

APRIL 19, 2010

Addressing Climate Change: Winning the War on Sustainability

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At its heart, climate change is an overarching symptom of the unsustainability of the current global human enterprise. Many in the United States recognize this, motivating a productive and needed conversation on solutions. As we write, Congress contemplates how the US will address climate change in a way that sustains and improves our economy, and President Obama is encouraging new fuel efficiency standards via the Environmental Protection Agency.

In the meantime, however, a war is being waged on the very idea of national sustainability. Indeed, a quixotic, vocal minority in the U.S. has received a lot of press lately for lauding unsustainability as a patriotic duty. The Tea Party overflows in irony. From the sound of their rightwing policies, most of them voted for the previous president, who spent our country into a catastrophic debt and recession with a war, tax cuts for the wealthy, and lack of economic regulation.

And now they're angry, and simply don't want to pay for it. This is what they call patriotism. Justifiably, the Mad Hatter of this party is a person who personified unsustainability and irresponsibility while in office, retreating from her official duties when it became personally inconvenient. Sarah Palin promoted the unsustainable development of oil in Alaska while governor, and unsustainable destruction of wildlife and environment in the name of pleasure and profit. Ever bereft of logic, she now brays this unpatriotic banner of twin vices on the national stage to angry throngs of the Tea Party. The wave of irony recently crested with Discovery Channel, whose popular shows illustrate the case for sustaining wildlife and the environment. Discovery is paying Palin over \$1 million to host a new Alaska show.

Having crested, the wave of irony and insanity is finally being hit with a green, angry counter-surge pushing back. Appropriately, these green patriots are going after this icon of unsustainability. The Center for Biological Diversity is petitioning

Discovery to unhost Palin. The Sustainability Education Network is organizing boycotts of those companies who support the show. It seems trivial, given the much larger issues our nation face. But it symbolizes a far greater fight. Human history has shown us how great civilizations fall when they refuse to face reality. Our reality today is that we must work our way back to sustainability. Throwing tantrums won't cut it.

What CAN we do? Yes, there are plenty of books on individual actions, and policy plans -- check out our free online book for starters. Now, though, there is a global movement creating Transition Towns -- towns in which the community decides as a whole how to drastically cut down their carbon footprint. It is addressing the reality of climate change and peak oil through community planning. Started in England, there are hundreds of towns worldwide that are now participating, and more expressing interest.

Now THAT's something to rally 'round, and party about.