

Correcting our climate crisis

Strategy Notes 14-26

6 August - 29 October 2019

20 February 2020

Dear reader,

Early each Tuesday I send an emailed Strategy Note to selected activists, organizers, leaders, and others. This booklet collects 13 of those Strategy Notes on correcting our climate crisis. Some of the Strategy Notes in this booklet have had small changes from their original email versions.

To see additional Strategy Notes or to subscribe to receive them by email, please go to my website <<http://organizenorthcarolina.org>> and click on the Subscribe button. There you'll find a Mailchimp form for subscribing and a link to see previous Strategy Notes.

Please give me your thoughts on these Strategy Notes. You'll find my contact info below.

Please share this pamphlet with a friend.

Toward the world we all deserve,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russell", written in a cursive style.

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What must we in the United States do to correct the climate crisis? An outline.

The next several Strategy Notes offer details on the following summary.

Climate experts estimate that we must keep our planet from warming more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. To do that, we must stop emitting greenhouse gases by about 2030.

"Embedded in the goal of limiting warming to 1.5°C is the opportunity for intentional societal transformation The form and process of transformation are varied and multifaceted"

-- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change <<https://www.ipcc.ch>>, Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C, section 1.4.3

To correct the climate crisis must we replace capitalism? In the long term, yes. We must do that by replacing exchange and property.

In the short term, we do not have to *replace* capitalism but we must severely *regulate* it to stop emitting greenhouse gases. *Regulating* capitalism sufficiently requires organizing almost as much power as *replacing* capitalism will, but does not require the full ideological and practical shifts needed for the long-term solution.

We must work simultaneously on the short-term (regulation) and the long-term (replacement) projects.

These efforts require a massive scale and a broad alliance. We must work with people with whom we agree about the climate even while disagreeing about other issues.

For correcting the climate crisis, how should we think about short-term and long-term work?

To correct the climate crisis, we must stop greenhouse gas emissions by about 2030.

This date does not mean we work on short-term goals until 2030 and on long-term goals starting in 2030. We must work on both simultaneously.

We who share the long-term goals outlined in these Strategy Notes have the interesting task of working with many people who do not yet share our long-term goals. Some of them vigorously oppose our long-term goals. Nevertheless, we must find ways to work together to win the short-term goals.

Without victory on the short-term goals, our species may not have a good long-term future. The short-term goals gain us the time needed to win our long-term goals.

Even when our short-term allies denounce our long-term goals, we must continue to work with them respectfully. We sometimes should debate long-term goals, but we must do it in ways that let us work together for our shared short-term goals.

We must build friendships with short-term allies with whom we disagree on long-term goals. We must make those friendships real. We must actually learn to like them. We must win their trust and friendship. Nothing less will sustain the necessary alliance.

To correct the climate crisis, what must we do in the short term?

To reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) on the scale needed by 2030 requires action by large governments (especially the United States government) and by large businesses.

We must win regulations to:

- Reduce GHG emissions and end them by 2030.
- Protect workers and communities currently dependent on GHG industries from economic harm.
- Protect the poorest 40% of our people from paying the cost of the transition.
- Spread the cost progressively among the top 60% of the population.

In the United States, we have two legislative proposals that could accomplish these goals:

- Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL, <<https://citizensclimatelobby.org>>) advocates for a steadily increasing carbon fee and dividend (CF&D) to make GHG emissions unfeasible economically and protect the poorer 60-75% of our people from carrying the cost of the transition. CCL's bill (HR763, the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act <<https://energyinnovationact.org>>) has 59 co-sponsors as of 13 August 2019.
- The Green New Deal (GND) has earned more public attention than CCL's bill, but as of 13 August 2019 exists only as a non-binding resolution <<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/109/text>> saying Congress should do a large list of excellent things. To actually do those things requires drafting, introducing, and passing legislation.

We must also make the long-term change to replace capitalism

In addition to the short-term changes, we must also replace capitalism with an economy that has the possibility of long-term sustainability.

We must replace capitalism for at least three reasons:

- Capitalist competition pressures businesses to make money faster than other businesses. If they don't, investors will invest where they make money faster. This relentless pressure for growth and for growth in profitability makes capitalist economies unsustainable in the long run.
- The pressure to deliver increasing profits creates pressure to cut costs. This pressure can result in social benefits when businesses cut costs by innovating usefully, such as by producing products while using less energy. However, businesses find it easier to cut costs by shifting ("externalizing") their costs onto others. Dumping wastes into the environment externalizes that cost. Capitalism encourages pollution.
- With representative governments, people could regulate capitalism to reduce its harm and harness its benefits. Such regulations, however, can reduce profitability. So capitalists must gain control of governments to protect their profits. Capitalism opposes democracy.

These pressures (for growth, for pollution, against democracy) make capitalism unsustainable. In the long term we must not just regulate capitalism but must replace it with a better economy.

Do the emotional work about the climate necessary to think clearly

Noticing the degradation of our environment stirs up many difficult feelings: fear, anger, grief, loss, shame, numbness, etc.

These feelings can distract and confuse us. They can make it difficult to think clearly. They can cause timidity, rashness, self-righteousness, depression, assuming that officials will take care of the problem for us, and other non-helpful behaviors.

We need to think clearly and to act well. So we must acknowledge that we have these feelings and let ourselves feel and express them. Doing so lets our minds heal from the hurts of living in such a messed-up world. That healing helps us think and act more effectively.

However, we must not express these negative feelings unthinkingly. Doing so could add to the confusions (and possibly even the hurts) of others.

We can solve this dilemma by pairing up with each other and taking turns listening as we feel and express our feelings. The active listening skills that form such an important element of training for nonviolent people-power actions work very well for this paired healing work. Organizations working on correcting climate change will benefit from including such paired listening time in their regular activity.

How can we overcome fossil fuel wealth to win our short-term goals?

We must end the fossil fuel industry. Most of its wealthiest owners will oppose us. How can we develop sufficient power to overcome them?

Use officially approved methods ("inside game") to persuade government:

- Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL, <citizensclimatelobby.org>) excels at this. Join and support them.
- Make it shameful for any politician to accept contributions from the fossil fuel industry.

Use methods not officially approved ("outside game") to pressure government and businesses to act:

- Use nonviolent people-power action to prevent "business as usual" for greenhouse gas (GHG) polluters (especially fossil fuel producers) and politicians who defend them.
- Support Sunrise Movement <www.sunrisemovement.org>.
- Support Extinction Rebellion <<https://extinctionrebellion.us>>.
- Build nonviolent action training and affinity group networks.

Back reforms that improve democracy:

- End personhood of corporations.
- Get money out of elections.
- Require non-partisan redistricting.

To win our legislation, make climate a bridge issue, not a partisan issue

To pass legislation in the United States soon enough to meet our 2030 goal will require determined, realistic political work.

We have to win support from both Democratic and Republican members of Congress. We likely will need bipartisan support to overcome a presidential veto and to maintain the bill in future Congresses.

This means we must make protecting our climate a bridge issue, not a partisan issue.

We must strictly avoid letting any party claim this issue or blaming any party for inaction on this issue. Both of the two main parties have members of Congress who agree with us and members who oppose us. We must support or oppose them based on their actions on the issue, not on their party. We must seek, welcome, and praise helpful actions from all members of Congress. We must build support for the climate in all political parties.

We also must understand that some members of Congress (from both major parties) will speak as if they support our goals while working to dilute, delay, or defeat our bills. We should not pretend that such behavior qualifies as support.

Directly pressure businesses

Make visible the split in businesses over climate. Don't let polluters (such as the fossil fuel industry) claim to speak for business. Insurance companies, for example, seem like potential allies on our short-term goals.

We should consider at least the following methods to influence businesses:

- Shareholder advocacy.
- If shareholders cannot get a business to become climate-friendly, they should divest from it -- especially from fossil fuel businesses and other greenhouse gas emitters.
- Look at Rocky Mountain Institute <<https://rmi.org>> for promoting efficient energy use, especially by business. People who think markets necessary or desirable should find RMI's approach attractive.
- Selective consumer boycotts. Most of us still have to buy fossil fuels, but at least for gasoline we can select which companies to buy from. Select one to boycott (including picketing its outlets) until it meets our demands (for example, stop funding climate deniers, stop leaking/flaring methane, endorse Citizens' Climate Lobby's bill <<https://energyinnovationact.org>>). When a boycotted company complies, start buying from it and boycott another company. Make them compete on climate-friendliness.
- Build local organizations to pressure businesses in useful directions. For a good example, see the work of Earth Quaker Action Team <<https://www.eqat.org>> in southeastern Pennsylvania.

Strengthen the organizations pushing these solutions

Support Citizens' Climate Lobby <<https://citizensclimatelobby.org>>:

- Help implement their program.
- Encourage more people of color in membership and leadership.
- Support CCL's policy of speaking well of allies and potential allies such as Sunrise and those of us working on the long-term solution.

Support organizations advocating for a Green New Deal (GND) including Sunrise Movement <<https://www.sunrisemovement.org>>:

- Sunrise defines itself as for youth. Support its youth leadership.
- Build non-youth organizations for GND.
- Build labor union support for GND.
- Train for nonviolent people-power action.
- Encourage a policy of speaking well of allies such as CCL.

As Extinction Rebellion (XR, <<https://extinctionrebellion.us>>) develops a presence in the United States, support it.

In all these groups, have one-to-one chats to raise our long-term goal as an additional step needed (*additional*, not replacing their focus).

Within groups working for the long-term solution we should:

- Develop a practice of not speaking ill of people and organizations working for the short-term goals even when they oppose our long-term goals. They win the time we need for the long-term solution.
- Model the democratic, feminist, anti-racist, non-exchange relations we need for the long-term solution.

Engage China (and the world) respectfully and cooperatively

The United States has emitted far more greenhouse gases per person than any other country. We must take more responsibility than other countries for correcting our planet's climate crisis.

Until the US cleans up our act, we cannot effectively call others to act. Yet humanity needs action widely.

When the US stops releasing greenhouse gases, that change will make an enormous contribution but will not by itself solve the problem. This problem requires engaging most of the world's people.

Every country currently releases greenhouse gases. Our climate crisis affects everybody. All people and countries have an interest in correcting it.

Because the current US government hinders climate progress, we must engage directly with our peers in other countries, especially China. We must approach those engagements with complete respect, a bit of humility, and a spirit of cooperation.

The people and government of the People's Republic of China will play a particularly important part in the world's climate struggle. Because of the size of their population, their position as the center of manufacturing, and their growing international influence, the choices they make matter more than most. The world will benefit immensely if they offer good leadership on the climate crisis.

When we replace capitalism, what might our long-term solution look like?

Strategy Note 17 explained why we must replace capitalism.

The new society likely will have the following characteristics:

- It will keep changing. Human societies always change.
- It won't require perpetual growth.
- We will free ourselves from property relationships and exchange relationships. Without this freedom, capitalism could re-emerge.
- We will each do the work we want to do. We will make the fruits of our work freely available. We will help ourselves to the goods and services produced by others.
- We will communicate widely and frequently to match supplies with needs (first priority) and desires (second priority) and to recruit for multi-person tasks.
- For necessary work that too few people want to do, we will take turns. This may cause inefficiency compared to the old system. If I collect trash for one shift annually I won't get as good at it as people who currently do five shifts per week. I prefer that inefficiency to forcing people to do unpleasant or dangerous work.
- We will have more resources because several costly industries will vanish. They include the military, most police functions, most prisons, spy agencies, advertising, banking, real estate, and insurance.

How might we win the long-term changes?

It could happen that everybody wakes up one morning determined to not cooperate with property relationships or exchange relationships and instead to live on the basis of sharing and solidarity. That *could* happen. We should not assume it *will* happen just because the long-term livability of our planet would benefit.

Instead, we must carefully prepare our society's culture to encourage that determination.

We know smart, persistent work can make major changes in human cultures. Consider the changes in our country in the last 100 years on women's rights, race, and LGBTQ rights. These changes did not happen automatically. People worked diligently to create them. People still work to move them forward.

Some early steps in preparing our culture for the needed changes in our economic relationships might include:

- Celebrate existing non-exchange relationships.
- Build organizations to spread the understanding that we need (and have the opportunity for) a free, non-exchange economy.
- Build movement infrastructure, especially training teams to spread the necessary skills.
- Build cooperatives, labor unions, and neighborhood organizations that give people experience cooperatively managing economic relations.
- Build strong, active networks of nonviolent action affinity groups. These can grow from pushing for short-term climate goals.

Can we make these changes? Do we have a chance?

Yes, we have a chance.

No law of nature or of logic prevents any of these goals.

We have the possibility of achieving all of these goals.

We have no certainty of success. We have no certainty of failure.

The future --our future-- remains completely undetermined.

The goals outlined here will require some work to accomplish. The choices we make and the actions we take (together with the choices and actions of everyone else) will create the society in which we live.

We have choices to make. We have work to do. Let's get it done.