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PROCEEDINGS

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A CACOR BASIC ECOCENTRIC EDUCATIONAL PACKAGE?

by

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This discussion paper explores the possibility of shifting some of CACOR's activities from dealing with ideas to dealing with people; i.e. to add executive endeavour to academic/scientific type of work. In particular it asks whether CACOR should prepare a basic ecocentric educational package directed specifically at economists and politicians, organize its promotion and use innovative alliances to achieve its goals.

The Global Predicament

The major dimensions of the global predicament are now well known by a relatively small number of educated people who actually understand that it never happened before; that some of our actions may cause irreversible damage to global ecosystems; and that the downslope that pulls us towards it is becoming recognizably steeper with each passing year (Al Gore, 1992) - i.e. there is no time to lose.

How to deal with the problems **theoretically** is now also spelled out in a score of books, conference papers etc. In short, some people have the motivation, some say what should be done but, unfortunately, nothing much seems to happen (our Chairman's assessment of march 1990). Global goals are too lofty, too monumental, and most busy people are disinclined to waste time discussing them.

What we can do, we must do. Can we make a difference by trying to select some limited, very specific goals and, in trying to reach them, achieve some real results?

What Kind of Action is Possible?

Ecologically damaging actions may be addressed in three ways:

- Cure: e.g. Environmental Protection Service; pollution abatement, etc.
- Force: e.g. military action to stop nuclear proliferation
- Persuasion: (the sun can remove the coat from a traveller's back faster than the wind).

CACOR is obviously in the persuasion and encouragement category.

In selecting a persuasion-type goal, consider the following three examples from the article *No New Worlds* in the July/Aug. 1992 issue of *Equinox*:

1. p.95: Muammar-el Qaddafi of Lybia argues that Arab countries must increase their numbers from 150 million to 1 billion, while forgetting that there is not enough water in the region to support them.
2. p.89: The Roman Catholic Church claims we can feed as many as 40 billion people, forgetting the obvious questions.

3. p.94: in 1991, our own Economic Council of Canada (now defunct) apparently produced, at taxpayers' expense, a \$1 million dollar study saying that Canada must increase its population to 100 million people by encouraging immigration, in order to raise our standard of living by 7%; in other words increase pollution, traffic, resource depletion etc. by four times in order to increase our wealth by 7%. It sounds crazy, but serious professional economists are obviously preaching such ideas.

All three examples are typical of the Ego-centric World View (see Annex 1) and were chosen to point out that we must start working in the field of economy, not only because we can take it on but its impact on earth is greater and more dangerous. In short, Tripoli and Rome are best left alone.

How to Integrate Economy with Environment

We (CACOR) cannot participate directly in NAFTA or GATT negotiations; we cannot ask governments or the United Nations to create new departments or agencies to deal with sustainable civilized lifestyle; but we can and should try to influence the thinking of various decision makers. We should therefore debate and, if need be, encourage others to debate the best way of reaching people and changing the way they see the world, the social reality, the myths etc.....Mission impossible??

We certainly can identify what kind of people, what kind of audiences will listen - what kind of organizations or lobbies may be interested to help stabilize the world, not by spreading alarming predictions but by disseminating the very basic knowledge that is needed to understand the predictions. Most "educated" people know practically nothing about exponential growth, carrying capacity,

sustainability, etc. All these terms can be explained simplistically, or simply, or with academic sophistication, in accordance with the kind of audience one tries to reach.

In short, I am trying to say that to establish many lists of desirable goals is not going to work quickly enough. One should plough the ground before throwing seeds to the wind.

How to prepare the ground, how to get help from others, how to find allies and lobbies, i.e. how to market the idea is an issue that may be debated and discussed by one of our groups.

For instance, in the eyes of the extremely powerful US lobby of "retired persons", many of whom are grandfathers concerned about the future of their grandchildren, the word "sustainable" means "to live off the interest of one's capital". Such lobbies may influence the motivation of some politicians.

To end by a quotation from *Saving the Planet* (p.9), published by World Watch, "there is something fundamentally wrong in treating the Earth as if it were a business in liquidation". It is as though a vast industrial corporation quietly sold off a few of its factories each year using an accounting system that did not reflect these sales. Such simple words may be enough to induce some people to read a few relevant books and to begin to think differently. Environmental risks, as we know too well, are not easily recognizable by the average person because they are slow, inexorable and flow like some invisible lava.

I hope that the reader will find some merit in this first contribution by a new member, as it is built on the CACOR Statement of Purpose. That is to say, identify specific aspects, be a catalyst in seeking solutions, identify possible roles and promote their implementation.

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AND TO THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARIAT OF THE CLUB OF ROME

ANNEX 1

Interactions in Industrial Society

Egocentric

- Maximization of individual self-interest
 - what is good for each individual will benefit society as a whole
 - mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon (social contract)
- Religious
 - individual saved by own good actions
 - Genesis 1:28 *Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it*

Homocentric

- Utilitarian
 - greatest good for the greatest number
 - social justice (reduce suffering)
 - duty to other human beings
- Religious
 - Golden rule, common to all (see Annex 2)

Ecocentric

- Eco-scientific
 - rational scientific belief system, based on the laws of ecology
 - unity, stability, diversity, harmony of ecosystem
 - balance of nature or chaotic systems approach
- Religious
 - faith that all living and non-living things have value
 - duty to the whole environment
 - human and cosmic survival
 - Gaïa

Myth

Jean Cocteau wrote: *Un mythe est l'image que l'imagination prête au rêve* - the likeness of a dream conjured by our imagination.

Miscellaneous Quotations

A dominant world view (social paradigm):

- "a dominant social paradigm is a mental image of social reality that guides expectations in a society."

P. Ehrlich.

Worldview elements

1. There are general assumptions about reality, including humanity's place in nature.
2. There are general "rules of the game" for approaching problems that are generally agreed upon.
3. Those who subscribe to a given worldview share a definition of the assumptions and goals of their society.
4. There is a definite, underlying confidence among believers in the worldview that solutions to problems exist within the assumptions of the worldview.
5. Practitioners within the worldview present arguments based on the validity of data as rationally explained by experts - be they scientific experts or experts in the philosophy and religious assumptions of the worldview.

T. Kuhn

Western Worldview

1. People are fundamentally different from all other creatures on Earth, over which they have dominion.
2. People are masters of their own destiny; they can choose their goals and learn to do whatever is necessary to achieve them.
3. The world is vast, and thus provides unlimited opportunities for humans.
4. The history of humanity is one of progress; for every problem there is a solution and thus progress need never cease.

Wm. Catton Jr./Riley Dunlop

Corollaries to 4

1. All problems are solvable.
2. All problems are solvable by people.
3. Many problems are solvable by technology.
4. Those problems that are not solvable by technology, or by technology alone, have solutions in the social world (politics, economics, etc.).
5. When the chips are down, we will apply ourselves and work together for a solution before it is too late: David Ehrenfeld, ecologist.

ANNEX 2

THE GOLDEN RULE IN DIFFERENT RELIGIONS

In Christianity:	<i>Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. (Matthew 7.10)</i>
In Hinduism:	<i>Do not to others, which, if done unto thee would cause thee pain.</i>
In Buddhism:	<i>In five ways should a clansman minister to his friends and familiars - by generosity, courtesy and benevolence, by treating them as he treats himself and by being as good as his word.</i>
In Judaism:	<i>What is hurtful to yourself, do not do to your fellow men.</i>
In Taoism:	<i>Regard your neighbour's gain as your own gain and regard your neighbours loss as your own loss.</i>
In Confucianism:	<i>Do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you.</i>
In Sikhism:	<i>As thou deemest thyself, so deem others.</i>
In Jainism:	<i>In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self.</i>
In Zoroastrianism:	<i>That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self.</i>

Notes: A major principle of Taoism is the concept of *doing nothing*. A quotation attributed to Laotse (the old one) "Do nothing and nothing will not be done" emphasizes this principle.

One outstanding fact of Chinese history is that the Chinese have never engaged in religious wars; quite a difference from European history, past and present