

A Delicate Imbalance

Scientists tell us that we are ruining our planet. In these times, we hear of holes in the ozone layer, of global warming, of massive deforestation that is destroying the planet's natural balance. The scientific evidence is pretty clear. Yet nobody seems to care.

Some people with the best of intentions recycle their aluminum cans and newspapers. But it's not even close to making a difference. Profit motives of major corporations for this fiscal quarter's revenue far outweigh any long-range environmental programs. If General Motors made a car which burned less fuel, lasted longer, needed fewer repairs, and didn't have an air conditioner that used freon, they would be doing the environmentally correct thing. GM, though, wants to build more cars, including luxury cars, and they want the consumer to buy another car every three years or so. That's why the car models change looks every year. Manufacturers want it to be obvious whether the driver has the latest model or just last year's model.

To make a profit in the near term, many big businesses choose to pay little attention to the long term effects of their decisions. Can we blame them? Not really. If a company did choose the planet over their stockholders, they would be out of business and it wouldn't matter that they took a stand. Their competitors would expand, with their consuming-polluting but profitable practices, to fill the void.

Scientific evidence is clear, but still nobody pays attention. I am capable of getting through the geothermal maps in Scientific News and I agree with the predictions of a seemingly inevitable decline in the livability of Earth. I also know we have nowhere else to go. But most people cannot follow the scientific evidence, and even if they had the training to do so, most of them aren't interested. They don't care about what happens in the next block, let alone in another hemisphere. Their world is just what they perceive affects them - that day, that time, and that place. Television is how most Americans get information. They also get hours of mindless video images, endless and unrealistic situation comedies, contrived soap operas during the day, and many violent episodes on evening drama shows. It's no wonder that families and marriages are breaking down. Nobody reads or thinks or brings new ideas into the relationships. Nobody turns off the TV and takes the time to just talk.

This year (1989) a Denver TV station rebroadcast a program that probably had run during the previous Christmas season. Much of TV is just that - reruns of earlier broadcasts. Same junk, different day. However, this was one rerun that I'm glad they aired. I wonder how many viewers saw it? For once, the television writers were trying to say something important. At the time I saw it, I was adjusting a pair of antennas that I had just installed in the attic of our house on Briarwood. I wrote about the broadcast to my friend, Jim Lockwood, using electronic mail.

From rfrank Sat Aug 5 08:51:52 1989
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During the testing of the television antennas last night, I stopped for a minute to watch a sequence that happened to be on Channel 9. Picture this: President Bush and his wife, Barbara, are in their bedroom in the White House late one

night. It is the Christmas season and the Bush's are expecting their own children and grandchildren to visit them the next morning. A man, actually more of an entity, appears quite unexpectedly in the room. He talks to the President while Barbara sleeps, explaining to him that there is a force that is going to destroy the planet if he and the other world leaders don't get together and do something about it. The President is of course alarmed and asks what this force is and where it is coming from? Outer space? When will it be here? What can be done?

The force that is destroying the planet is of course us, and it's happening now. Deforestation, pollution, chemical and nuclear wastes without a clue how to dispose of them safely. It's a global poisoning process, and it's not too late but something must be done now if we are to keep from killing our planet. The visitor disappears and a moment later Barbara Bush wakes up. George describes the encounter, but Barbara dismisses it as a bad dream. She urges him to get to sleep since the next morning the White House will be full of his grandchildren and he will have a busy day.

Suddenly the doors to their White House bedroom burst open and a group of young children walk slowly into the room, carrying candles. The group is all in white. They circle the bed. As it is the Christmas season, they are softly singing a Christmas carol. President Bush and his wife are totally astonished. Suddenly the stranger reappears who had earlier asked the President to try to save the planet.

Who are these children? George asks, incredulously. The stranger replies, "These are your great grandchildren." Barbara and George look into the eyes of their yet unborn descendants. Then the scene changes, and there is a smaller group of even younger children. The stranger continues "These are your great great grandchildren." In another moment, only a few very young children remain around the bed. The stranger says "These would have been your great great great grandchildren."

"What do you mean, 'Would have been?'" George asks. The stranger replies, "They were never born. The world died. You didn't do anything about it." The youngest little girl and the President are looking at each other. In a small voice that almost sounds as if she is asking to be allowed to be born, the young child says, "Merry Christmas, great great great grandfather." Then she slowly fades into invisibility.

This incident was special to me. I have researched my ancestors – who they were, how they lived, and what their world was like. I see a big difference today in what mankind is asking our delicate ecosystems to endure. Looking back allows me to look forward to future generations in a very personal way. What will they inherit from me? Carl Sandburg said "A baby is God's way of saying that the Earth should go on." Will my great great great granddaughter ever be born? I hope so.