

A Feeling for the Organism

Every evening when I'm finished my writing I turn on the T.V. to watch the news. What I see is discouraging. I see men in different political parties fighting with one another. They remind me of two young brothers in a sand box out in the backyard.

One of them has a toy dump truck filled with sand. The other one has a car. The one with the car wants his turn driving the dump truck. But the dump truck driver won't give him his turn. Then comes the fight. They end up throwing sand at one another and start crying until Mom comes out. She scolds them, grabs them by the ears and marches them back into the house.

For the most part our political world is dominated by men and there are continual struggles between political parties both in the United States and Canada. The dominance of men is part of a cultural reality called "endocentrism". It is defined as "*centered on, emphasizing, or dominated by masculine interests.*" Boys grow up with the belief that they will eventually take charge and their culture supports this belief.

I have great expectations for our young people. They will be our future leaders. I know there will be both men and women in leadership roles. But in this chronicle I will spell out my hope that women will dominate our future just as men have dominated our past and are still dominating our present situation. (If you don't believe this dominating influence, remember it wasn't so long ago that men in both our countries finally deigned to give women the right to vote).

The Requirements for Leadership

We can talk about leadership skills and abilities until the cows come home. But in our climate changing world leaders need not only excellent speaking skills and the ability to think on the spot. More importantly they need to place a high value on relationship, specifically a mutually enhancing relationship between our species and Earth. If what we do is good for Earth, it is good for us because we are dependent upon Earth. If it is not good for Earth in the greater scheme of things, it is not good for us,

The key to dealing with a climate changing world is to realize that Earth is not something "out there." It is something that is part of us, just as our parents are part of us. It think it is interesting to note, without making too much of a point about it, that we often hear the term "Mother Earth." The term Mother Earth recognizes that we and all other species have come from Earth and, in a very real sense, Earth is our mother.

A Change in Thinking

Why do I feel that women are more capable of providing leadership? It is because in many cases they are able to think and act outside the box.

I spent much of my adult life working as a management consultant helping organizations and communities develop strategic plans. At first we would think ahead to next ten years. But then, because of changes in the world, we made plans in terms of five years or even fifteen months. Then the emphasis focused on scenario planning—this situation or that situation just ahead of us.

But in all of these cases we worked with what we had. It never seemed to dawn on us that the systems we had to work with were causing the problems. Nor did we realize that there were other possibilities. But during these years there were women who thought differently and were often accused by men of “not working with the facts”. Actually these women knew the facts but instead of coming to the same conclusions, they were able to see clearly to a different and better future. Here are some examples.

Women Imagining a Different Future.

Rachel Carson in 1965 saw what DDT was doing to Earth. Although her book *Silent Spring* was met with fierce opposition by chemical companies, it spurred a reversal in national pesticide policy, which led to a nationwide ban on **DDT** and other harmful pesticides. It also inspired the creation of the first Earth day in 1970.

Donella Meadows in 1972 was the lead author with a group of researchers from MIT that developed a report for the Club of Rome on Limits to Growth. It showed that we humans had already gone beyond Earth’s ability to respond in areas of population, economics and environment. Her work and consequent writings provided a significant impetus to the development of systems thinking.

Barbara McClintock was a geneticist and was undoubtedly a genius. In her work on maize in the 1940s she discovered what she described as the “jumping genes”-- the ability of genes to “jump” from one chromosome to another. Her discovery was rejected for a number of decades. But her insights were eventually confirmed. In 1982 she was awarded the Nobel Prize. Hers was the first case where the prize was given to a single individual. Some authors have indicated that, as a woman, she had a different way of seeing things. Thus the expression from her own words, you must have “a feeling for the organism.”

Marjorie Kelly has worked for years with businesses, legal corporations, labour unions, environmental and community groups. Once when she was teaching at Schumacher College in Devon, England, she heard another prof ask the question, “*What kind of economy is consistent with living inside a living being.*” That sentence dominated her

work life. It led her to develop her concept of a Generative Economy. This is “a living economy that is designed to generate the conditions for life to thrive, an economy with a built-in tendency to be socially fair and ecologically sustainable.”

Kate Raworth is an English economist working for the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. For twenty years she worked with the UN and Oxfam in different parts of the world. She eventually wrote her book: ***The Doughnut Economy—Seven Ways to Think About a 21st Century Economy***. The emphasis is on creating an economy that is consistent with the limited Earth resources, its ecosystems and the need for humans to survive.

Naomi Klein is a Canadian social activist and film maker known for her political analysis and criticism of corporate globalism and capitalism. She has written a number of books but, as of this writing the most significant is probably *No Is Not Enough: Resisting the New Shock Politics and Winning the World We Need.*”

Greta Thunberg. As we are all aware Greta is a Swedish teenager and environmental activist who has gained international recognition. She is well known for her view that humanity is facing an existential crisis from climate change. She has spoken to government leaders in various parts of the world and her comments have influenced teenagers to demonstrate publically for climate change action.

The Common Ground

If we review the world and work of these women we see two things in common. They are dissatisfied with the way things are and they are concerned with the way the world is becoming. As they look at the way the world is becoming they see the need for a different relationship with Earth.

I'll close with words about such a relationship from Thomas Berry.

To the children

To all the children

To the children who swim beneath

The waves of the sea, to those who live in

The soils of the Earth,

To the children of the flowers

In the meadow and the trees in the forest, to

**All those children who roam on the land
And the winged ones who fly with the winds,
To the human children, too, that all the children
May go together into the future in the full
Diversity of their regional communities.**

Mike Bell, Comox Valley Climate Change Network.