

Comic book sensibility

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RODGER A PAYNE, MAR 12 2010

Just over a year ago, Obama's climate negotiator Todd Stern gave an important speech at a U.S. Climate Action Symposium. He'd been on the job for fewer than three weeks, but he nonetheless offered 10 fairly detailed principles that he said would underpin U.S. participation in the Copenhagen process.

This blog has previously discussed some of those principles, but I want now to draw attention to the last (10th) point Stern offered as his conclusion:

the countries of the world need to recognize the threat, pull our oars in the same direction, and do whatever it takes to succeed. Tired orthodoxies and endless reruns of north/south debates are not going to get us anywhere. We need a little less preaching about who is to blame and a little more of that old comic book sensibility of uniting in the face of a common danger threatening the earth. Because that's what we have here. It's not a meteor or a space invader, but the damage to our planet, to our community, to our children and their children will be just as great. There is no time to lose, so let us resolve to work together, guided by science, doing the math, appreciating the art of the possible, and at all times using our common sense for the common good.

Stern likewise could have referenced the *Three Musketeer's* motto ("One for all and all for one") or a contemporary film like *Independence Day*.

Despite the sense of impending doom implied by Stern's point, I cannot say that I've picked up any urgency in U.S. policy in the weeks and now months since Copenhagen ended. Sure, health care reform is dominating the agenda, but shouldn't there be some time for a problem described as a threat to the entire planet?

Incidentally, more than 100 states have now endorsed the Copenhagen accord — including China and India. Surely that agreement is not all that Stern and Obama had in mind when they talked about climate change in 2009.

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