

JANUARY 2016

***We'll Always have Paris?* Not the Same Old Same-Old**



COP21: Reactions to the Paris Climate Change Conference resemble a Rorschach ink-blot test, demonstrating more about the respondents than about the conference itself. Assessments have ranged from “monumental triumph” to “charade” and “worthless fraud” depending on who’s done the assessing [respectively [Ban Ki-Moon](#), [Chris Hedges](#) (along with a host of others) and [James Hansen](#)]. Neither the final communique nor world reaction held any true surprises.

By any reckoning, the delegates achieved everything we could have asked of them. That’s the good news. That’s also the bad news, because everything that diplomacy can accomplish is now finished. Whether or not the annual “COP” process continues slogging on (Paris marked its 21st year), its potential has been exhausted.

This is not to disparage what actually did come out of Paris. First, as with the Pope’s landmark encyclical *Laudato Si*, the world leaders spent their considerable prestige to weigh in on the urgency of climate action. Except in the United States (mocked in [The Economist](#) as an out-of-control infant in a roomful of adults [*See Pg. 2*]), no one with any claim to leadership now denies that human civilization sits in the path of a catastrophe of our own making.

New Year’s Resolutions

The deepening climate crisis won’t be “solved” by technological breakthroughs or some magic of the marketplace. But, although our institutions are struggling, we can live as fully human at our time in history. Here are some suggestions:

1. Start conversations

Merely to begin to cope with the climate crisis, Americans need to “get real” in our public discourse. Here fractivists have a head start, because we’ve already been facing up to the “unthinkable” for several years. So offer your experience and insights to people who are just now awakening to what’s coming toward us. Whether or not they accept what you’re telling them, you’ll help by simply breaking the silence.

So the conversation has been changed. Now we can talk about “how” and “who,” without first wasting breath over “whether or not” (even, optimistically, over “when”).

Second, Paris has written numbers on the wall. True enough that we don’t know how to achieve them. Those specific numbers might be already out of reach, given the long “tail” of past and present emissions; and that’s a terrifying prospect. Yet the numbers now have a reality that had previously been the provenance of “climate geeks” alone (such as Hansen and Bill McKibben).

Third, Paris adopted an implicit but fundamental understanding on how to allocate climate responsibility among the nations. The ratification process for the Paris [agreement](#) specifies that each nation’s vote is proportional to its emissions—a ranking by both influence

2. Cultivate generosity

Would-be presidents and demagogues are stoking our fears and summoning up our most selfish impulses. One antidote to this induced panic is more sharing—of time, money and common courtesies. Look for opportunities to give something away. You’ll be aiding the emotional climate, as well as loosening the grip of “things” on your own heart.

3. Find your community

There are hundreds of municipalities in our region, with varied responses to fracking. If your own neighborhood isn’t yet feeling fracking’s impact, “adopt” one which is. Read their news, go to their public meetings, meet people who are in the thick of the action, and join with them. They need you, and you’ll feel better.

and accountability in one stroke.

Finally, for both good and bad, the Paris agreement has left the physical pursuit of climate goals in the hands of the various national governments. It couldn’t have been any other way, really. But it means, for example, that if the U.S. — trapped by our own ideology— can’t find a way to move forward, some different culture, working with a different mindset, can make its own path without us holding them back. Those other cultures can now also claim the moral authority to stand up to the climate-destructive behaviors of multinationals and militaries, and of their sponsors in the U.S. Government.

The rest of the world is now poised to step away from U.S. neoliberals, if necessary. In principle, at first; but, if it comes to that, in practice.

Potentially, then, Paris really does “Change Everything.”

Marcellus Protest is a project of the Thomas Merton Center (Pittsburgh, PA): www.thomasmertoncenter.org

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The “Smart Money”: Energy Financing in the Time of Climate Crisis

NEW YORK: Wall Street is the betting window for the blood sport of corporate competition. No matter which company (or its workforce) lives or dies, someone stands to profit from the outcome.

The role of financial pundits, as touts for the casino of capitalism, is to draw more bettors to this game; so they can

always offer some rationale for either side of any proposition: Go “long.” Go “short.” Get “in.” Get “out.” “Double-down.”

Still, their rhetoric can be illuminating. One can see how the “buzz” has shifted and how the odds are fluctuating from week to week and from year to year. And, occasionally, what happens in the financial markets can have real-world consequences.

In context of the Paris climate talks, both before and after the conference, the odds have been running strong against fossil energy companies, and especially against frackers. While the “smart money” flows out, the touts are looking for contrarians to cover the action.

So we’ve been seeing creative [headlines](#) like these:

- “Chesapeake Energy: Why investors should not lose hope”
- “Default is not a foregone conclusion for Chesapeake Energy”

The story behind the headlines is this: Chesapeake, whose free-spending former CEO (Aubrey McClendon) was the industry’s attack dog against fractivists, is trying desperately to restructure its massive debt before the notes become due. Last month, it offered up a new batch of IOUs with higher interest and longer paybacks, hoping to raise from Peter what it needs to pay Paul. But lenders rolled their eyes at Chesapeake’s deal, and the company’s credit rating is dropping like a stone.

Other local frackers aren’t faring much better with the analysts:

- “Time to buy battered Consol Energy?”
- “EQT Corp hits 52-week low: Is the stock still worth holding?”
- “Range Resources: Asset sales, hedges buy time”

Meanwhile, here “on the ground,” where we face the real-world results of fracking, Consol and Range Resources are throttling-back on their activity (at the airport

and Deer Lakes Park), while EQT is going for broke in Elizabeth and Forward Townships.

Next door, in Jefferson Hills Township, EQT was denied a “conditional use” zoning decision for drilling, but is still considering a “land development plan” which is said to include a new processing plant. EQT also promoted its top “exploration and development” executive as the new company president, and is pouring cash into its Utica Shale acreage, despite low gas prices.

The [Paris] conference isn't the game —it's the scoreboard.

Bill McKibben (in [Foreign Policy](#))



From [The Economist](#), an international viewpoint on the U.S. role at the 2015 Climate Conference. [See story on Pg. 1]

A Range of Resources

Please check out our ‘Resources’ page at www.marcellusprotest.org/resources, and follow us on Facebook (at [Marcellus Protest](#)) and Twitter ([@Marcellus_SWPA](#)). Here is a sample from our recent recommendations:

[GasWork: The Fight for CJ’s Law](#). Josh Fox’s documentary on the effects of fracking on those working in the gas industry. As usual, Josh’s work stirs controversy and orchestrated backlash from fracking’s advocates.

[While Glaciers Slept](#). An intensely personal book from a writer for *National Geographic*, exploring her experience of grief: from the “expected” loss of beloved family members to the “unexpected” impending loss of her beloved planet.

Upcoming Events in January:

Sat., Jan. 9 (10:00am): “Farms Over Fracking.” Harrisburg, Penna. Farm Show Complex. Sponsored by Pennsylvanians Against Fracking, and by Food & Water Watch. Join farmers from across Pennsylvania to deliver an anti-fracking message to Gov. Tom Wolf when he addresses the Farm Show. Details and directions on the [Food & Water Watch website](#).

Wed., Jan. 13 (7:00-8:30pm): “After Paris: Now the Real Work Begins.” One Smithfield St., Downtown Pittsburgh. Sponsored by Pittsburgh350. Report on the Paris meetings and discussion of planning for local and national campaigns to ensure effective action by elected officials. Details at [Sierra Club website](#).

Updated information on these topics (with links to original sources), along with our calendar of upcoming events, and other resources, can be found at www.marcellusprotest.org.