

**Notes on the  
Berwick Trades Council Annual Day school. October 26<sup>th</sup> 2019**

**Climate Change & Inequality.**

10.30 a.m. Kate Duncan: Extinction Rebellion.

“From this moment despair ends and tactics begin” A photo of a Banksie graffiti

- What we need to do and have a moral obligation to do.
- This includes to other humans, future humans, ourselves and the natural world.
- Our predicament has been inflicted by the wealthy upon the less wealthy.
- The Government is not acting so we have a right and obligation to rebel.

So far we have already had several Global Climate summit meetings since the problems were raised in 1988. Scientists were given a chance to look at evidence.

Venues were Rio, Kyoto and Paris.

Other concerned groups include Greenpeace, WWF and Wildlife Trusts. There have been attempts to clean up the use of pesticides and some progress on re-cycling but none of these efforts have succeeded in reducing the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. These have increased only since the Industrial Revolution in the 1800's. Since 1990 there has been an alarming increase.

Why hasn't this Carbon crisis happened?

- Short –term lengths of democracy. With frequent elections the authorities don't like to make long term decisions.
- Capitalism has failed to cost Climate Change into its budget. Instead it creates an endless hunger for more consumerism.
- We need to act globally. Trump's recent decision to pull out of the Paris agreement is especially depressing.

What Next?

Only legislation will make a difference. Greta Thunberg made the point that if we cannot win then the rules need to be changed.

- NVDA is essential i.e. Non-violent direct action. Role models include Gandhi, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King.
- Thousands of people need to be involved in civil resistance.
- This should be focused on a capital city
- It needs to be disruptive to get attention.
- It may need to be prolonged to inflict economic damage
- It must be creative and fun.

What is Extinction Rebellion?

- It was formed in October 2018 when the London Bridges Blockade.
- Now it is global with 60 countries involved.
- This includes places which are under threat of climate change affecting sea levels or droughts or hurricanes or fires.

Achievements.

- Scotland has now more than 100 members.

- This April the London Rebellion was effective with some people still going through the courts.
- Ambivalent success with the Jubilee Line and Underground protests.

Three Demands-----

- Tell the truth about the ecological crisis and declare an emergency.
- Halt diversity loss by 2025
- Create a Citizens Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice.

The present target by government of 2045 leaves it too late.

### **What would a Citizens' Assembly be?**

- It would comprise a random mix of people of all ages, gender, locality, education and ethnicity.
- The Assembly would discuss issues with experts
- The Assembly would draft recommendations after group discussions
- The Government should deliberate on the recommendations and act accordingly.

Such Assemblies have worked in Ireland and Poland. E.g. on abortion and same sex marriage.

A quote from John Lennon " If violent THEY (i.e. the authorities) know how to handle you but THEY can't deal with non-violence and humour.

Kate stresses that differences should not be top down but through working groups. The core activity is ACTION. Photos are shown of people lying down ( I think at Holyrood). 2019 led to Summer Uprisings in Glasgow, Bristol, Leeds, Cardiff and London. Extinction Rebellion Activists occupied Scottish Parliament.

Any arrestables are voluntary. Each one is pre-agreed with about 20 supportive people.

**How can you contribute?** Through Facebook, produce artwork and banners, attend actions, join a working group or present a talk.

**Why join?** It means being on the right side of history.

### **What about the Media?**

BBC are biased and do not cover Extinction Rebellion events. These might be reported in the London based "Evening Standard". Members responded by a ten hhour blockade of the BBC.

### **Questions.**

- Paul recognised that the Schools Rebellion was more effective at being reported by the media. General agreement.
- The government needs to make Climate Change a priority but more effective to tackle the Banking system.
- Question of strike action and how effective is it without antagonizing the public.

Coffee Break.

### **Rachel Featherstone, Green Party Candidate for Sunderland. What is to be done?**

Even a 1 degree rise in temperature is affecting our climate. Few nations can reach their targets to decrease emissions. It is estimated that 140 million climate refugees will be made when the tipping point has passed. Famine and wildfires will endanger lives. It is shocking

that we have known about the threat for 30 years and done very little. Imagine having to explain to a grandchild what a butterfly used to look like.

- Social Inequity. This can be within nations – between nations- and intergenerational.
  - We consume at least 4 X as much as 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries.
  - We need structural change. Adaptations to flooding, change our factory farming methods, reduce our meat consumption and
  - EVERYBODY needs to use less energy.
  - Metanoia is radical thinking at the heart of civil society.
1. Change economic growth. Our current system has been dominant for more than 200 years.
  2. We have assumed that growth is good for all our society but it isn't
  3. Instead it increases the gap between rich and poor.
  4. Life expectancy is going backwards
  5. Correlation between GDP growth and destruction of natural environment.

We need more money spent on health and education. We need to decrease our consumption of earth's resources which has a finite capacity.

There will be competition for fresh water soon which could even lead to wars. This could be a geopolitical form of domination.

Crucially we must decrease the correlation between consumption and happiness. There has been a rise in self-harm especially in children. Instant gratification is rife and economic growth is allegedly best but it must be sustainable. We are a throwaway society with thousands of tonnes of waste going to land-fill.

## **Solutions**

1. Degrowth will have to come.
2. Need a more just society.
3. Decrease consumption in the global north in order to increase consumption in the global south.
4. Need to consider the quality of life rather than amassing goods.
5. Need to localize production and consumption.

### **Politics**

- Government must tackle the Advertising industry to stop this insatiable desire for Things.
- National economics should be measured by Happiness not G.D.P.
- Adopt ecological economics. Avoid pollution and do more re-cycling.
- Need proportional representation
- Need to change NOW!

### **Work**

1. Work is an essential factor in the quality of life.
2. Need to reduce working week and share employment more fairly
3. Need to widen its definition to include care work, voluntary work, domestic work and creative work
4. Reduce automation and increase creativity.
5. Introduce a Basic Income.

### **Transportation**

- This is the biggest source of Carbon emission
- Invest more in public transport
- Make the fares cheaper

- Localisation especially transport of goods and food.
- Allow more home working

### **Energy**

1. We are still using fossil fuels
2. Peak of oil extraction has been reached and resources are declining twice as fast as predicted.
3. Enormous cost of de-commissioning is daunting (power stations etc )
4. Coal is one of the most polluting fuels . Drax is the 7<sup>th</sup> worst and Longannet in Scotland is the 11<sup>th</sup> worst colliery.
5. Leave fossil fuel in the ground.
6. Nuclear fuel has a waste storage problem.
7. Solar panels need rare minerals to operate.
8. Cement is a large producer of Carbon emissions.
9. Better housing insulation is needed.

### **Food**

Our grain production per capita peaked in the mid-1980's.

We are losing our top-soil to erosion . Staple crops e.g. potatoes, maize, soya all deplete soil. We need to support organic farming. The fish production is badly affected by global warming. We need to localize food production and abstain from air-freighted delicacies. If meat is eaten there should be a reduction but also experiments to eat rabbit, pigeon, even protein rich insects.

**Conclusion;** Are **we** going to leave life in our world to become extinct or can we make it more peaceful and better. We may need to forge international solidarity. Unfortunately fascism is a possibility.

Comments: Dave Byrne; China is important and we may need mandatory population control and certainly embrace G.M. foods.