

The Change of Lifestyle.

The Need for Community.

Western society, and in particular the establishment, is founded on greed and worships wealth. Even in our own societies the gap between the rich and the poor - or indeed the rich and the average grows. Looked at objectively it is obscene that some people, who are lucky enough to have been gifted with talents (often merely the "talent" to be ruthless), should receive 400 times the average salary. Or that on an international scale the ratio is 10,000 : 1. Yet year on year the already stupendously wealthy tell us that they deserve a further increase in their relative wealth and that it is fully justified.

The Western dream endlessly thrust upon us by advertisements and media presentations is to own a better home, a newer car, smarter clothes, more leisure toys (second homes, swimming pools, golf courses, boats, etc.), to take more holidays in more and more exotic places. We are making the towns and cities noisy, stressful and unpleasant places which people want to get out of (moving to the country, the seaside or abroad). For most families more time is spent working than in the past; meanwhile family life is falling apart, there are more divorces, more broken homes more disturbed children. Psychologists tell us, not surprisingly, that far from getting happier, we are less content and more stressed.

We have seriously lost sight of the ball.

And now it is apparent that in going down this road we are also destroying the Earth.

Our politics has become equally misdirected. The recent election was a bazaar in which the parties competed to offer us more, - more police, more education, more health, at less cost - basically more wealth. These offers were made with greater or less degrees of credibility. There was almost no concentration on:- arguing for, or offering us, what was right, just or good.

If we are to sort out the Global Warming crisis we are going to have to change this approach to life. We are going to have to stop thinking only of number one. When the oldest of our citizens, our parents, grand parents and great-grandparents fought World War II they did not do so from selfish motives or with thoughts of personal advantage they did so because they perceived that it was right. The Global Warming crisis has got to be tackled in the same spirit.

What is surprising is that many of those who lived through the war remembered it as the most meaningful experience of their lives, in spite of the losses, pain and tragedy. Tackling the Global Warming crisis should induce the same sense of community purpose, but hopefully without the tragedy. It could well be the most rewarding experience of our lives.

Justice.

The protocol signed at the Rio Earth summit - the Agenda for the 21st Century - had almost as much to say about justice as it did about the practicalities of "sustainability". This was right because if we are to persuade people to embrace the constraints and lifestyle changes of sustainability, this will only be possible if we move towards a much more equitable sharing of the world's resources. We cannot expect to see restraint imposed on the mass of the population if their restraint simply enables the fabulously rich to continue to flaunt their grossly extravagant lifestyles. Not surprisingly such a situation will lead to rebellion. This can already be seen in the upsurge of terrorism around the world. While it is true that most terrorists have a fanatical, unreasonable and destructive hatred which motivates them - the various levels of community support behind them are heavily influenced by perceived (and real) injustices.

We have to return to the concept that the Earth and its resources are there to be shared by the people of the Earth. All people whether rich or poor are helpless babies at birth, needing the resources of the Earth - air, water, food and the nurture and care of other human beings to enable them to grow. There is no logic or justice in some babies having hundreds or thousands of times more resources provided for them than others.

Reverence.

Human beings are a part of the natural order.

At a practical level we have to live much simpler and less wasteful lives.

If we are to cut our individual carbon footprints to 20% of their existing values down to about 2.5 tons per person/pa. We are going to have to tackle our CO₂ output in every area. Very roughly our individual carbon footprints are made up of:-

30 % on home heating and home energy consumption.

17 % on our individual travelling.

10 % on moving goods which we consume around.

15 % on our public services - using that term very broadly.

26 % on consumer goods and services.

In the UK our most damaging personal activity is keeping our homes warm (and, for those few who have air-conditioning, keeping them cool in hot spells). This is almost entirely unnecessary; quite simple technology could enable us to cut the average heating bill by 75% and it would be possible to go further. This might entail cladding the outside of our homes and fitting more efficient heating and glazing systems. But apart from the cost and inconvenience of making these changes they would not unduly interfere with our lifestyle. However the other aspects which would involve change are reducing our travelling, and reducing our general consumption. Air travel and the private ownership of cars should be drastically curtailed. We would favour public transport paid for out of taxation and a personal travel ration.

More generally the rationing approach may be the only way to tackle the problem of consumption. - including our consumption of "stuff".

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