

#151 First Gore, then Gates and Now Nature

Remember when Al Gore finally found the courage to talk about the Inconvenient Truth of climate change? Perhaps if he had made this a core part of his presidential campaign and the nation had an honest Supreme Court, he would have been elected and efforts to mitigate climate change would have begun nearly a decade ago. Instead, the dominant experience has been years of escalating environmental destruction and climate extremes that have rocked the world's population and natural habitat of all forms of life and life supporting systems.

Bill Gates just a few weeks ago declared his commitment to lead an effort through repositioning his philanthropic resources to achieve a zero impact on climate change. Not many people seem to have taken notice of this remarkable proclamation. Alleviating poverty and improving public health, okay. It's recognized as a growing problem and for reasons that have no rational basis, is not a controversial issue, Let him have at it. Maybe he could lower the cost of his products and increase their quality as well. But, zero climate change impacts - no waste, no emissions by 2050, maybe just ignore the guy. I hope not.

There is a great point here. Gates knows that poverty and poor health are the product to a large degree of climate and environmental changes. He has no chance for success in his current work without eliminating one of the two root causes of the tragic life conditions of half of us. (the other is human injustice and the lack of fair sharing of resources and opportunity)

It is a very positive new development and we hope this Gates initiative will attract the science, technology, economic, environmental and community development resources to get it right. But, there is a huge problem, so very sad to say.

The Gates approach is always pristine, simple formulas which is a wonderful tactic. But if the formula is wrong, great loss is the result. It's wrong.

Here it is. $CO_2 = P \times S \times E \times C$. CO_2 - carbon emissions = P - population multiplied by S - services to sustain people (which will rapidly increase as billions seek to rise out of poverty) multiplied by E - energy necessary to provide the goods and services multiplied by C - carbon emissions generated in order to produce the energy to fuel prosperity. Without radical change in the numbers associated with the components of this formula, Gates says we are headed for an unimaginable disaster.

He picks E - energy. He will repurpose his efforts to stimulate the production of promising new ideas that may provide an "energy miracle" that will lead us to a world economy of zero emissions, zero climate impact. Great - especially that definition of success from a source that really believes in prosperity.

Two problems appear. One relates to the definition and actual living conditions of prosperity in this new, carbon (and other element) free economy and the absence of N - Nature in the equation. Lessons from the very poor and victims of injustice and from the innumerable current experiments and

successes in living with very small ecological footprints in wealthy societies will need to be promoted to overcome the wall of resistance and fear of giving up or changing some of the habits and things that are creating global crises. We are a long way from building the new society of sufficiency, fairness and sustainability. There is a truly beguiling promise of a much better way of life for all on the other side of zero.

Now comes N - Nature - into the equation. $CO_2 = P \times S \times E \times C$ divided by Nature.

Still taken for granted as freely abundant in resources and earth cleaning and energy services, nature must be added to the Gates approach. Everything is divided by Nature's requirements for no human formula can substitute for the law - Nature bats last. We are but one of millions of hers - she is not ours.

The growing numbers of local people and local community projects to design and complete projects that listen and support nature's requirements is very positive.

Equally encouraging is the reports of how much enjoyment and deep satisfaction people experience in working with nature and with each other. Therein lies one more world changing formula - working with nature and with each other.