

## Critique of “How Green is the ‘Green New Deal’?” by Don Fitz

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Fitz’s paper is a welcome critique of Green Capitalism with its delusionary promise that business as usual market-driven economic growth has the capacity to deliver a truly sustainable future for humanity. But in the end he fails to recognize both the immense opportunity, indeed the imperative, of supporting a Global Green New Deal (GGND) for any hope of avoiding catastrophic climate change (C3) and ending energy poverty for the majority of humanity living in the global South. And Fitz fails to recognize the necessity of engaging in multi-dimensional class struggle to shape the content of a GGND as a path opening to ecosocialist transition.

Fitz writes “An increasingly popular answer is the “Green New Deal” (GND): create “green jobs” in order to jump start the economy. But the GND **might not provide** long term employment and **could cause** major environmental harm.” [**bold added**]

“Might not, could”, but these are contingencies that must be the nexus of class struggle, not simply possibilities to consider. I wrote “only multidimensional and local-to-transnational class struggle within capitalism (see Abramsky’s illuminating volume 2010) can terminate this system, which unfortunately will not die a natural death on its own accord. It will have to be put to sleep forever. A critical role of the ecosocialist Left is to identify the strategic class sectors - those existing and those in formation - that will be the gravediggers of capitalism. Additionally, the ecosocialist Left must also, of course, participate in the creation of a collective vision and its realization as embryos within capitalism of the new global civilization ending the rule of capital.” (p. 55, Schwartzman, 2011).

Fitz briefly discusses my paper on the GND, and claims “Absent from Schwartzman’s analysis is mention of the huge mobilisations against extraction industries, including mining across the globe and anti-oil and anti-coal efforts in the US. Since his article was published, anti-fracking conflicts have mushroomed. His advocacy of a blue-green alliance is on target, but, why not bring anti-fossil fuel activists and labour together with a program for a much shorter workweek, much more leisure time and democratic control of production?” Note however that I cite Abramsky (2010), a book focused on the mobilisations against the extraction industries Fitz mentions. In the same paper I say “We now witness or can soon anticipate ongoing struggles for social governance of production and consumption on all scales from neighborhood to global. Areas of struggle in this fight should include nationalization of the energy, rail, and telecommunications industries; municipalization of electric and water supplies; the creation and maintenance of decentralized solar power, food, energy and farming cooperatives; the encouragement of worker-owned factories (solidarity economy), the replacement of industrial and GMO agriculture with agroecologies; the creation of green cities; and of course organizing

the unorganized in all sectors, especially GND workers. All of these objectives should be part of the ecosocialist agenda for struggles around a GND, which of course, must include the termination of the MIC [Military Industrial Complex].” (p.55-56). Thus, I applaud Fitz’s “call for ending US hyper-militarism with endless wars and hundreds of military bases around the world could subtract as much as \$1 trillion from the US economy.”

However, I have major disagreements with Fitz’s arguments concerning the energy needs for humanity, economic growth and the issue of large scale creation of wind and solar energy infrastructure to replace our present unsustainable supplies. He calls for reductions in “total energy usage (not merely fossil fuel); and, total industrial production.”

Fitz’s opposition to economic growth entailed in a GGND is unwelcome because it fails to analyze the quality of such growth, i.e., what needs grow and what needs to degrow. The concept of economic growth should of course be deconstructed, particularly with respect to ecological and health impacts. Growth of what are we speaking, weapons of mass destruction, unnecessary commodities, SUVs versus bicycles, culture, information, pollution, pornography, or simply more hot air? Instead, advocates of global degrowth with their goal of reaching a zero growth economy, commonly lump all growth into a homogenous outcome of the physical and political economy (Schwartzman, 2009, 2012). Further, “While zero growth ... is ultimately plausible in a global communist civilization, it is an unwelcome prescription for the immediate challenges posed by the threat of C3 as well the undeniable lack of material consumption enjoyed by the majority of humanity living in the global South, the lack of adequate nutrition, housing, education and provision for health services, but most critically, their state of energy poverty... if robust solarization and the reduction of carbon emissions to the atmosphere begin in the coming decade humanity will have a fighting chance to implement an effective prevention program to avoid C3. And this transition will necessarily require an increase in the material production and consumption of energy supplied by the global construction of a wind/solar power infrastructure, with many countries in the global North such as the US decreasing their wasteful consumption, while most of humanity, living in the global South receiving a significant increase, reaching the rough minimum of 3.5 kilowatt/person. Note that reaching this minimum is necessary but not sufficient for acquiring the highest life expectancy, as several petroleum-exporting countries in the Mid-East as well as Russia now fall well below that goal. Life expectancy for the United States is likewise below most industrial countries of the global North. Income inequality is robustly correlated with bad health and must be reduced to achieve the world standard life expectancy and quality of life. Supplying the minimum 3.5 kilowatt/person for the present world population of 7 billion people requires a delivery equivalent to 25 TW, with the present delivery equal to 18 TW.” (p.237–238, Schwartzman, 2014)

Finally, while Jacobson and Delucchi may indeed be guilty of being naïve regarding the capacity of the capitalist market to power a robust renewable energy transition, Fitz’s support of Ted Trainer’s critique of their technical case is very problematic. I urge readers to examine the debate for themselves in the primary literature (see Trainer, 2012), Delucchi and Jacobson, 2011a, 2011b; Jacobson and Delucchi, 2011, 2013; Trainer, 2012, 2013). Our own research and that of Greenpeace strongly supports the technical feasibility of a rapid and robust renewable energy

transition as argued by Jacobson and Delucchi (Schwartzman and Schwartzman, 2011, 2013; Greenpeace (2014)). The obstacle is not technical, nor ecological, but rather lies in the political economy of real existing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Capitalism, with MIC at the core of capital reproduction. Hence, the need for ecosocialist strategy confronting the creation of a GGND.

As Fitz correctly notes, simply building renewable energy capacity is not sufficient to prevent dangerous climate change, as global carbon emissions continue to climb. I wrote “The avoidance of C3 requires an end to coal and fossil fuel addiction, giving up the nuclear option, and a rapid conversion to a high-efficiency solar energy infrastructure.” “Given the Jevons paradox, ... we will also need to implement a strong regulatory regime for curbing carbon emissions in order to avoid just expanding renewables as a supplement to the continued reliance on fossil fuels. At the same time, a broad global alliance of the working class and oppressed people including blue green labor, women’s movements, marginalized workers, indigenous people, and yes, even factions of capital investing in solar, can potentially create the power to challenge the privileged position of MIC capital and begin the process of global demilitarization, putting the MIC dinosaur in the Museum of Prehistory where he belongs, to be followed soon by his parent, Global Capitalism.” (p.53 and 54, Schwartzman, 2011).

I would add that the highest carbon footprint fossil fuels must be phased out rapidly, namely coal, tar sands and natural gas, whether it be fracked or conventional (Howarth, 2014), with conventional liquid petroleum being the prime energy source for a full wind/solar transition completely ending anthropogenic carbon emissions to the atmosphere. Keeping all this oil in the ground will prevent such a energy transition as well as the possibility of terminating energy poverty in the global South and will likely bring on C3 because only a wind/solar power infrastructure has sufficient capacity of drawing down atmospheric carbon dioxide levels to below the safe limit of 350 ppm. We estimate that no more than 30% of conventional oil reserves will be required, and this fraction is likely to be reduced as more efficient wind/solar technologies are developed in the near future (Schwartzman and Schwartzman, 2013). And of course, it is imperative to strengthen the regime for environmental, ecological and health protection for workers and communities, particularly for the industries supplying the new renewable energy technologies, as well as implement social management of their siting, construction and operation, particularly by the communities most directly affected.

For more on this subject I urge readers to check out the just published booklet of the Climate Committee of CCDS, “Change the System, not the Climate”, available at <http://ouleft.org/wp-content/uploads/Climate-final-1.pdf>.

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