment Minister and Chairman of the Hague Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, supported the case for an international agreement based on the principle. In his environment speech in the City of London in the autumn, Prime Minister Blair acknowledged that the massive reduction in greenhouse gas emissions must be achieved on 'an equitable basis'. A month later, in the Hague, President Chirac stated that 'France proposes that we set as our ultimate objective the convergence of per capita emissions'. It is extraordinary that acknowledgement by these two world leaders and others of the relevance of the concept of equity to the subject, with its seismic implications for the future of economic growth, received almost no coverage in the media.

It is clear that radical changes are called for not only in the policies and practices of government, industry and the business community generally, but also in our own lifestyles. If these are to be conducted according to principles of conscience and survival, we cannot continue to play down the significance of climate change. The fact that greenhouse gas emissions remain in the atmosphere for several generations makes it urgent that we take our responsibilities on this portentous issue far more seriously.

I can think of no better investment of time and no more effective means of jolting people out of their complacency on the ramifications of global warming than to read this remarkable book.

By Richard M. Dennis - See all my reviews

(REAL NAME) This review is from: *Contraction and Convergence: The Global Solution to Climate Change* (Schumacher Briefings) (Paperback)

It is not a question of life and death... it is far more important than that.

Although 9 years old, this book outlines possibly the most significant contribution to the survival of humankind on planet Earth. Aubrey Meyer deserves his place in history!

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful:

5.0 out of 5 stars A concise work that offers hope and practicalities, 18 Dec 2001

By A Customer

This review is from: *Contraction and Convergence: The Global Solution to Climate Change* (Schumacher Briefings) (Paperback)

This briefing is about the dangers presented by global warming. It explains how they arose, what the international community is doing about them and how, just possibly, humanity may head off the worst dangers. Against international sluggishness the method proposed (Contraction and Convergence - C & G) aims to show what can be done, right now, to curb the emission of greenhouse gases whilst creating sustainability and equity for the worldwide community.

Governments now recognise the 'devastating trend' of Global Warming but todate, no international census has been formed on how to rectify the problem, stop the increase in damages and create a fair and just deal for every single person on this planet, whether they live in the prosperous north or developing south. It recognises that such massive changes can only take place globally, and the author (a member of the Global Commons Institute (GCI) shows how international policy makers diverge in their aims. A

According to the GCI the equality-of-access-to the emission rights aspect of C & G is the only option to offer any success. The briefing travels through how the climate crisis developed and the strategies to combat these trends: how nations are blocking the equity and survival strategy that seems a sensible approach to halting and averting global tragedy. A short but concise work that offers hope and practicalities to enable us and our descendants to achieve a world in which to enjoy a future.