



Professor Norman Myers
Nomination of Aubrey Meyer for C&C Campaign

Nominee

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ENVIRONMENTAL ACHIEVEMENT

After a notable career as a musician since 1969, Aubrey Meyer turned to environmentalism in 1988 after hearing of the murder of Chico Mendez and the plight of Amazonia. A year later he founded the Global Commons Institute (GCI) with three colleagues from the U.K. Green Party, since which time he has served as its President. The office still at this time has only one full time staff member.

The problem Meyer has chosen to address was the "unequal human causation" of global warming among other climate changes. In his view, much more responsibility rests with the industrialized nations than the developing nations, as was originally documented in the 1990 First Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). After all, the first group accounts for 83% of accumulated emissions of carbon dioxide (dominant amongst other human released greenhouse gases (ghgs)) worldwide, while the second group accounts for the remaining accumulated 17%.

The IPCC Report expressed the view that since concentrations are a function of accumulated emissions, 60-80% cuts in greenhouse gas (ghg) emissions (particularly from fossil fuels) were required to just stabilise their rising concentrations in the global atmosphere. This meant with respect to the two groups that the industrial country group had the prime responsibility.

The Global Commons Institute started out by examining the historical record of fossil fuel consumption worldwide, highlighting the almost complete correlation to industrial and commercial development. The record shows that even on current emissions levels, the 20% of global population living in the industrial countries are still responsible for over 60% of the annual gross industrial ghg emissions worldwide.

Meyer believes that over-consumption of fossil fuels could be corrected and the worst climate changes averted only if the historic and persistent inequalities of consumption are corrected as part of the policy framework evolving at the United Nations. Reconciliation, within global limits to consumption, suggests therefore an "equity of necessity", rather than equity merely for its own sake. This concept is the most innovative and path breaking of all Meyer's initiatives.

The main GCI campaign has been directed at this equity of necessity under limits, specifically in terms of resolving the high per-capita disparities of energy consumption between developed and developing countries. For the first two years until the Earth Summit in Rio in June 1992, and through regular attendance at negotiating sessions, Meyer successfully helped to establish the language of equity and "differentiated responsibilities" in the text of the United Nations' Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

For the next three years, GCI contributed to the work of the IPCC Second Assessment Report, notably its Working Group Three on the socioeconomic repercussions of climate change. The IPCC invited Meyer to prepare a report on *"The Unequal Use of the Global Commons"*. In this he critiqued the work of those neo-classical economists who, through the IPCC, were seeking to establish a programme of Global Cost/Benefit Analysis as the principal policy method for ascertaining the optimal level of greenhouse gas concentrations in the global atmosphere. Meyer rejected this approach as unsound because of two main characteristics.

Firstly the proposed method suggested that it was both possible and sensible to anticipate the objective of the UNFCCC as being simply the end result of an analysis linked to monetarist methods and financial trends in the global market. This approach failed to recognise that global economy can only be seen as a wholly owned subsidiary of the global environment and specifically not vice versa.

Secondly and because of the first flaw, the analysts would inevitably be driven to defend absurd and discriminatory income-based assumptions for the valuation of the global costs and global benefits selected as relevant to the analysis of climate change. Mortality (human lives lost) due to climate changes for example, was valued crudely because of income differentials at fifteen dead Chinamen equaling one dead Englishman. It was obvious that this would create a diplomatic furore at the UN and it did.

Instead Meyer proposed that a global approach based on the Precautionary Principle was necessary to ascertaining the quantitative value of the objective of the UNFCCC. In other words, the ghg concentration stabilisation threshold in the global atmosphere "less than dangerous" had to be ascertained through a risk-averse process of primarily democratic political decision-taking where greater weight was given to number of people at risk than to the number of monetary units. This argument was not presented so much as an equity argument per se but as an argument for the 'equity-of-necessity' which recognised that a global policy success for dealing with global emissions restraint could only succeed based on full participation rather than making people expendable.

As a result of the success of this critique and the campaign that Meyer ran to promote his proposals, the neo-classical economists and their margin-focused methods were largely discredited and their numerical results were rejected in the IPCC Second Assessment Report. The environmental and social trade-offs contemplated in the economic analysis were exposed as deeply flawed and politically absurd exactly as Meyer had predicted. His campaign had a major influence on re-focussing the United Nations negotiations towards promoting real and equitable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions under global limits.

He proposed the creation of a Multilateral Environmental Agreement [MEA] for the management of global climate change which was presented to First Conference of the Parties (COP1) to the UNFCCC in March 1995 by the Indian Government as follows: -

"We face the actuality of scarce resources and the increasing potential for conflict. Protecting the world's environment requires that development be sustainable. It also implies the implementation of a programme for convergence at equitable and sustainable per values for the use of environmental space on a per capita basis globally. In our view equal rights to carbon usage is fundamental to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The social, financial and ecological inter-relationships of equity should guide the route to global ecological recovery."

At the time the proposals were not accepted and a three-year negotiating process which became known as the "Berlin Mandate" was created instead. This mandate specified that the restraint of greenhouse gas (ghg) emissions in the Industrial Countries only would be the interim objective of the UNFCCC negotiations. Inevitably, because of the sub-global formulation, the negotiations ran into the increasing political resistance to this mandate during this period. This was particularly evident in the USA formulation that said, *"global solutions are required for global problems"*. The Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC, which was the outcome of this mandate, is now entirely hostage to this unresolved quarrel. The US Senate have refused to ratify it.

During these three years Meyer consolidated his proposals for an MEA (or a global solution) into the detailed negotiating method for the international management of greenhouse gas reductions consistent with the objectives of the UNFCCC. This method has become a model now known as *"Contraction, Convergence, Allocation and Trade"*.

- First, countries would set an internationally agreed global ceiling on CO₂ concentrations in the atmosphere for the next century.
- Second, countries would agree a global "carbon emissions contraction budget" for each year of the next century in order to stabilise global CO₂ concentrations within the agreed ceiling. The ceiling and budget are held under review.
- Third, countries would agree to allocate the CO₂ budget amongst each other as the result of international per capita emissions paths converging by an agreed date.
- Fourth, to reduce global emissions at the least cost, the resultant allocation of emission entitlements would be tradeable amongst the parties to the arrangements.

The resulting process of “*contraction, convergence, allocation and trade*” would thus see those in the North where per capita emissions levels are typically high, 'leading' by cutting emissions in situ or paying a social-ecological market premium for their over-consumption to those in the South.

Meanwhile, Southern countries where per capita emissions levels are still typically low could be leading by immediately using revenues from the sale of their surplus emissions entitlements to engender post fossil-fuel dependent social and economic development.

Under such arrangements we would create a virtuous cycle of financing a sustainable playing field through the efficiency - not merely the equity - of leveling it at the same time. This is putting money to work for a global good that is otherwise unachievable.

Also during this period of 1995-98, Meyer commenced an international effort at the United Nations, in India, China, the US and in Africa to propagate “*Contraction and Convergence*” as the framework for reconciling the international community's shares in sustainable future fossil fuel consumption. He also generated publicity for the scheme in whatever broadcast and printed media were amenable to the message.

He also created striking graphic imagery in the form of advertising bill-board size multi-colour prints of fully internationally delineated past and suggested future allocations of CO₂ emissions entitlements under various regimes of “*Contraction and Convergence*”. These images were repeatedly exhibited at the UN in conjunction with technical presentations of the technique and the implications of, and the socio-economic justifications for, its use. Because of these increasingly successful efforts to convey and popularize the approach, the method has gained the attention and support of many organizations principal amongst which was: -

- Globe International, an international network of parliamentarians from over one hundred nations who have been promoting “*Contraction and Convergence*” as “*the global solution to the global problem,*” since early 1997.

and indeed of several United Nations member states such as:

- The Maldives Bangladesh and the Marshall Islands. Indeed the whole of the Association of Small Island States endorsed “*Contraction and Convergence*” to the European Parliament.
- In turn, the European Parliament has passed a resolution in support.
- The Africa Group of Nations, which has, through private briefings by Meyer, adopted “*Contraction and Convergence*” as its formal negotiating position to the UNFCCC.
- Government agencies in China and the United States, which have invited Meyer to give private briefings on the model as a result of GCI's efforts to instigate a settlement between them on greenhouse gas emissions.

- Dr. Song Jian, the Chinese State Councilor with responsibility for climate change, publicly endorsed "Contraction and Convergence" prior to the Kyoto climate negotiations in December 1997. Meyer's strategy has been part of the discussions between China and the United States during the recent President Clinton visit to China.
- Leading members of the American policy community now discuss "how" rather than "whether" to inculcate the strategy.
- The British Environment Minister the Right Honourable Michael Meacher MP, who has called for "Contraction and Convergence" to be part of the next UNFCCC all-nation review of commitments, with support from representatives of the Indian Government and the Africa Group of Nations.
- The Third World Network, the Climate Action Network, major Indian NGOs and Climate Network Africa, which all advocate "Contraction and Convergence."
- The European Union, which has introduced the language of "Contraction and Convergence" into its submissions to the UNFCCC negotiations.

In addition, there now has been considerable media coverage of Meyer's campaign, with TV and newspaper coverage in the United Kingdom and internationally. For instance interviews on BBC World TV, Channel 4 Television News, BBC World Service, BBC Radio Four, BBC Radio 5 Live, The Guardian, The Independent on Sunday. There have also been articles in a range of magazines such as "Nature", "The New Scientist", "The Parliamentary Monitor", "Town and Country Planning", "The Ecologist", "Corner House Briefings", "Down to Earth" with many more planned.

This remarkable campaign has been almost entirely due to Meyer's personal efforts. He has conceived the ideas, he has developed them, he has formulated the policy responses, and he has taken them to governments, agency bureaucracies, international bodies, NGOs, media and whoever else would listen to his persuasive message. He has gained access to dozens of ministers and other top-flight officials. He has accomplished all this from a small office in London with an annual budget average of less than £10,000.

For this work, Meyer has been awarded the 1997 British Environment Media's Andrew Lees Memorial Award, with following citation:

"Aubrey Meyer, almost single-handedly and with minimal resources, has made an extraordinary impact on the negotiations on the Climate Change Treaty, one of the most important of our time, through his campaign for a goal of equal per capita emissions, which is now the official negotiating position of many governments, and is gaining acceptance in developed and developing countries alike."

Personal and Political Trials

The material difficulties of keeping himself, let alone his campaign, going for nearly ten years have caused numerous problems for Meyer. When he abandoned his music career, he likewise abandoned his personal income (he even had to sell his viola to buy the computer with which he began his campaign).

It was more than difficult to attract funding for what has been a largely one-man effort. Meyer's ideas, in the face of complexity, were originally perceived to be "radical", and brought opprobrium rather than support for Meyer.

In addition, there have been many conflicts with with a range of actors. The neo-classical economists have preferred to avoid Meyer's structural critique, while other environmentalists have generally preferred the politics of confrontation. These actors have not always welcomed GCI's strategic formulations for global reconciliation on the global warming issue.

In more positive terms, Meyer has found that, operating as an individual, and directing a small independent organisation, has produced the tactical advantage of being rapidly manouverable. Best of all, Meyer now enjoys the reward of growing acceptance, success, and a convincing record of political progress.

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