

March 31, 2009

Where I come from:

In 1987 I began researching the impact on the environment due to economics and human expansion. My background is in physics and art, so I try to resolve things to their simplest elements. After nearly twenty years, my conclusion was that humans have only two Real problems to solve. All other issues; including war, poverty, corruption, violence, disease, etc... will continue to escalate till we face head-on: Sustainability, and Human Population levels.

There are many of us who have tried to sound the alarms regarding economics, population, and pivotal environmental concerns. Anyone who has tried to help awaken others to these sensitive situations has been branded an "alarmist" by opposing forces. - Most of us are not crying wolf; though now, many vital messages have gone unheeded due to a label that is largely a misnomer. There are those who have raised alarms for money, 'power' or vanity. I am not one of those.

Letter to the right, and to the left:

(*Aside to the extreme right wing of America*) If you want Obama to fail, he will. And when he fails, the country will fail. – It's time to face the reality that this is no longer a game. The puppeteers have rolled all the dice, played all the cards. There are no cards left in the deck.

What does it mean to have a failed state?

- It means that the government is no longer capable of providing for the safety and welfare of its people. In this era of high stress, disconnected peoples, and easy access to weapons, you can do the math. Or better, ask someone who's done a tour of duty in the more intense regions of Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, Darfur, Pakistan... or right now our neighbor to the south, Mexico.

The way I see it, we have very little time to try to work together to stabilize this country. If we can help Mexico stabilize it might help all of North and South America.

Further,

Anyone who believes they can continue to make a profit at the expense of someone else needs to think differently. The "extra" money (and credit) that was floating around in the middle class is nowhere near what it was 8 months ago. That means there is very little left that can be extracted by "exploitation" of the middle class.

I maintain great hope for the Obama administration and for the future (Though at times that seems completely irrational). About three years ago, I started saying I didn't think we could survive to the, non-impeached, end of the Bush / Cheney Presidency. It depends on your definition of "survival" whether we have or have not. While I find Obama to be infinitely better, I believe he, and we, need to make truly bold steps (some of which he outlined during his campaign) if we are to really "survive" and help the world of men towards a sane sustainable existence.

Two of the obvious areas where Obama has been unable to overcome inertia are 1.The failure to functionally increase taxes on the extremely wealthy and 2.The failure to extricate coal as a

primary source of energy. Both of these interests are capable of getting what they want, regardless of the cost to the US citizens and the rest of the world. Currently, “Clean Coal” and its opponents are spending hundreds of millions on commercials trying to persuade us to their perspectives. If we were truly acting as a “*United*” States, we would not be wasting all that money. We would be using it towards solutions instead. Personally, I believe Clean Coal to be a myth; however, since stimulus money has already been committed, then I say – give it your best shot. Just be rational and impartial about the results. I’m sure we can make it a little cleaner; however, I don’t think we should be investing our future resources, time and energy into this 20th century dinosaur. We need to move on.

A core element to our energy and environmental policy should be getting us and the world off coal ASAP. – Some details in Environomics 101

As regards fair taxation of the very wealthy, it has come to this: If the premier capitalists wish to save capitalism itself, then they should impose limits on themselves. This country is in a very perilous position. Those possessing enormous wealth and resource have the ability to help us all. If they choose not to, then we have to either 1. Pry it from their cold dead hands or 2. Devise a new economic system that doesn’t use any ‘old’ currency. – Neither of these seems easily implemented; although, the latter, if achieved, could be the key to the future. If we’ve ever needed another Einstein it is now, and it is in the art and science of “New Economics”. – None of the old guard; as smart as they are, can see from outside their own bubbles. - The entrenched multinational “Monopoly” players continue to impede and disrupt the process of essential change. We need to give them a new game to play...

Environomics 101 / Stimulus Notes:

Virtually all the financial institutions were heavily invested into the housing market. (As well as derivatives, day-trading and insider trading schemes) Some people bought over their heads, and many marketeers looked the other way because they had so many different ways to make money as the price bubble just kept inflating. Wall Street and the banks were operating like Las Vegas. They were all trading ‘paper’ money and driving the prices higher and higher (like pyramid schemes, as long as there’s a buyer on the far end, there’s money to be made and the pyramid grows) till we started to hit the inevitable wall. People began to lose their jobs, primarily, due to “free trade” agreements and the fact that we haven’t had near enough focus on the essentials: food, water and shelter. Lost jobs led to foreclosures and diminishing revenues for many businesses, leading to more lost jobs and foreclosures.

Housing prices fell, which was good only for those few who were truly in a stable position to buy. Anyone who needed, or was counting on, selling a house for a “fair” market price, almost overnight, lost up to 50% of their home’s value while still holding a note for the escalated price they had committed. And, of course, many were already just barely making or barely missing their mortgage payments. - A dip in these incomes and more foreclosures. And the dominoes are falling. The banks and all the investors that had been trading paper were suddenly stuck holding onto much thinner air. Like playing musical chairs, but when the music stopped, there were a lot of chairs missing, not just one...But whose money was really lost??

Economic policy, environmentalism, energy policy and politics have all been woven together into an inseparable fabric. Most in the news media talk about “The Economy” as though it were something real or tangible. What is it really? Since the 1950s our economy has drifted into the land of illusion...

- Notes on Supply Side Economics – Two things: 1. Supply is created in anticipation of demand, and 2. “If you build it they will come”, which came to mean that if you had enough capital to promote the heck out of a product, you could “create” a market for it. This was done to the extent that we ultimately became products ourselves of market manipulation. Largely, goods and services were not created to serve public needs; rather, goods were created, and the idea that we needed them was what was sold to us. To survive, we do not NEED digital plasma TVs, super-charged SUVs, drive-through saturated fats, face lifts, liposuction, implants, designer clothes, 8,000 square foot homes with perfectly groomed chemical lawns, 10 million dollar athletes on steroids selling Viagra, multimillion dollar bonuses for the CEOs of failing companies, nor the 24 hour entertainment-news cycle. And we don’t need any politician, whose campaigns we’ve indirectly financed, lying to us while they trade our freedoms for favors from the lobbyists who represent faceless corporations trying to rule the world by selling us a bunch of crap that we do not need!
- I could go on all day...

What we do need is a new economic matrix that is founded, primarily, on the essentials of life: food, water, shelter, some form of health care and *connection*. And the essential goods and services that we provide should be valued in such a way that what one person does could be traded for something of value that someone else does. Further, we are up to our solar plexus in a world wide ecological crisis. Some of you may not believe this; however, irrespective of what you choose to believe about the degree and cause of Earth’s temperature fluctuations, scientists around the globe are in agreement that we have crossed into very fragile territory regarding the pollution and toxification of the air, land and water systems. There is widespread consensus and concern regarding fresh water and resource depletion, eco-system degradation, habitat destruction and species extinctions. In short, even if “global warming” has no impact whatsoever, the habitability of Earth for humans is on the verge of crossing the point of no return.

Now if you think the Earth is simply enormous with an endless supply of fresh water and minerals and that the atmosphere is large enough to absorb any amount of pollution; you would be very wrong in both assumptions. The human population is depleting resources across the board at a rate far in excess of the Earth’s ability to regenerate those resources. And the atmosphere, while expansive, is not able to completely filter out our daily waste products; meaning that every day the air gets just a little less breathable. To compound that, the human population is currently increasing by over 1 million people every five days. For some reference, this rate which we’ve been applying for over fifty years is about 100 times what it was just three or four centuries ago.

If this information is new for you and if you don’t do any kind of biological or mathematical research involving interdependent exponential functions, I would simply tell you that I believe it is beyond human capability to grasp the full impact of what this means. To make it even simpler; if we do not create, with all possible haste, a sustainable economic structure that we can share with the world, while also addressing world population concerns, only a miracle will save us from our own ignorance and stupidity.

So what do we do now? – Assuming you’re still out there, if you were the leader of the diminishing free world what would you do?

Twere I, I would initiate the discussion claiming that, “The Goal, the Destination, for our society must be *Sustainability*. (Using all resources at rates less than or equal to their

respective regeneration rates) Establishing this as a goal (achievable or not) will then guide our economic, environmental, educational and foreign policies.”

- A. Energy Policy: In order of priority: 1. Conservation 2. Conservation 3. Conservation. 4. Renewable technologies (solar, wind, geothermal, wave and motion generators, etc...) 5. Nuclear fast reactor development and implementation¹, as well as some 6. Natural gas use to 7. Get us off burning coal ASAP. 8. There are additional small and large initiatives here as well. The energy portfolio needs to be regionally based, rational and broad in its scope to employ people and keep the long term focus on sustainability. Aspects of the Picken’s Plan, and the “Smart Grid” should be adopted, as long as they do not entrench us in long-term natural gas consumption or privatize and destroy lives along the grid paths. (An eminent domain issue)
- B. Education Policy: To follow our energy and economic policy guidelines, we will need to emphasize conservation and maintenance principles: Teach our kids how they can live just fine using small amounts of water, electricity and all resources. Schools should be models for resource conservation and healthy (sustainable) nutrition habits. There should be an absolute minimum of materials used. Recycle only what cannot be reused. And throw out next to nothing. (Some trash can be used for fuel or compost) No recyclable material should ever be thrown into the garbage at an accredited school. Period.

Among the jobs that we will need for the present and future are: Soil conservationists and organic gardeners, Renewable energy technicians , engineers and designers, Nuclear technicians and engineers, plumbers, carpenters, energy inspectors, computer technicians, electrical and mechanical engineers, insulation and ventilation installers, crawl space and basement rehabbers, quality control specialists and efficiency managers, teachers, health care providers, mold inspectors and remediation technicians, water and waste treatment technicians, desalination technicians, scientists, police, military personnel, peer mediators, sustainable chefs, nutritionists, mechanics, etc ...

- C. Economic Policy: 1. Implement an emergency graduated tax on all incomes above, say, 3 million, such that the 30th million and above is taxed at 90%. This formula should also apply to capital gains. For those fortunate enough to be in these tax brackets, there should be tax-deferred government bond programs (much like IRAs) and other incentives or pathways to “grandfather” the excess wealth they have become accustomed to. The more they guide their money toward sustainable investment in this country, or in their own benevolent businesses, the more they control their own destiny. To preserve the essence of Capitalism, the premier capitalists need to pay something closer to their fare share. – Or the present monetary system will simply fail. Those with enormous resources should have seen this coming and should have contributed to the salvation of the system that has rewarded them so disproportionately. And for those that believe the “free market” should be able to sort out our current economic crisis, I would agree, but argue that our markets have been so manipulated and abused that they are not really free at all; and the profit motive as a vector for positive change has failed us in the most egregious ways. The “greed is good” philosophy that began to escalate in the 1980s has led to quantum increases in acceptable decadence. Among the few non-green growing industries are pornography, penis extension and incarceration. With the implementation of some realistic values and limitations, the free market may get another chance. The majority of the players in the old big-game have played their hands unsustainably to the detriment of all. – That is a substantial part of why we’re here now. If we do this right, then most of us

might view taxes, not as a burden, but as reasonable usage fees for living in a sustainable, democratically-based country.

As regards the idea of a carbon tax: The cap and trade system appears highly inefficient. I can see no legitimate reason to involve the flawed stock market approach at all. If we're serious about changing the world, we should simply incentivize good (sustainable) behavior; and tax bad behavior (over consumption and / or pollution, such as particulates, nasty chemicals, heat, and CO₂).

Regarding Housing: It's much better if we can keep people in their homes. I want to stay in my home (or my car). I want my friends, you and your friends to be able to stay in your homes. Mortgages should be rewritten at a level that reflects their current value, unless the owner prefers not to. (or was found to be manipulating markets) And for those who can't find work till we create sustainable jobs, they could shift to a rental option, perhaps only paying the interest on the revalued mortgages. (Just who owns these houses is now coming into question.) If we can keep people in their homes long enough to build a truly sustainable infrastructure, we will avert incalculable levels of chaos. This approach just makes sense. Banks are already beginning to walk away from foreclosures. An article in the March 30th NY Times stated, "The soft housing market and the vandalism that often occurs when a house sits empty are the two main factors influencing the mortgage holders' decisions to walk away..." So we should definitely make every effort to keep people in their homes. – (There is still a "responsibility" lesson that needs to be addressed and learned: For nearly every bad mortgage, or "toxic asset", there are at least 2 irresponsible parties; the signers and the signees)

Notes on Stimulus and Job Creation: The more specific the details involved in stimulus and job creation the better. We, the people, should be able to submit ideas for immediate consideration. For example:

1. **Energy and Conservation Core for Homes and Businesses:** Each municipality could have teams led by energy auditors, who do a complete inspection of every structure in the municipality. The auditors write reports detailing the conditions with long and short term systems, structural, and energy upgrade recommendations. The efficiency managers and manpower coordinators determine the budgetary outline, and the supervisors, tradesmen (plumbers, roofers, carpenters, electricians, etc.) and labor required for each "job". The supervisors, who are also inspectors or tradesmen, then manage each job to completion and submit the data on each. In some cases the home or business owners will cover some of the cost of these services. (There are already rebates and tax rebates on the books for energy audits, efficiency upgrades and "active" renewable energy sources such as solar and wind). In many cases, the lease holder or owner pays no up front costs. Much of the fee can be offset by freezing the utility rates for several months. After that the consumer gets the benefits of significant reductions in water, electricity and natural gas use. – Employs a lot of people. – Only requires a small stimulus from the government (may prove self sufficient in many areas) while substantially reducing resource consumption and pollution. A lot of bang for a small buck here.

2. **Soil Conservation and Revegetation Core:** – Similar functional structure to the Energy Core, but this one is led by soil conservation specialists, gardeners and farmers. – The soil conservationists and master gardeners work up a plan for each lawn or open area with the lease holder or owner. The ultimate goal is to fortify and conserve the soil and water. Owners, cooperatives or municipalities will also get the benefit when it is time to harvest. – Not all lawn areas should be in "conventional" crops. Some forest land, savannah and prairies should also be part of the land management program. The idea is to mitigate the damage caused by chemical

pesticides and fertilizers, enrich the soils for long term sustainability and water retention. This will employ many people. Homeowners could receive some stimulus for their participation. There will also be some economic or sustenance return from any harvests. Some crops would remain individually controlled, some for community distribution. This would employ many skilled and unskilled workers.

Not quite as much potential for off-setting the cost as the energy core; however, the long term benefits are undeniable and critical. Water will soon become our most precious resource and commodity. This is something we must do, and immediately is not soon enough. Projects like these can employ local workers as well as service legions like Americore.

3. Grey Water and Water Reclamation Projects: Again, this should be done country wide. This would require some municipalities to alter their building codes. Predominantly employing plumbers and carpenters, but also requiring draftsmen, designers, efficiency managers and labor. The idea is to recycle low level waste water from bathing or cleaning to be used again to flush toilets or water lawns, gardens and trees. In some instances the water can be completely filtered and used again for bathing or even drinking. There are other water reclamation protocols besides homes. – Some related to flood control. – All are vital to our local and national stability, and will put people to work.

4. Manufacturing: Many products that are made or grown exclusively outside the US could be made here. Examples: Wind Mills, Solar Panels, fabrics, clothes and more. Many of these should be grown and / or manufactured in this country. Local production should be emphasized to reduce consumption of resources and waste. Think Sustainably and let's make it here.

5. Paradigm Shifts and Organic Farming: Produce should be grown locally as much as possible. Organic Farming needs to be emphasized and stimulated to enrich the soil, avoid pollutants and conserve water. ‘Outlaw’ crops such as dandelions and hemp have enormous possibilities for food and materials production; and in the case of hemp, the Oxygen production and CO₂ sequestration levels are virtually unmatched. A limited amount of biofuel production may also be beneficial during a transition to a truly sustainable system. – These decisions need to be influenced by biologists, chemists, master gardeners, and soil conservation specialists.

6. And beyond... I'll be back again, but as before I suggest that we all try to think how we can apply our talents and resources towards sustainable pursuits and away from wastefulness. Also, those of us with stable situations need to prepare to assist relatives and friends. Municipalities need to prepare secure areas to accommodate the homeless....

A considerable chunk of what we're in for is due directly and indirectly to the policies of the Bush / Cheney administration, the Congress that failed to stop or impeach them, and the multinational lobbies that supported, cajoled or coerced them all. If those people have any humanity left, now would be a good time to start working towards redemption. Invest in a sustainable United States, and a sustainable Earth. Forgiveness follows action...

Peace,
Jordan

1. There is a 4 part nuclear discussion video at EnviroMonster.com (<http://enviromonster.com/>) as well as several other “interesting” short videos