

Saving a Wasting World

In formulating this assignment on Environmental Issues it dawned on me that making people aware of environmental issues doesn't necessarily help our cause in resolving the environmental dilemma. I believe the key in dealing with the dilemma of the environment is to make people aware that we all are individually responsible for the dilemma. With this view in mind I have pursued this assignment by hitting head on the fact that the lifestyles we all individually live is what compounds the problems. In other words, someone who lives a very materialistic life is doing a lot of environmental damage compared with someone who makes the most of what they already have. Every time you buy new you are using up more of the world's limited resources and damaging more of the environment. Alternatively, whenever you re-use the things that have already been used your not putting greater demands on a straining world. John Button puts it this way

Living is polluting. Our very presence on the planet makes us all exploiters of its natural wealth and contributors to the vast volume of waste we collectively spew out into earth, air and sea. In essence, we have created today's ecological crisis, not industry or government. After all it is we who demand industry's products and continue to condone the government's environmentally damaging policies. This is why the notion of individual responsibility is central to the business of cleaning up the planet and developing sustainable ways of creating wealth in the future. It's down to each and every one of us to do our bit for the future by learning to tread more lightly on the planet right now.¹

The issue isn't out there somewhere in the environment, the truth is the issue is with you and me and to what extent we all consume, re-use and recycle. It is these three facets of our lifestyles which is of the greatest relevance in dealing with the issue of our environment. The global recycling network refers to these facets of recycling as the 3Rs - Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. Sadly the recycling symbol of three arrows fails to address the major factor contributing to the major environmental problem which is consumption. Some people are now acknowledging a fourth facet to recycling which is to 'Refuse' first. The term is now becoming more widely accepted as the complete process involved with reducing environmental impact. The CD "101 Ways to Save the Planet" defines the first phases of the recycling process as Precycling. Whatever way we view recycling the fact remains that the cycle needs to be complete for the recycling efforts to amount to any significance. It is not enough to just recycle; we as consumers need to considerably reduce our consumption and reuse what we have already got. It is foolish to believe that if we simply buy environmentally friendly products and sort out our rubbish to be recycled that we will save a dying planet and yet this is what many of us believe. In researching this assignment I have discovered that this is merely a mindless belief because the facts reveal that our environment is continually deteriorating while population and consumption is ever increasing.

Environmental education fails to address the issue of reducing our consumption of goods. It gives us information concerning the energy rating of products but fails to address the issue of not consuming full stop. Environmental efforts compare with that of a boat which has a leak. Instead of simply addressing the issue that the hole needs to be fixed they side track the issue by recommending we all get a bucket to bail out the water from a sinking boat.

We need to question whether the multitude of our labour saving devices actually save us from labour and time. Lets look at a can opener for example; a simple metal can opener only needs to be banged into a can and then quickly opened. The other simple type is the one where you turn the wing nut which in turn rotates the toothed wheel to open the can. Both of these openers cost next to nothing, work efficiently and quickly, require very little effort and most importantly have very

little impact on the environment. Alternatively the so called labour saving device "super duper electric can openers" don't really work any quicker, still require us to exert some labour and costs us the earth. If you compare the costs on the earth's resources and the environment with all of the production processes, this labour saving device doesn't equate to an overall saving at all.

An even greater madness is the amount of money which is spent in areas of health and fitness. Society and their labour saving mentality deprives them from the very labour they need. Health and fitness fanaticism is one big consumerism fad. We pay mega dollars on fitness centres and associated health therapy and so called nutritional expertise, and yet all we need to do is have a mars a day to help us work rest and play. Basically the answer is as simple as having a balanced diet, keep busy and occasionally rest. Consumerism has complicated the simple things in life which in turn has corrupted our lifestyles and ultimately our planet. Balanced simple sustainable living will personally give you less stress and the environment.

The reality is for as long as we consume more items such as these, environmental damage will undoubtedly increase regardless of our efforts to recycle. Consumption is continually increasing rather than reducing which is crucial for the cycle of recycling to be complete. The consumption factor negates our recycling efforts. If we want to see any significant improvement in the ecological system it is critical that consumption is reduced. The speed at which we are consuming compared with that of recycling at the very least needs to be compatible. Consideration must also be given to the rapid increase in world population. It is not possible to save the earth from its course of destruction without significantly reducing consumption as well as increasing recycling. The cycle must be complete for the saving process to succeed. It will only be a wholehearted commitment to the four R's (Refuse, Reduce, Re-Use and Recycle) that can change the self destructing collision course of the world. Anything less will only delay the inevitable - the world's finite resources coming to an end.

What A Waste!

We eat more than we need and then we waste what we don't want
We drink for the sake of drinking - coffee, tea or whatever
Nearly everything we do is a total waste.
Lets use what we've got instead of wasting it
Lets salvage what we can while we still have something left to salvage
We need to stop wasting and start saving.
Our world is wasting away because we are wasteful in everything we do

It's time we stopped talking about all of the environmental problems and started to acknowledge that we are personally responsible. Lets wake up to the fact that we create the demand for consumerism every time we consume something. You are the one who is stripping and ripping the heart and very life out of the earth with all your unnecessary consumption. The only answer to the current crash course of the world which we use and abuse is to live a simpler sustainable lifestyle. Our own self interests and affluent western lifestyles is what will bring about our own self destruction. We are the ones who create the demand for new products and we are the ones who are creating a worldwide catastrophe. The answer is really quite simple. We need to refuse to listen to the lies of advertising which tells us to buy more, reduce what we already use and recycle what we view as rubbish. The cycle needs to be complete in order for recycling to be a life sustaining cycle. The complete cycle of recycling is indeed the circle of life and anything less will result in death.

The ultimate solution to the problem would be to simply fix the hole. To live a life without materialism - to simply consume only what we need. Such self sustainable communities are increasing worldwide as a pattern for the rest of us to follow. Sustainable societies in themselves though are not enough to save the world from its destructive course. These societies need to not only practice sustainable living but need to also contribute toward solving the problems of the rest of the world. There is nothing more self defeating than a community whose focus is inward and has isolated itself from the rest of the world. Jesus himself promoted a simplistic sustainable lifestyle as part of the answer to the problems. Ultimately if you give your life to solving the problems of the world you won't have time to fill it up with materialism. Often we look to the comforts that consume the world to keep our lives busy, but if we constructively use this time to make the world a better place we will no longer be part of the problem but rather playing a part in providing an answer to the problems.

An undeniable fact is that current economic philosophy is based on producing more products which consume more rather than less, as a means of generating more profits. A worldview such as this is actually the primary reason for such a negative effect on the world's resources. Primary industries and every other business sector doesn't necessarily want to reduce their turnover because ultimately their business diminishes. Business education, training and practice has been geared around building your business so it consumes more and sells more, but the tide is now turning. Concepts which promote a sustainable society are now influencing world view and related education, training and practice. A philosophy based on conservation rather than consumption is now starting to be adopted. Alternative working principles and practices are on the verge of displacing the current structures built upon consumption. Conservative economic solutions are now being pursued in order to progress into the future. Entrepreneurial thinking and innovative substitutes is now what both society and business are seeking. The world is starting to look at a sustainable lifestyle in order to survive. In fact it has no other choice, if it fails to do so it will fail to have a future.

A Sustainable Solution

It will be very difficult to have any type of significant influence in getting the society to reduce their consumption when the social and economic system is geared around creating a greater demand. According to conventional economic principles a society needs to consume more in order to grow and develop. Prosperity is viewed in terms of promoting profits regardless of the loss on the environment. Society as a whole - the media, advertising and the business world all promote a philosophy to consume more whereas a society that wants to be sustainable would be promoting less. Society is at cross purposes with itself, on the one hand it wants to consume while on the other hand it says it wants to save the environment. Its high time we acknowledged that money doesn't make the world go around but rather money is the reason why the world will fail to go around. A sustainable society will only ever be something we imagine for as long as we fail to address the issue of consumption.

In essence what does this mean? What it means is the future of our globe is dependent on an economy which is restructured. An economy which is not based on consumption but an economy based on reduction. Is this possible? Only time will tell. An alternative economy based on reduction, re-using and recycling is the only logical solution for a consuming world. Every other method to salvage what we have left of the world are purely band aid methods. The root cause of environmental devastation is consumption and only the three facets of recycling can offer a viable solution to a world which is consuming itself. A sustainable society demands that we complete the cycle. Recycling is all but one link in the revolution. The chain needs to be complete if our society is to be sustained. If we fail to address this issue we will fail to survive.

Essentially it is mans greed – his own self interests which cause all the problems in the world. It has been said that man is his own worst enemy and it is this self destructing nature that is destroying the world in which he lives. If more of us were willing to go without and deny our own self gratifying pleasures, dreams and desires then perhaps there would be enough of us to make a difference in the world. This is an easy thing to say but the reality is that it is a cross too hard for us to bear. But the hope is when you come to an end in yourself you can look beyond yourself to a power greater than yourself. Simply pray for His power to enable you to perform what you are powerless to do! You are the key to solving the problems of the world and your destiny is tied to the future of the world. What are you going to do and which path are you going to follow? Dave Andrews in his book “Building a Better World” says we have a choice “either we complain about the way things are or we can change the way things are, starting with ourselves.

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