

Timeline

Email Edition

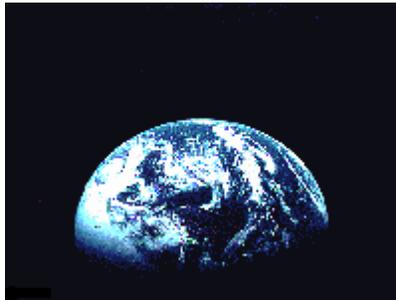
March/April 2000 - No. 50

A Publication of the Foundation for Global Community

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Earth Day 2000: “End Global Warming”

by Denis Hayes

Denis Hayes is international chairman of Earth Day 2000. He is president and CEO of the Seattle-based environmental Bullitt Foundation, chairman of the board of the Energy Foundation, and chairs the development committee of the National League of Conservation Voters. He was selected by Look magazine as one of the 100 most influential Americans of the 20th century and by the National Audubon Society as one of the 100 environmental heroes of the 20th century. The following is part of a public talk he gave at the Foundation.

The first Earth Day in 1970 was an event with consequences. Some were calculated and strategic, many were not.

A story: When I was practicing law here in Palo Alto, my legal assistant’s name was Tom Ehrlichman. His father, John Ehrlichman, was in the Nixon administration. Although he had some character flaws that caused him to do time in jail having to do with Watergate, John Ehrlichman was a fairly ardent environmentalist. Tom told me the story of how the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was created.

Richard Nixon didn’t care about the environment and in fact was rather hostile to it. He believed that progress necessarily involved activities that poisoned people, and the society needed to accept that. Tom said his father, John Ehrlichman, went in to see Nixon and said to him, “There were 20 million people on the streets for Earth Day yesterday.” (It

had been the largest public turnout ever seen in the U.S.) “Twenty million people,” he said, “and your likely opposition two years from now is Ed Muskie.” Now Muskie happened to be the chairman of the Air and Water Pollution Subcommittee of the Senate Commerce Committee, and he had two or three pieces of high profile legislation he was pushing. Nixon is hearing, “Twenty million people on the streets. Ed Muskie is cued up to take advantage of it and we don’t have a piece on the chess board.”

A report by a government commission had made some recommendations, and Ehrlichman said, “You know, there’s this idea in it. Pretty easy, sounds like. You take a bunch of water pollution stuff that’s currently housed over in the Department of Interior; some air pollution stuff that’s in Health, Education and Welfare; some radiation stuff over in the Atomic Energy Commission. Lump them all together, call it the Environmental Protection Agency. Won’t cost a cent because we’re already doing all this stuff. You just lump it all together and suddenly you’re a player.” Thus, on the afternoon of April 23, 1970, the Environmental Protection Agency was born.

The creation of the EPA and the wave of legislation that followed—the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, Superfund, on and on—completely redefined, in a span of about 30 months, many of the ways America did business; and it became a model for much of the world.

With Earth Day 2000, we are hoping to create another Earth Day with consequences. We've decided to take on a monumental change that has happened in the world: In the last couple of decades, for the first time in history, one species has developed the ability to change the entire world. Humankind has become a geophysical force.

On some scale, this has been going on for a long time, back to the cradle of civilization, the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. Human activities turned that region into a barren wasteland. But not until recently have we had thermonuclear stockpiles capable of bringing on nuclear winter, or the ability to drill holes in the ozone layer, fundamentally changing the way the influx of radiation affects the entire planet. Not until recently could we change the climate, triggering the greatest epidemic of extinctions that the world has seen in 25 million years.

This means that now, boundaries have lost much of their significance. For these kinds of issues you have to design policies that are planetary. If you're emitting a CFC, it makes no difference whether it's manufactured in Russia and smuggled through eastern Europe and installed in an automobile air conditioner in southern California, or whether it follows a different path and escapes from a refrigerator in Brazil. The impact is the same. Whether a lump of coal is burned in Pittsburgh or in China, the impact is the same. But the complexity of this is simply too big to communicate in the kind of campaign staccato that is necessary if you're doing an event-oriented campaign. So we decided to narrow the focus of Earth Day 2000 to one topic: global warming.

Global warming is not just about the melting of Antarctic ice sheets, the elevating of the world's oceans, the spread of disease, the undermining of world food productivity, the acceleration of extinction, and the rest of the stuff you hear in a typical environmental address. It is also about solar cells and fuel cells and hydrogen economy and hybrid automobiles and all sorts of things that can bring a different kind of prosperity, things that can allow us to have a high level of comfort and productivity and pride and creativity—and in a context that has a future, as opposed to one that is diminishing the prospects of our future on the planet.

That's where we decided to go with Earth Day 2000, to focus on global warming and its positive alternatives—super efficiency and a revolutionary accelerated shift to renewals. The challenge is: How do you put together something that confronts some of the most powerful sets of economic interests on the face of the planet and create a context within which the competition flourishes?

I talked recently with William Clay Ford IV, the chairman of Ford Motor Company, about the new Ford Excursion. This vehicle, on a level surface at a reasonable rate of speed, gets 12 mpg. With a twinkle in my eye, I hope, I asked him when he was planning to introduce it in Germany. He kind of chuckled and the conversation moved on. In Germany, it would cost \$240 to fill an Excursion gas tank. The taxes on gasoline in Germany are five times as high as in the United States—there's no market for an Excursion in Germany.

There should be no market for such a car in America, but our gasoline has been cheaper than bottled water.

These are conscious choices. They determine what kind of society you're going to build. We know how to get there. It's pocket change to alter the policies to support the solutions, but when you try, you run smack into the oil lobby. This isn't intended to hint of conspiracy, and I'm not saying that they are evil people. They are folks who have been hired to advance the interest of the entity that employs them. And in the ordinary course of things—that's the important phrase here—in the ordinary course of things, these lobbies will prevail because they are able to contribute more to political campaigns than anyone else can dream of.

We don't have those kinds of resources on our side. But in 2000, we do have two enormous potential assets. First, 80 percent of Americans now believe that global warming is real. You've got this latent, potential army of allies, although they currently view global warming as a kind of third tier issue because it seems too big to figure out what can be done about it.

The second huge potential is that just about everybody, if asked, "Do you want your kids to have a society that is powered by coal, by nuclear, or by renewables?" will answer, "Renewables." Solar, wind, bio-fuels combinations—they have all kinds of advantages that are intuitively obvious to everybody. Yet, most people can't afford a \$27,000 solar system to put on top of their house. If that's what it costs, you just can't get it

done. You've got to change what is possible by changing the price of things.

What we need to do is change global warming from something that no one who is running for office is even talking about, and catapult it to a top tier issue, so that whether you're running for the Palo Alto City Council or for the presidency of the United States, you have to tell us what you are going to do about global warming. It will be one of the things on the basis of which people make up their minds for all elected offices.

That will create a context within which the next Congress can do something that is dramatically different, as Congress did under Nixon. We've got a half dozen pieces of really important legislation cued up to be enacted in this changed environment.

For Earth Day 2000, April 22, our strategy is based on this: The candidates are going to have spent all their media money by March 22, the last primary. The political thing will follow the pattern it always does, and we'll go into a quiet news period. We intend to seize as much as we can of communication on every level from the end of March till the end of April. We'll take the issue of global warming and put it forward with both the problems and the solutions. We're going to inundate communications by having specials on all of the networks and news programs. By having everybody who is putting out a study on global warming sometime in early 2000 publish it during this month. By having anyone who's going to have a conference doing it in this month. By getting it into Chinese fortune cookie fortunes and questions on

Jeopardy! Just being as creative as we possibly can.

We're going to try, by the end of April, to catapult this "third tier issue" into one of the top tier issues in electoral politics and in the consciousness of the American society. And if we can do that, then we will have a model for other issues—like the collapse of biodiversity, like world population, like the thermonuclear stockpiles—that we'll be taking on during Earth Days in future years.

We want to cause people to think: What does this mean for me? What does it mean politically? Is there some way we can change it? Is it really this scary? Yes! Do we have some really good alternatives? Yes! Let's start demanding!

If this program is going to work, it's going to be because people like you make it work. We don't have the money to do all this. If anybody wants to give us money, we're wide open. This is a thing that is going to be people-powered. It's going to come from the grassroots. It's going to translate into demands by people who are just fed up with the current situation and prepared to demand change. I hope that will include every one of you.

Earth Day website: www.earthday.net



What Ladybugs, Bicycles, and Pad Thai Have in Common

by Donella Meadows

A couple of years ago, I heard snatches of a radio program in which Alan Durning, director of Seattle's Northwest Environment Watch, talked about the "Seven Sustainable Wonders of the World." Clever concept, I thought, but afterward I could only remember three of his wonders:

- **The bicycle** — the most energy-efficient form of transport ever devised. It doesn't emit pollution, it runs on renewable energy, it makes its user healthier, it's easy to repair, it requires little in the way of pavement or parking lot, and 80 percent of the world's people can afford one. (Only 10 percent of the world's people can afford a car.)
- **The clothesline** — even more affordable than the bicycle, runs on solar energy, it requires no electricity, it produces no pollution, and your clothes come out smelling sweet.
- **The ceiling fan** — the air conditioner of the tropical world, which I fondly remember turning slowly and romantically in rooms all over India. A fan makes a space feel 9 degrees cooler than it really is. A typical ceiling fan draws no more than 75 watts, about as much as a single incandescent light bulb and only one-tenth as much as an air conditioner. And it doesn't make the air stale and clammy, the way air conditioners do.

Now what were those other four sustainable wonders Durning came up with? I couldn't remember. I kept meaning, and forgetting, to call him and ask. So I was delighted to see that he passed his idea on to a colleague, John C. Ryan, who has put out a little book called *Seven Wonders* (Sierra Club Books, San Francisco). Here are the other four:

- **The condom** — protects against some of the world's worst diseases, gives parents control over the size and timing of their families, helps control population. "Those are big jobs for a flimsy tube of rubber," says Ryan. One sustainability problem with this item is that it's discarded after just one use. But it's made from natural rubber, a renewable resource.

- **The public library** — the written wisdom of the world at the fingertips of anyone with a library card! The average American pays \$20 a year in taxes to support public libraries and can save that much by borrowing instead of buying just one or two books. A book that is loaned 10 times cuts not only cost but paper use per read by a factor of 10.

- **Pad Thai** — the highly seasoned Asian dish made of noodles, garlic, and vegetables, sometimes with bits of chicken or shrimp thrown in. Ryan doesn't mean to celebrate that particular dish so much as the basic principle of "peasant" cooking around the world: start with starch, mix in veggies, add great seasonings and use meat sparingly, if at all. Could as well be tortillas and beans, or curry and rice, or spaghetti and tomato sauce. Healthy, cheap, do-it-yourself, easy on the planet, delicious.

- **The ladybug** — constantly, without charge, without environmental damage, searching out and destroying plant pests. Your average ladybug scarfs up 40 to 75 plant-sucking aphids a day. Multiply that by 75,000 beetles per gallon, which farmers can order through the mail, and you've got one heck of an efficient pesticide. Something like 98 percent of sprayed chemical pesticides never even hit a pest, but ladybugs zoom right in on the aphids and nothing but the aphids.

After I finished reading Ryan's book, which is full of interesting facts about these wonders, I started seeing wonders of sustainability all around me. There's no reason to limit the list to seven. Here are some more:

- **The root cellar** — temperature controlled by the Earth, a way of storing potatoes, carrots, onions, cabbage, squash, turnips, beets, apples, dahlia tubers, and gladiolus corms (that's what goes in my root cellar) without moving parts, canning jars, boiling, or freezing.

- **The basket** — someone once told me that no one has yet succeeded in mechanizing the making of baskets, made all over the world by skillful hands out of renewable, biodegradable material, are lightweight, strong, beautiful, and reusable over and over.

- **The olive tree** — it can live hundreds or thousands of years in dry, hot climates; like all trees it recycles carbon dioxide breathed out by us animals and turns it back into the oxygen we need; its roots hold the soil; its leaves break the impact of the rains; and it produces tasty, healthful olive oil.

- **The sari** — and the sarong and the shawl, made of uncut, unsewn cloth colored and patterned as gorgeously as a butterfly, gracefully draped, comfortable, cool, adaptable. You can suspend babies in it or melons or firewood. You can hitch it up for wading, tuck it around your legs for bicycling or running, pull it over your face if you want shade or to be modest or to flirt. Never out of style. Easy to wash and dry. One size fits all.

- **The compost pile. The knitting needle. The canoe.** This is fun. I could go on with this list, and so, probably, could you.

What do all these wonders have in common?

Well, kindness to the Earth and to human health is what qualifies them for a sustainability list. They are accessible to anyone, inexpensive to obtain and maintain.

Many of them serve not only practical but also aesthetic needs; they satisfy the eye, the palate, or the soul. Most are old in concept, though they may have modern variations. Something like them has evolved in many different cultures. Most are objects you can buy, but usually from a local maker, not a multinational corporation.

Donella H. Meadows, a systems analyst, author, director of the Sustainability Institute, and adjunct professor of environmental studies at Dartmouth College, writes a syndicated article each week to “present a global view, a connected view, a long-term view, an environmental and compassionate view.” Meadows can be

reached at Sustainability Institute, Box 174, Hartland Four Corners, VT 05049.



Parliament of the World’s Religions

by Eileen Rinde,
with inputs from other team members

“We’d like Foundation for Global Community to come to the Third Parliament of the World’s Religions, December 1-8 in Cape Town, South Africa. You bring something that is sorely needed. You’ve always been spiritually based agents of change, people who are able to create actions out of philosophy.”

That was the request of one of the board members of the Parliament. It was an invitation too promising to turn down. So, after five months of preparation and the generous support of nearly 500 people, our team of 16 adults and two young people flew to Cape Town, South Africa, with trunks, brochures, invitations, computers, cameras, 90 large *Walk Through Time* panels, and 500 *Walk Through Time* books.

Before we went, we studied and talked about the major religions of the world, learned about the previous Parliaments, and read the goals of the current conference. The goals meshed perfectly

with the principles we'd established for the *Walk Through Time*: "Infinite gratitude for the past, infinite joy in the present, infinite commitment to the future." With these goals uppermost in our minds, we arrived in Cape Town with great anticipation and excitement, ready to go to work.

The first Parliament of the World's Religions took place in Chicago in 1893 with several hundred representatives attending. Its purpose was to facilitate religious dialogue and sharing. It took a hundred years for the second Parliament to occur. In Chicago in 1993, members of the world's religions took on the challenge of thinking critically and holistically about the role of religious and spiritual communities in finding solutions to the world's most pressing problems. That Parliament produced a thoughtful document, "Towards a Global Ethic: An Initial Declaration," stating that "Earth cannot be changed for the better unless the consciousness of individuals is changed first....Therefore we commit ourselves to this global ethic....We invite all people, whether religious or not, to do the same."

One of the goals of this Third Parliament was a practical application of the ethical principles outlined in the 1993 document. Cape Town was chosen as the site partly as a way to honor the strength and solidarity of the many religious traditions of South Africa in the struggle to end apartheid and to give support to the fragile hope and possibility that now exist there. Some 6000 people came from every continent and every religion, although there were segments of all the major religions who chose not to come. The Parliament venues spread

throughout the city with sometimes difficult shuttle bus service between them. There were 800 workshops, a youth contingent, a "Gifts of Service to the World" program, plenary sessions, entertainment, and a three-day assembly of 400 people—leaders, scholars, workers, teachers, executives, interpreters, activists, ethicists—who worked with a second document, "A Call to Our Guiding Institutions." The profusion of riches was, for most of the participants, overwhelming! And then, of course, there were the Foundation for Global Community's contributions, including:

The Walk Through Time...from stardust to us We set up the *Walk* in about half its normal one-mile space using vinyl banners generously donated by our long-time friend Hans Zulliger of Switzerland. To guide people through the *Walk*, we placed white vinyl footprints both indoors and outdoors. Though the *Walk* faced competition from Zulu dancers, Japanese Taiko drummers, and Arlo Guthrie, we had more and more visitors each day.

EXPLORATIONS Together with the people who organized the Science and Religion Symposium, we cosponsored two evening "Explorations," where people were invited to discuss what the *Walk* meant to them personally and what implications the epic of evolution had for the faith traditions. While most people at the Parliament appeared generally well aligned and settled with their faiths, many seemed to be seeking a more contemporary creation story, one that would help them find answers to today's unique challenges. For many, the shift from total focus on the human condition

to a focus on the well-being of all of life places the human in a new relationship to God and to all of God's creation. Since the *Walk* presents information available to anyone and is not doctrinaire (unless you view science as doctrine), it is a story accessible to all faiths without undermining them in any way, and thus might help bring people of different faith traditions together around a common understanding and common purpose.

BOOTH At our booth at the Civic Center, we offered people a sample of ten panels from the *Walk* and audio-taped their comments about their commitment to the future.

WORKSHOP A team shortened our "Living on the Edge of Evolution" course to a three-hour workshop using the experiences and concepts honed over years of practice in Palo Alto.

BOOKS Those who finished the *Walk*, or attended the workshop or an exploration evening, were astonished and delighted to be given a *Walk Through Time* book (shipped, along with the banners, gratis, thanks to Hewlett Packard's Cupertino Division).

We met amazing people, absorbed a little of Africa's magic, were delighted, frustrated, expanded, amused, confused, exhilarated, and exhausted, occasionally all at the same time. We spent up to 18 hours a day together and learned a lot about ourselves and about each other. And we all came home changed, feeling immense gratitude for the experience and an enhanced responsibility to continue our work.

The five of us who were in the Assembly, whose goal was to develop specific projects to engage the "guiding institutions" of the world, formed a relationship with several other people/groups. Together, we outlined an educational program that we could take to the guiding institutions— business, education, religion, politics, etc. The program would use the *Walk Through Time* as a context, the World Game (developed by Buckminster Fuller) as an experience of the current moment, the Threshold 21 modeling software of the Millennium Institute as a way to investigate alternate future scenarios, and the Earth Charter as a document embodying the attitudes, values, and actions necessary to assure a viable future.

In addition, we are pleased that the *Walk Through Time* panels produced for the Parliament have been purchased by the MTN ScienCentre, a new museum near Cape Town. The museum's founder plans to take the *Walk* all over southern Africa, thus exposing it on the continent on which the human journey began.

Finally, there will be another Parliament in 2004, and we have already been asked to consider going and having the *Walk* be an even more central part of the event. To read "A Call to Our Guiding Institutions," see the Parliament web site, www.cpwr.org.

For a day-to-day report of the experiences of the Foundation team in Cape Town, see our web site, www.globalcommunity.org

Impressions of the Walk Through Time

by V.V. Raman, a participant at the
1999 Parliament of the
World's Religions

This tapestry of our planet's history is presented with colorful images, scientific depth, and consciousness-awakening commentaries. An intensely enjoyable and enlightening experience, it highlights the fascinating geological and biological transformations that have occurred in this speck of ours in the cosmic expanse. Just inspecting it reminded me that there is something unique about our planet in that it harbors not just the throb of life, but a self-aware being, for in this creature called *Homo sapiens*, blind nature and the created multiplicity become beautiful, meaningful, and inquiry-worthy. Of what significance or charm would all this be were it not for an experiencing human spirit? The Walk, in which each foot corresponds to an eon, deserves to be displayed in every public school and mall across the country and all over the world. It adds poetry and majesty to the vision of science, and is certain to light a revelatory spark in any intelligent mind as to how man and microbe came to be.

The Earth Charter*

The Earth Charter originated at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and has evolved through a worldwide consensus process. This latest version was presented to Parliament participants at a plenary session.

PREAMBLE

In our diverse yet increasingly inter-dependent world, it is imperative that we, the people of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations. We have entered a critical stage in history when we must join together to bring forth a new global order, founded on respect for life, environmental protection, freedom and justice, sustainable human development, and a culture of peace. We are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny.

Earth, Our Home

Humanity is part of a vast, evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life. The forces of nature make existence a demanding and dangerous adventure, but Earth has provided the environmental conditions essential to life's evolution. The well-being of the community of life, the enjoyment of human rights, and the development of culture depend upon preserving a healthy biosphere, in particular clean air, pure waters, fertile soils, and a rich variety of plants, animals, and ecosystems. The global environment with its finite resources is a primary common concern of all humanity. The protection of Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust.

The Global Situation

The Earth community stands at a defining moment. The dominant patterns of production and consumption are

causing environmental devastation, including global warming, extensive pollution of air, land, and water, a massive extinction of species, and the depletion of resources. This harm is done in the name of economic growth, but while the growth greatly benefits some, it is inequitable as well as unsustainable. Injustice, poverty, hunger, ignorance, corruption, crime and violence, and armed conflict are widespread and the cause of great suffering. An unprecedented rise in human population has increased the pressure on ecological systems and overburdened social and economic systems. The foundations of global security are threatened. Fundamental changes in our attitudes, values, ways of living, and systems of governance are necessary.

The Choice Before Us

The choice is ours: form a global partnership to care for Earth and one another or participate in the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life. We have the knowledge and technology to create healthy economies that provide for the needs of all, even as we reduce our impacts on the environment. The emergence of a global civil society is creating new opportunities to build a democratic and humane world that secures respect for human rights and promotes biological and cultural diversity. Let us resolve to harmonize freedom with responsibility, diversity with unity, individual interests with the common good, short term objectives with long term priorities. Our environmental, economic, political, social, and spiritual problems are interconnected, and we can cooperate in

developing integrated strategies to address them.

Universal Responsibility

These aspirations will be realized only if people everywhere decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying themselves with the whole Earth community as well as their local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature. We must realize that when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more.

In the light of these considerations, there is an urgent need for a shared vision of basic values that will provide an ethical foundation for the emerging world community. Therefore, together in hope we affirm the following interdependent principles for sustainable development as a common standard of achievement by which the conduct of all persons, groups, businesses, and nations is to be guided and judged.

I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. Respect Earth and life in all its diversity.
2. Care for the community of life with understanding, love, and compassion.

3. Build societies that are free, just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful.
4. Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.

In order to realize these interrelated ethical ideals, it is necessary to address the following:

II. ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

5. Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life.
6. Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection, and when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach.
7. Treat all living beings with respect and consideration, and protect them from cruelty and wanton destruction.
8. Advance worldwide the study of ecological systems and the dissemination and application of knowledge that enables communities to care for Earth.

III. A JUST AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ORDER

9. Adopt patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being.
10. Ensure that economic activities, including world trade, support and promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.

11. Eradicate poverty, as an ethical, social, and environmental imperative.
12. Affirm and promote gender equality as a prerequisite to sustainable development.

IV. DEMOCRACY AND PEACE

13. Establish transparency and accountability in governance, and provide access to information, inclusive participation in decision making, and access to justice.
14. Honor and defend the right of all persons, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of their dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being.
15. Integrate the knowledge, values, and skills needed for promoting sustainable development into universal education and life-long learning.
16. Create a culture of peace and cooperation.

*This abbreviated version of the Earth Charter contains the Preamble and 16 main principles only. For the full text see: www.earthcharter.org/draft/

South Africa

A Personal Perspective by Richard Rathbun

As a location to hold the 1999 parliament of the World's religions, South Africa was a perfect choice. South Africa needs the world's attention and support, and

holding the Parliament there was a welcome response.

I have watched events in Africa unfold during the past three decades because I lived there in the early '70s, establishing a connection which has reserved a portion of my attention ever since.

For part of the time in Africa, I worked as an architect in the coastal city of Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Because I was an outsider and an American, people confided in me in ways that they did not feel free to do with each other. Black and colored and Asian South Africans talked about their feelings and living conditions under the social experiment which was called apartheid. Both English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans spoke of their relations with each other and with the other races.

The system of apartheid was a horrible, disrespectful, at times violent social/political experiment which violated the souls of everyone subject to it. It was based on a system of separateness, a system in which everyone felt excluded in some way, and hurt and hatred were inevitable outcomes. South Africa 30 years ago felt like a pressure cooker in which the heat keeps getting turned up, the pressure building with no obvious way to decrease the steam. Terrible violence seemed inevitable.

So, the process of moving beyond apartheid which has taken place in South Africa is nothing short of a human miracle. Dismantling apartheid demanded tremendous courage, breaking with an entrenched and known system and embarking on a process based on reconciliation rather than retribution,

forgiveness rather than punishment, compassion rather than judgement.

We live in a shrinking world, where bold and fragile initiatives which represent new ways of solving ancient problems need and deserve as many acts of encouragement and support as the world can afford. That is why holding the Parliament in Cape Town, South Africa, was so right.



What Can a Suburbanite Do?

by Wes Jackson

Timeline readers will remember our article in the May/June 1999 issue about Wes Jackson, President of The Land Institute. The following is excerpted from a Foreword which Jackson wrote for a book by Brian Donahue entitled Reclaiming the Commons: Community Farms and Forests in a New England Town. Donahue is currently a professor at Brandeis University.

Smart children of parents who have spent much of their productive lives worrying about (and maybe now and then working on) the global problems of population growth, resource depletion, and pollution of nature's sinks and sources have been known to ask questions similar to the following: "And so, Dr. Doom, what can we do about it where *we* live?" How *can* a suburban Sierra Club member who frets over spotted owls and pesticides act, beyond writing his or her congressperson about the owls and avoiding the use of

pesticides on the lawn and garden? I have always supposed that a primary source of authenticity for proposed solutions to these problems must come from those who have had a serious engagement with the land itself. It is this historical engagement that generates the evolving cultural arrangements for the harvest of the stored energy from that great centralized fusion reactor in the sky 93 million miles away. Brian Donahue has written a book dedicated to getting people in the suburbs to engage with their land.

Brian Donahue walked onto the grounds of The Land Institute in January 1994 to become its education director with a promise to stay three years. He did, and while he was here, he changed minds. But then he returned to the same Boston suburb from which he had come, leaving many of us at the Institute to wonder why such a seemingly sane environmentalist would want to do that once he had tasted the Kansas prairie, minimal traffic, and far superior weather. Well, this book has supplied a rather complete answer to our questions about his sanity. We shouldn't have been surprised, for his depth as an environmental historian constantly generated useful insights and even categorical surprises that made us all aware of the importance of his chosen field to an environmental curriculum. The book's pages are vintage Brian Donahue, bringing social history and natural history together, subjects usually treated separately. Donahue's treatment of Weston, Massachusetts, from precolonial times to the present represents a prototype of the sort of scholarship and action-on-scholarship that America needs. It is about suburbia,

that modern Leviathan with an irrational settlement pattern, prime-farmland-gobbling, mall-producing, loneliness-generating, xenophobic, consumptive life where secular materialism has become the national religion. The majority of Americans is either already in suburbia or headed there. It is the world that defines our being; the world that even the nonsuburbanite is pulled into. It is the world that investors in economic growth gain from, a gain that dooms our culture and forces our descendants to pay the bills in the long run.

Rural landscapes and their declining small towns—and for that matter burned-out inner cities—present problems obvious to any who care to look, even while driving past over the speed limit. In the country, soil erodes and outbuildings collapse while the farmyard is increasingly adorned with huge tractors, disks, harvesters, and industrial machinery built to lay on the ammonia fertilizer and synthetic pesticides. The problem is greater than the fact that so many major U.S. cities count large populations of the poor and drug-addicted. These are just two of the many symptoms of our cultural sickness, which includes poor land use and other easily recognized ecological sicknesses in need of healing.

The suburbs, on the other hand, are “Where it's at.” In suburbia, children of the affluent are raised with the idea that they are in the midst of a legitimate American dream. In Donahue's Weston, most of the kids are fit, play soccer, excel in a first-rate school system, and perhaps after a minor bout of adolescent alienation go on to live affluent lives, fretting a little about the loss of rain-

forest. At the other extreme are suburban kids dreadfully overweight and more of the TV-watching, arcade-playing type, attending schools that reward minimal compliance. Whatever the situation, most failures on the suburban landscape are due to economic success. The suburban dream rests on the social and environmental nightmares that haunt the inner cities and the harrowed countryside.

Weston, Massachusetts, is a suburb. Why would an environmentalist begin with a place like Weston, where the inhabitants perceive that life is as good as it gets? For that very reason Donahue did become interested; he saw that in suburbia people are in the “belly of the beast.” What suburbia lends itself to is bumper sticker or T-shirt environmentalism. Sporting an artfully silk-screened “Think Globally—Act Locally” T-shirt and then limiting that action to recycling plastic in six categories won’t do it. The suburbs exist because there have been and still are industrial vandals in our land, people we never seem to nab precisely because we are addicted to what they have to sell or offer. And so we continue to buy stickers and T-shirts with clever, catchy phrases and unwittingly help to fuel industrialization’s movement of people—including rural people—to the suburbs.

The industrial mind has promoted the idea that a sufficiency of capital should take precedence over a sufficiency of people. But what about the idea that most people *need* a landscape, and what about the fact that essentially all agricultural landscapes in the United States *need* more people? What about

the fact that most kids want to work in a meaningful way but cannot because of our settlement patterns? Work is one of the most natural things to do if it is of the right kind. On a hot June day my then three-year-old grandson outlasted me at picking in the cherry tree and later in the berries as well. At the end of his two-day visit he rewarded my effort by declaring me his best buddy. It made me feel good even though I know that anyone else in my place would have been declared his best buddy. The sandpile and his toys were far less interesting to him those two days than what amounted to a harvest of contemporary sunlight and resultant health. Our evolution shaped that predisposition in him, and the context of those June days allowed its playing out.

Nearly twenty years ago Mary Catherine Bateson blurted out in a conversation of which I was a part, “Boredom has to be taught.” It was a stunning and, I believe, accurate statement. Until that time I thought boredom was a natural derivative of not having something to do or having work that can go on too long. And of course it is, but clearly there is more to it than that. We teach boredom to our suburban children in countless ways. Just look at all the schools without windows or the frequency with which teachers tell kids to pay attention and quit looking *out* the windows. The areas in which we overstimulate are seldom berry- or cherry-picking. Children need reality, not virtual reality, and there are plenty of examples you can read about in Brian Donahue’s book. Children need to understand the nature of source, whether it is wood for a stove or food for their bellies. Donahue’s nonreductive way of showing connections to the young can be replicated; indeed, it has the potential to

relegate the environmental bumper sticker and T-shirt to some museum of the future dedicated to the period of the environmentally and socially naive.

If America doesn't save agriculture with a sufficiency of people, wilderness is doomed. It is doomed as an artifact of civilization because hungry, formerly civilized people will encroach upon it and destroy it to meet immediate needs. What better place to teach the essentials of agriculture and forestry than in the suburbs, where most people are located?

Knowing the history of a piece of land from presettlement times to the present, the environmental historian has nevertheless been limited in role. Missing has been the more prescriptive work that would shape people's actions in accord with the limits and possibilities of the particular lands they occupy. But now Brian Donahue has created a new genre, a success story out of the suburbs sure to give heart to sociologist and ecologist alike. This is at once an intellectual's and an activist's approach.

Brian Donahue's book, *Reclaiming the Commons: Community Farms and Forests in a New England Town*, is published by Yale University Press, New Haven, CT. Cost: \$27.50.



Your Money and the World

By Vicki Robin

Vicki Robin, co-author of the best-selling book Your Money or Your Life, recently hosted a national television dialogue involving audiences at 60 downlinks. After summarizing the Your Money or Your Life program, Robin talked about how our personal use of money impacts a larger picture than just our own life. She had just returned from a worldwide conference held at the residence of the Dalai Lama, followed by an extended tour of India where she experienced first-hand many of the problems the world increasingly faces. The following are excerpts from her presentation.

The bigger picture is where we're headed right now. First of all, we need an understanding that there is more than just us here. I am not the center of the universe. None of us is. A quotation on my bulletin board says: "Love is the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real." What is our relationship with the "more than me?"

Our personal lives can give us the sense that we are separate and secure. We all do things on a daily basis—garden, read, cook, eat, go to work, raise kids, sleep. When I look out my window, I see beauty. I do not see the things I'm aware of that are going on in our world right now—deforestation, global warming, pollution, overpopulation, war, starvation, species extinction. Functionally, most of the time, I act as though this erosion of life is not happening.

Where do we experience these worldly goings-on? In the news. That's the place

where our personal lives and the planet meet. But we start rationalizing. First, we don't believe the news. We all know it's infotainment, compressed into sound bytes, and manipulated by PR people. Even if the news gets by our filters and we say, "That's horrible; I'm going to do something about that," there is a certain level of inertia. We hear something shocking on the radio in our car riding home from work, we make a vow to act, but by the time we get home to the kids and the dog and dinner we've spaced it out and we just don't get around to doing anything.

Then there is the fact that our human biocomputer is designed to react to things that we experience directly: the saber-tooth tiger is coming at us and we'd better run. It's not designed to react to the news that the polar ice caps are melting, and in a hundred years some islands in the Pacific may be inundated with water.

Another rationalization is, "Well, *they* are going to do something about it. I'm sure the government has this handled," or, "Technology will save us—we're going to design a technology that will handle all our pollution." And even if we actually do a few things, it feels like tokenism. We know that separating our garbage is important, but it feels so small in comparison to the enormity of all this stuff that is going on around the Earth.

But there is another place where the person and the planet meet, on a daily basis, and that is money. Money is, of course, my time—the time it takes me to earn it—but my relationship with money also includes my desires, real or

perceived. The Buddhists say that desires are endless.

So here we are, a multiplying species with multiplying desires on a planet with finite resources. Every dollar in your wallet gives you the ability to call resources out of the body of the Earth to produce a product you will use for a certain period of time and then send off into the landfill, possibly never again to become something like soil that could support more life. Money gives you the privilege of doing that. So it follows that by becoming conscious in your consumption, using the program in *Your Money or Your Life* or anything else that helps you bring awareness to your earning and spending, you will reduce the amount of stuff you bring out of the body of the Earth.

How can you consume more consciously? Many people find that sharing is a way to increase their quality of life while decreasing the number of things they bring into being: one less boat can be manufactured if four people instead of just two are willing to share it. Public policy is another factor. When you start to see yourself as needing mobility but not necessarily needing a car, then you might want to energize the public transportation system in your city.

Another action people take is boycotting those forms of production and consumption that they know are harmful. There is a whole array of activities supporting socially and environmentally responsible consumption, including information on how your purchasing can be more ethical.

But we are more than material beings. My sense is that if you try to have an ethical, conscious relationship to the Earth by paying attention only to your material relationships, you'll end up frustrated and not nearly as effective as you could be. So where do you look next? In *Your Money or Your Life* we talk about having a values-based relationship with money by asking if your earning and spending are in alignment with what you say is important, with your purpose in life.

How do you understand your purpose in life? We are living in an impoverished culture in terms of spirituality, in terms of purpose. The purpose our culture gives us is: do well in school so you can go to college, do well in college so you can get a good job, get a good job so you can get money, and get money so you can get a mate and a house and a lawn to mow and a car and a dog. But when you talk to people who are hitting mid-life now, you'll find that this sequence just doesn't cut it. It's not sufficient.

So you ask the basic questions, including, "What do I have to contribute?" Even then, if you stay at the personal level, you'll find that that's not a big enough question. If you stay at that level you can start to get into "designer purposes," as though you were making a purchase. What purpose looks best on me? Shall I save the gray whales or save the gray squirrel?

When I started asking bigger questions, the first place I went was cosmology, and questions like, "Who am I and why am I here?" At the level of cosmology, the big, big picture—the story of the

universe—emerges. Every single one of us is an expression of the evolutionary story of the universe that came out of the fireball, the big bang, the deep mystery. It seems like we're the end product of that fifteen billion years of evolution, but actually we're somewhere near the midpoint. If you attribute, as I do, some sort of purpose or intentionality or rhythm to this whole story of the universe, you might ask, "What is the universe—or God or that larger spirit or the Mystery—up to at the moment? Why has it brought me into being, with my particular set of talents, abilities, and passions? The future is vast, evolution isn't over, so how can I co-create, how can I participate in this story in a way that is meaningful?" When your thinking and questions are at this level, you start to see your consumption in light of those big questions, and you can discern what kind of consumption is going to serve that purpose, is going to support you in being the absolute best member of your species you can be.

The wisdom traditions historically support moderation at the level of material consumption so that you can have room for expansion at the level of spirituality. Islam says, "Riches are not from an abundance of worldly goods but from a contented mind." Taoism says, "He who knows he has enough is rich." Christianity advises, "Guard yourself against all kinds of greed—a man's life does not consist of the abundance of his possessions." Buddhism says, "By the thirst for riches, the foolish man destroys himself as if he were his own enemy." So the wisdom traditions are right in here with us on conscious consumption.

Or take some of our modern “wise elders.” Vaclav Havel says, “It is my deep conviction that the only option is a change in the sphere of spirit, in the sphere of human conscience. It is not enough to invent new machines or new regulations or new institutions; we must develop a new understanding of the true purpose of our existence on Earth.” This is the Dalai Lama’s message as well: ethics and spirituality are the primary places to look for solutions on our Earth.

The next big question that arises is, “Is there anybody else like me out there? Does anyone else think this?” I have found, as I’ve traveled around the country speaking for frugality and voluntary simplicity, that the reasons people come to this movement are legion. Some come to it for strictly financial reasons. Some, desperate and gasping for time, realize that reducing their consumption might yield more time. Others come to it for meaning—they are cosmology-poor and thing-rich and want to readjust and rebalance their lives. There are people who come to it from an environmental point of view. And people who come to it from a social justice point of view, wondering why the rich are getting richer and the poor getting poorer, and knowing this just isn’t right. People come to it because they want to give more attention to raising their families. Ultimately, it’s really all about, “How can I regain control over my own existence in a complex world?”

This is the level at which you start to form community. You seek out other people who share your set of values. Where do you find them? You take risks in your communications. When someone asks you how your weekend was, instead

of saying, “Not bad, can’t complain,” or some other habitual response, you say, “I went to this great workshop and let me tell you some of things that really stimulated me,” and you invite them to see the workshop video. Just start standing up for your values and see who congregates.

After you have found your community and learned to communicate amongst yourselves and to affirm each other, then you have another challenge. Simplicity could just be the new form of self-centeredness. “I got mine, Jack. I’m all together, and I got my little group together, and out there are just the bozos who haven’t gotten enlightened yet.” What I’ve discovered, however, is that I can’t create an island of sanity in an insane world and expect my own personal sanity to hold. I will always be walking out into that insanity. Eventually, I feel called to at least understand the systems and institutions and mindsets out there that are generating the sickness that I have just fished myself out of. In other words, I’m not healed until the world is healed. I’m not at peace until the world is at peace. I don’t have enough until everyone has enough.

You begin to develop concern, and you realize you have a double identity. You represent yourself in the world, but you are also a member of our species. We’re all going to have to represent our species and ask questions like, “Is this worthy of my species? Is this what my species is designed for? Is this what I want as a future for humanity?” As you ask those questions, you get into the level of contribution. You ask, “How can I go back into the world, into all this

deforestation, pollution, overpopulation, global warming, species extinction, starvation, and war, and go back in an empowered way—not with anger, but in a way that allows my personal life to be part of healing Life?” Since the problems are systemic, wherever you step in to help you’re going to make a difference.

So you identify your particular skills and passions. For example, you might be passionate about the increase in commercialism in schools—ads in the school bus, Channel 1 in the classroom, corporations writing curriculum for kids. And you realize that this is not worthy of your species. It is not how you, as a member of humanity, intend human culture to be. So you might look to see if the school system is using your tax dollars to educate your children in the way you want it to. Do we really need a bigger gym, or do we need bigger classrooms, or higher pay for teachers? You might find yourself feeling empowered and, even though you’ve never done public speaking before, there you are in front of community groups, or organizing discussions around values in education.

We’re living in an incredibly exciting time. The problems are huge—no doubt about it. Many people say our survival is at stake. Are we going to make it? The jury is still out. But the tools we have for understanding and addressing the issues in our world are enormous, and the empowerment we have is enormous. A better future is not going to happen magically. It will happen because every single one of us takes our relationship to the material world seriously and starts to act as though we are part of something

much, much larger. Then together, we will help life to evolve in all its glory.



From talks at the 1999 Parliament of the World's Religions, Cape Town, South Africa

“We commend the Parliament of the World’s Religions for its immense role in making different communities say that the common ground is greater and more enduring than the differences that divide. It is in that spirit that we can approach the dawn of the new century, that it will indeed be a better one for all of the people of the world.”

Nelson Mandela

“When we get new ideas and new visions, those ideas and visions we have to implement, because change only takes place through action, not through meditation, not through prayer, but through action. So, therefore, these visions must be implemented, that I want to urge you.”

The Dalai Lama



TIMELINE (ISSN 1061-2734) is published bimonthly by the Foundation for Global Community 222 High Street Palo Alto, CA 94301-1097

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Palo Alto, California
March 23, 2000