As The Machine World Fries the Planet...

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We must hold a council of all generations
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Just walking on an asphalt parking lot in the sun, feeling the artificial heat, tells us this society has no wisdom as it warms the globe. Contrast this with walking under some trees where the air is cooler. And one encounters a mulberry tree with sweet fruit. It is not enough to feed many people, but doesn't it serve as a reminder that food can be grown naturally and collected locally? The fact that people are doing nothing about fruit-tree propagation in residential common areas is evidence that we are going down as a society and taking the climate with us. In the U.S. the average piece of food has traveled 1,500 miles, enabled by oil.

The very idea of ignition as a commonplace activity reveals the insanity of a culture that has jumped off the cliff. To ignite? It's not to cook food or to thin the understory of ancient forests to enhance hunting. It's to fry the planet. Do you like engineering and think ignition is all fine and dandy? Sorry, you can't treat the planet like it's all yours.

The wheel was a great invention indeed. But how many wheels do we need? How many people do we need?

A baby is pushed down a sidewalk in a stroller on wheels. No one thinks of those metal and plastic wheels that were manufactured out of nonrenewable resources, or of the pollution generated. No one thinks of the wear and tear on those wheels that have historically ended up in landfills. No one thinks of all the pavement required to accommodate strollers, skateboards, scooters - not to mention car and truck tires and wheels. The native Americans lived differently, for thousands upon thousands of years. Instead of wheels, they used sleds and travoises, living off the sweet land.

The unthinking motorist is part of the Machine World, becoming machine-like himself. He uses a global-warming machine for the sake of convenience. Car-pool in a time of tight fuel supply and geopolitical conflict over oil? "Nah, gotta drive off to an errand." Bicycle? "Nah, might get sweaty or run over by a car." (So use the sidewalk if there are no pedestrians on it.) Complete disregard for the life he is killing. And the larger system of "rights" (laws) enshrines the killing machine and deprives us of safe surroundings especially for children and elders.

A council of all generations

I think about things like the unsustainable wheels on a passing baby stroller because I see a mistaken extension of inventing that seemed to make sense 50 years or a century or two ago. But that's a short time in human history. We need to hold a council of all generations: all who have been and all who might be waiting to come. We need to treat each one of them with respect. We should examine what we owe to the past and what future generations are owed.

The current generation is the worst steward yet. We not only have the power to extinguish life and drive ourselves extinct, we are acting on it.

The size of the council and its selection, and where it would meet, needs to be determined by a grouping of independent, respected civil-society activists, writers, artists and scientists. Those who are a big part of the problem should not be allowed to masquerade any longer as leaders offering solutions.

Some spiritual disciplines would need to be included if past and future generations are to be somehow represented in the Council of All Generations. Your thoughts on this are welcome.

We are poorly represented but well depicted

Just as the most bloodthirsty, thieving Englishmen that got a foothold in what is now called North America created havoc and gave the new settlers a bad name in the eyes of the native inhabitants, we are not today all greedballs and willful megapolluters. But the gentler folk who show up in the opinion polls as saying they would give up economic growth for a clean environment - this is the majority - have very little say-so. The story of one bad apple spoiling a whole barrel full has been going on ever since gangs and dictators took control of the expanding cultures of Western Civilization. Attempts at fair democracy have been hijacked from within.

The Matrix movie was about a war in the future between the machines and the last of the free humans. The story's machine environment used software and virtual reality to control the non-free humans. The literal story was that a future

hell existed because machines and computers got the upper hand and decided to push the humans aside except to use them as fuel cells. But the message of the story was that we are already machine-like and we cannot see the reality around us because of commonly accepted illusions. However, one misses the greater message that was not in the movie, if one assumes that basic technology - such as millions of wheels - can be infinitely benign.

And that greater message is the dirty truth that Western Civilization has taken humanity and countless species for a ride to hell. System change must replace election placebos, but still we dilly-dally.

This is why we issue a call for action. Culture Change has already written it, and it includes the legal concept of the Necessity Defense with case references. Stay tuned.

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All the further background reading you may need:

USATODAY.com - Alaska the 'poster state' for climate concerns:

www.usatoday.com

While you're at it:

Auto-Free Times/Culture Change magazine back issues:

http://www.culturechange.org/auto_free_times.html

Fact Sheets from our old Alliance for a Paving Moratorium:

http://www.culturechange.org/factsheet1.html

Energy Bulletin features the recent Culture Change Letter on the technofix bubble:

energybulletin.net

Speaking of the technofix, see our new section Energy and Survival in our webpages' menu. Alice Friedemann has joined Culture Change as a contributing editor, offering in this section two new essays of interest to anyone studying food security and related issues.