

Harry Johnson

If you're fortunate enough to live in Australia and you value your children and grandchildren as much as you value yourself, and you've had an education that has put a roof over your head, you just keep chipping away. As Pablo Casals, the world's most famous cellist said:- " We must take the next step"

At one stage funding for global environmental repair was only 5% of global military spending and it is said that giving the global military machine 2 weeks holiday, the money saved could be used to adequately feed, clothe, house and educate the entire population of the world.

Our four basic, essential needs are clean, carbon-constrained AIR, unpolluted WATER, uncontaminated SOIL and SPECIES DIVERSITY and now for the first time in the history of humanity, we can no longer guarantee that the air we breathe is safe to breathe anywhere in the world. Today smoking kills 7 million people per year. Air pollution kills 8 million people per year.

Last year the 7-year-old daughter of a major Australian organisation asked her father if she would need to wear a mask for the rest of her life. Not a prospect any 7-year-old would look forward to, any more than a child in that group of one billion fellow human beings who don't have enough to eat on a daily basis. For those who do have enough to eat, the thought that the Olympic Games in Japan may have to be cancelled due to increasing air pollution from the pandemic is an example of the threat posed to the developed world.

If our present expanding pandemic tells us one thing it is that we must now change direction so that we don't end up where we are heading.

This pandemic tells us that Barry Commoner's first 'Law of Ecology':- " Everything is connected to everything else" is correct on a global basis. This pandemic can only be addressed adequately on a global basis when a successful vaccine is provided to the one billion fellow human beings who don't have enough to eat on a daily basis for not even the world's children who have been privileged to attend the world's most prestigious schools will be able to safely travel the world until the world's air is safe to breathe.

This vital paradigm shift in thinking and action about how we must now start to treat the world's people as well as the world's non-voting species of fauna, flora and fungi, the world's web of life that never has a vote in its future was suggested to me by two people.

Close to 70 years ago my mother who I treasured told me she believed we should treat each other and the environment how we would like to be treated. 35 years ago a Grade 3 8 year old girl told me she too believed what my mother believed.

But when you look around, you still see too many decision makers making important decisions that appear to be based on greed, short-term gain or ignorance.

In recent years the United States has hardly been an exemplar of what you would hope for from the world's most powerful nation but I am now delighted that the United States now has Joe Biden as its President for I remember a quote from Joe Biden when he was Vice-President to Barack Obama:- "The powerful, the rich and the well-connected get a seat at the table while the rest of us are on the menu." ('Late Night Live' 3.12. 08.) 500 Americans have \$ 2 trillion more now than they had at the start of the pandemic and 55 major American companies paid no tax last year. As Q and A tweet on 25.3.21 put it :- "The rich get richer and the poor get the picture."

President Biden has plans to change direction in very important policy areas:- to achieve fairer wealth distribution, to attempt to adequately address the climate catastrophe now, to put in place more adequate gun control at home and to decrease its military spending overseas, starting with pulling out from its military presence in Afghanistan.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that we live on a planet with finite resources and whether it be the availability of clean air, unpolluted water and other material resources, on-going increasing consumption is no more possible than ever increasing population growth if we want to sustain life on earth on an on-going basis.

Arundhati Roy in her Sydney Peace Prize Lecture in 2004 said:- "Weapons were manufactured in order to fight wars. Now wars are manufactured in order to sell weapons." And I believe President Biden is determined to cut U.S. spending on fighting wars so that more US funds can instead be devoted towards endeavours for more global peace initiatives and for fighting the climate catastrophe which is the greatest challenge our children, our grandchildren and future generations are inheriting from us.

Janet Yellen, Biden's Secretary of the Treasury, the first woman ever to have held this position is a founding member of the Climate Leadership Council. Yellen has declared that the US is now actively working with the G20 nations to agree to a Global Minimum Corporate Tax Rate along with the United Kingdom. If this is achieved this will be a game changer in global wealth distribution.

The future is what we choose and who we choose to elect on behalf of those we cherish, for those still too young to vote for their future and for the world's non-voting species that never have a vote in their future. Choose wisely, while there is still a little time.