

## **"Contraction & Convergence"**

### **AMEN to Climate Change**

For the last twelve years scientific reports have demonstrated that human pollution has begun to change global climate. Carbon emissions from fossil fuel burning are accumulating in the atmosphere and trapping more of the sun's heat. As the climate becomes less stable what the insurance industry calls 'Great Weather Disasters' are causing more damages through floods, storms, droughts and crop failures. Coastal areas are being lost and small islands are disappearing in the rising seas.

Twelve years I interrupted a musical career to co-found the tiny organisation GCI (Global Commons Institute) based in London to undertake a mission to avert these devastating trends. By 1992 the UN Climate Convention had been created on principles GCI - and others - believed were fundamental: - precaution and equity.

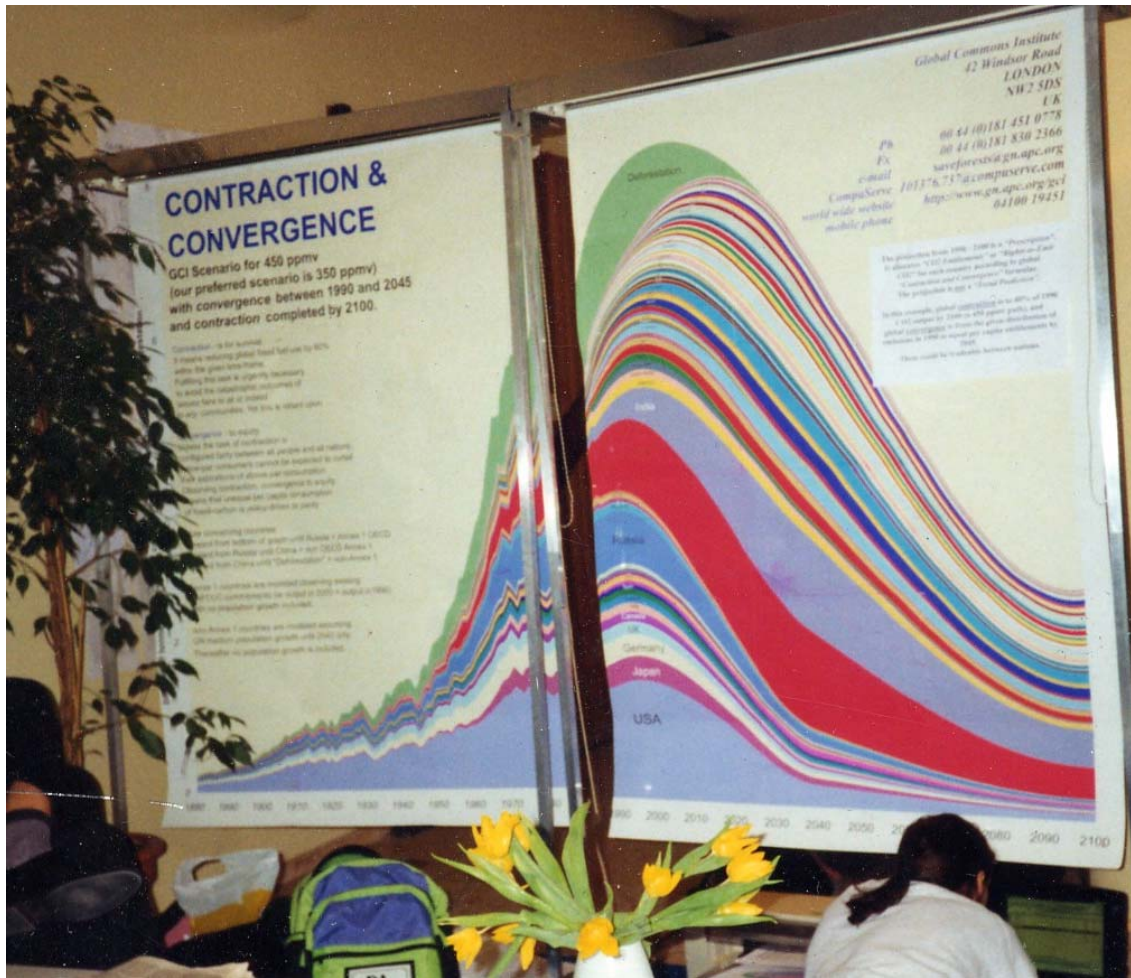
For the next three years GCI struggled against mainstream economists at the UN whose cost/benefit analysis of prospects under climate change tried to subdue these principles in favour of profits and pollution - on slippery slopes called 'no-regrets' and 'efficiency'.

Many people will die because of climate disasters and we sank the cost/benefit exercise not least by exposing its daft global dictum that fifteen dead poor people equalled one dead rich person.

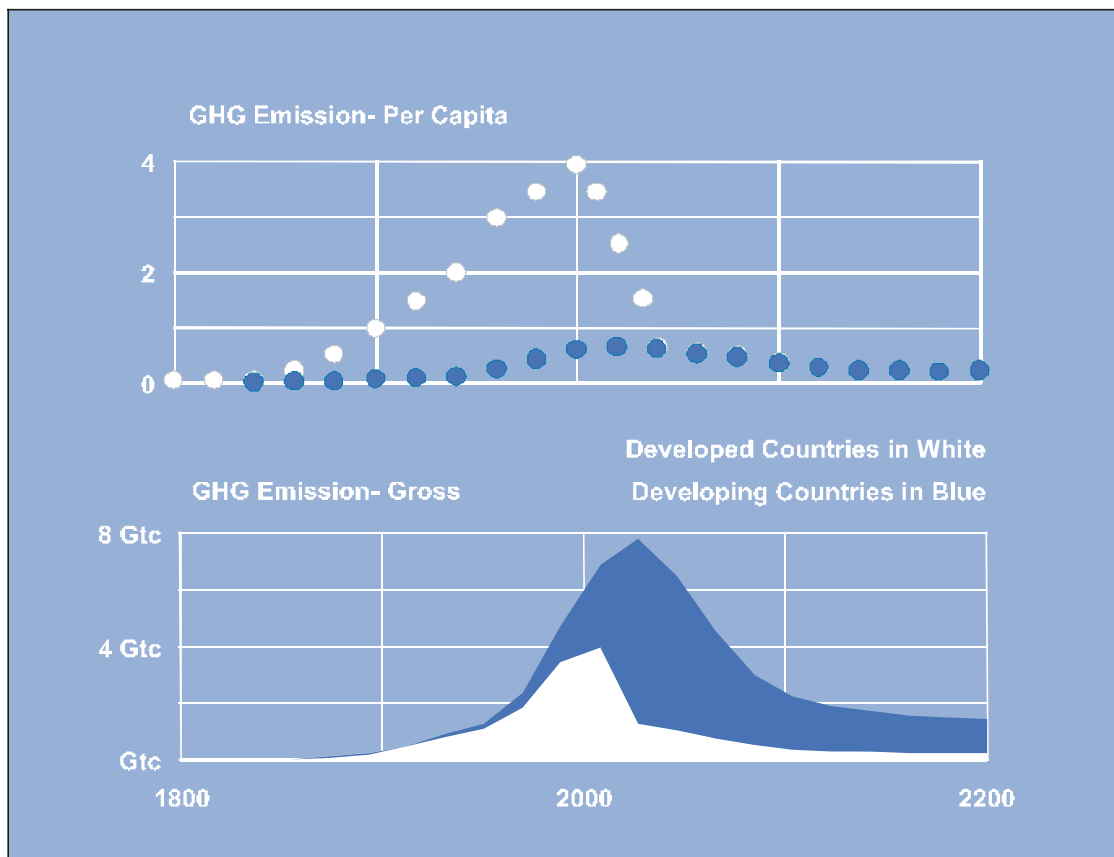
Planetary Connections - the predecessor of 'Positive News' - published a cartoon to celebrate this saying, "*Triumph for GCI - climate economists told to try again.*"

We didn't give up. We kept on with our main climate mission, which was to synthesize the principles of precaution and equity into a fully international framework for policies and practices to avert the devastating climate trends.



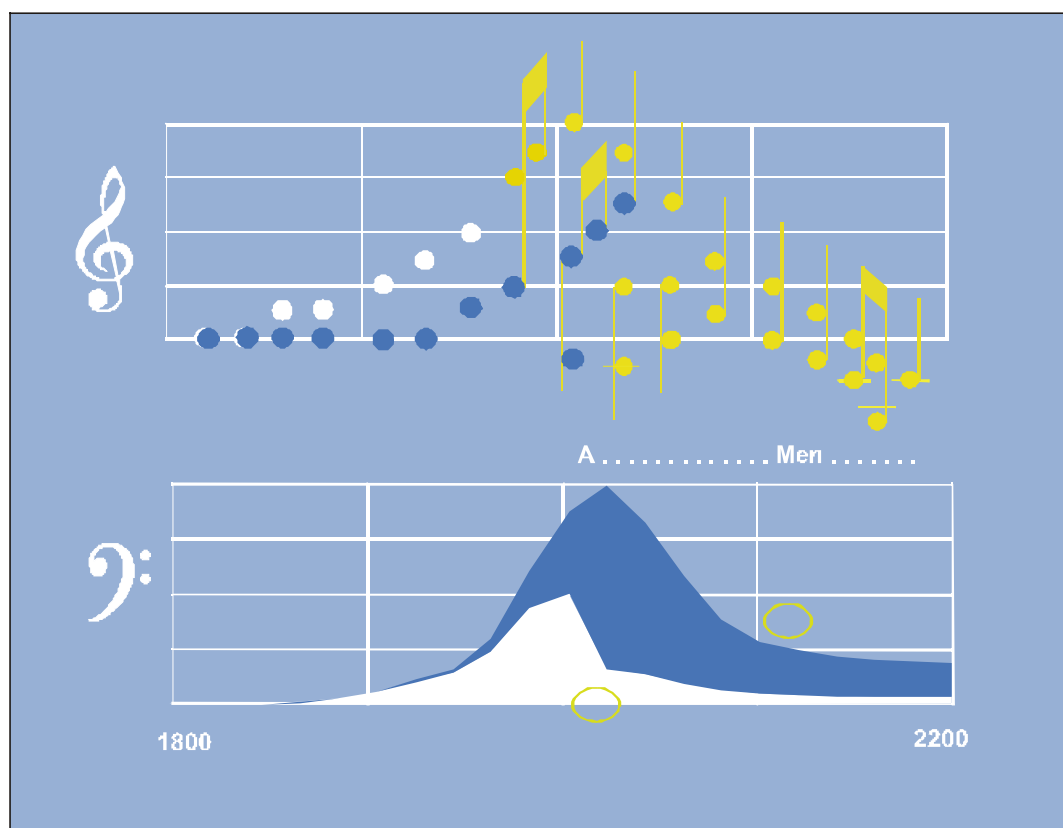


In June 1996 GCI launched the first images of this synthesis at the UN. The programme was called “*Contraction and Convergence*” (C&C).



In a nutshell C&C simply shows the fossil fuel consumption or emissions for all countries into the future. As the very much-simplified graphic above shows the global total of emissions is shrinking - *contraction* - by an amount that stops the rise of their atmospheric concentration. At the same time the international sharing of this goes from the present distribution that is proportional to income to a future distribution that has become proportional to population - *convergence* - after an agreed date.

This has the virtues of equity, logic and simplicity. This value of this in a negotiation that has been marred by intense inequity and discord is immense. C&C is like a perfect cadence in music. While the notation of C&C is little more elaborate. In principle it is as simple as singing Amen.



As the dangers of climate change become ever more apparent, the insurance industry has revealed that the rate at which damages are occurring is considerably faster than the rate of growth in the economy. Consequently, governments and policy makers begin to accept C&C as the sensible way ahead in the negotiations. It provides a simple way of synthesizing precaution and equity into a science-guided political agreement. Once the tradability of the international shares that are created by C&C is added, an economics of avoiding climate damages becomes possible guided a shared sense of what is safe and how the asymmetric conditions that are changing the climate can be resolved.

C&C is now attracting numerous supporters from all over the world from individuals and institutions both eminent and ordinary. The government here are poised to accept the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution to champion C&C at the UN. This would sit nicely with the rest of the European Union who have expressed varying degrees of enthusiasm for the concept. The UK Environment Minister Michael Meacher: -  
*"C&C is a very powerful idea and we are moving remorselessly towards it."*

All this reflects the growing realisation that the "*Contraction and Convergence*" process is intrinsic to any emissions scenario that stabilises the rising concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

The only questions are will this come about by chance or by formally building it into an international framework. GCI believes that to start as soon as possible with this contraction of ghg emissions and the logical consequence of international convergence is prudent behaviour.

In reality it is as simple as saying, "*Amen to climate change.*" And as someone never said, "*all life aspires to the condition of music.*"

