

Democracy, the Earth, and You

Presentation Four: Strategies for Planetary Transformation

(Approximately 40 minutes)

The following write-up contains recommended content for the fourth presentation. Obviously, each presenter must make this presentation his or her own. The write-up speaks from the first person “I” in order to indicate the sort of ownership needed. This write-up may be more thorough than some presentations need to be. The presentation can be simplified or expanded to fit each group. Also, note that the titles are not part of the script.

The basic intent of this presentation is to provide encouragement for concrete action, through suggesting a viable strategy for reaching the future we seek.

Opening

(During the break place on each seat the handout that has on one side the Strategy Chart and on the other side the overview of the course.)

On your seat you will find a sheet of paper. On one side is a chart entitled **Strategies for Planetary Transformation**. This will be our focus this afternoon. On the other side is a diagram of this whole course. Again using this diagram, let’s review where we have been.

In the first session, we focused on **Overviews of the Ecological Era**—on some master pictures that illuminate the times in which we live.

In the second session we focused on the ways that industrial civilization is confronting an **Ecological Crisis**. We noted that “crisis” means both the necessity of ending some old ways and the possibility of beginning something new. We observed that the ecological crisis cannot be met without constructing a whole new mode of human society.

In the third session we focused on the **Core Blocks** to progressive change that exist within current industrial civilization: 1. Our Obsolete Economics, 2. The Corporation Rule of our Lives, 3. The Demise of Democracy, and 4. The Public Relations War on Truth.

In this fourth session, we will deal with the construction of **Winning Strategies**—with how we the vanguard, the concerned minority, can actually win a new destiny for the Earth and humanity. Also in this final session we will raise the question of how each of us can make a significant contribution to the doing of these strategies.

So this is our first question: “Is there a winning strategy for changing all of this?”

I. Is There a Winning Strategy?

Has humanity already created a hopeless situation for itself? Is there any viable path from the mess we are in to an ecologically wholesome human presence on this planet?

Feelings of Futility and Thoughts of “Why Bother?”

We tend to be overwhelmed by the immensity of the task. **Most of us have done ecologically helpful things:** insulated our houses, recycled our wastes, saved water, purchased cars that get more miles per gallon, and so forth. We could list a hundred and one such things many of us do or could do. Yet even if millions of individuals do scores of these good things, it will not make a big enough difference to avoid ecological disaster.

Similarly, many corporations have done ecologically helpful things, and we have seen some laws passed that have protected the environment. But these repairs on our society do not add up to a winning strategy.

Perhaps some of us have been ecological activists who have actually succeeded in preventing some disaster: closing down a polluting cement plant, rescuing a waterway, saving a piece of forest or a wetlands or a wilderness area. And perhaps some of us have been eco-activists long enough to learn this tragic truth: ecological victories are only temporary. They can always be reversed later. And when the established world wins over its ecological opponents, the results are often permanent and irreversible.

This awareness does not make for optimism. If our ecological victories are temporary and our ecological losses are permanent, we are losing in the overall struggle.

I think ecological activists sometimes feel like a poorly financed fire department rushing to put out one fire after another, while well-financed arsonists are setting more fires, setting them faster than we can put them out. This is not an encouraging picture.

So why bother? Let's just relax and enjoy these last few decades on the way to doom.

Sam Smith, in a book entitled *Why Bother?* put it this way: "To accept the full consequences of the degradation of the environment, . . . the dismantling of democracy, the commodification of culture, the contempt for the real, the culture of impunity among the powerful and the zero tolerance towards the weak, requires a courage that seems beyond us. . . . We do not know how to look honestly at the wreckage without an overwhelming sense of surrender."¹

So why bother? This question will not go away. Is there anything we can do that will matter enough to be worth all the trouble of fighting these ominous foes? Can the changes we need actually occur? Will anything we do make a difference?

Big Changes do Happen

We might encourage ourselves a bit by noticing that big social changes do happen. Whoever would have thought that apartheid in South Africa would end in our lifetimes? Whoever would have thought that the Cold War would end or that the Berlin wall would be torn down in our lifetimes? When we look at long spans of history, we can see many other huge changes. The social status of women in many parts of the world has changed enormously in only a century. The ending of slavery and the improvement of conditions for African Americans in this country have also been an enormous change. In the midst of these changes, it probably often seemed hopeless to those trying to affect these changes.

But humanity is built for change. Step by step we got into our current mess through our own inventions. And step by step we can get somewhere else through making further efforts.

Building the Road as we Travel

And we don't have to know everything about how to get where we need to go. We can learn as we go. I love the title of that book *Building the Road as We Travel*.² Those words conjure up for me the picture of moving down a railroad track on one of these hand-pumped railroad carts and at the same time laying the tracks out ahead of our vehicle. Clearly, no one has been where we are going. So we will not know everything we need to know about how to get where we are going until we have already gotten there.

¹Smith, Sam; *Why Bother?* (Feral House: 2001) this quote was taken from promotional material on this book.

²This book on cooperatives is recommended in the Further Resources handout.

At the same time, we do need a viable strategy on how to get where we need to go. We need to be able to visualize lots of people doing everything that needs to be done. One person cannot do very much to effect the huge changes we are talking about. We have to picture ourselves as members of a vast movement in which each of us is playing our part.

Acting alone, we can only do one little thing at a time, but as a vast movement of people we can do many huge things all at once. So seeing ourselves as a BIG WE rather than a little me is very important. I like to call this BIG WE “The Vanguard of the Earth.” There exists a large diversity of movements that are already dealing with various aspects of the ecological crisis. No one knows the boundaries of this vast vanguard of people and movements. But we can know that it exists and that we can contribute to its growth and clarity and effectiveness. Everyone does not need to focus on exactly the same aspects of this huge transition. But each of us and each ecological movement need a way to envision being a meaningful part of an overall winning strategy.

So what does this BIG WE need to do? This chart entitled “**Strategies for Planetary Transformation**” is a picture of what this BIG WE needs to do. Again, no one of us is going to do all these things, but all of us together need to do all of this if we are going to win the game we need to win. I am going to walk through this chart in order to clarify how this might be a winning strategy.

Down the left column are three overall strategies. I am calling them “**The Triple Play.**” These three strategies are not sequential. All three of them are already in process and all three need to be vigorously pursued right now. Each strategy is described as a positive direction stated in relation to some overwhelmingly powerful foe. These three strategies are:

Democratic Governance rather than **Corporation Rulership**
Global Cooperation rather than **Corporate Globalization**
Local Innovation rather than **Monopolistic Uniformity**

Across the top of the chart we see three stages. Right now we can pursue the **Short-Range** tasks. Then, as we succeed with them, we can pursue the **Mid-Range** tasks. And still later, we can complete each of these three vast transitions by doing the **Long-Range** tasks.

Note the bolded words in the Short-Range column: **Limit**, **Protest**, and **Demonstrate**.

Limit Corporate Control of Existing National Democracies. We cannot **End** corporate control immediately. We can, however, begin *now* **Limiting** this still-growing control.

Protest Every Globalization Event Massively & Disseminate the True Story Widely. Nothing prevents us from turning out tens of thousands and even millions of us in meaningful protests. We can also conduct thousands of reeducation programs right away.

Demonstrate Viable Alternatives to our Current Ways of Life. This is already being done. Nothing prevents us from doing more.

Now, let’s look at this chart row by row, examining how each of these master strategies plays itself out in three stages. **The details of what I am going to say are not as important as seeing this master picture.** This big picture can show us the possibility of winning historical victories. The details are secondary. The details I will site are only illustrative; they are not inclusive of all the detailed actions we might do.

II. Democratic Governance rather than **Corporation Rulership**

The first row of this chart is about overcoming corporate rulership: In the third session of our course, we discussed corporation rulership over our democracies and our lives. We examined how

we do not have true democracy as long as corporations control our governments. This first row deals with correcting that malady.

Campaign Finance Reform

So, how do we make this huge shift? **We can begin, at least in the United States, with some meaningful campaign finance reform.** Changing how election campaigns are financed can be a step toward ridding our political system of corporate control. The issues we have been discussing cannot get a fair hearing in the halls of government until this happens. Meaningful transformation does not have a chance as long as corporations continue to pay the exorbitant costs of electing our representatives. All this money results in unwarranted legislative influence. Access is power.

So we need to change the ways in which our elections are financed. The McCain/Feingold bill on campaign finance reform, which passed the U.S. Senate, is one small step in the right direction. In the wake of the Enron scandal, a similar bill was passed in the U.S. House of Representatives. Even if such a bill is signed by the president and becomes the law of the land, it is only a small beginning.³ The Green Party and others are insisting that the malady of campaign financing cannot be solved by anything less than full public financing of our elections.

Public financing would mean that a candidate could run for public office without having to raise millions and millions of dollars from the very people who may be opposing the changes for which a good candidate needs to fight. Some nations already have workable public financing systems. The states of Arizona and Maine have made significant steps toward public financing. We don't need to know all the details about how public financing works in order to get serious about moving in this direction.

Here is another meaningful proposal for election reform. Jim Hightower, the ex-agriculture secretary of Texas and the colorful editor of *The Hightower Lowdown*, has convinced me that we ought to break up the two-party monopoly on national elections in the U.S. We could do this quite easily by having **instant runoff voting**. Here is how such a voting system works: when you go into the voting booth, you vote for both your first and second choices for each political office. Then, if no candidate has received enough first-place votes to give him or her a majority of the votes cast, the instant runoff goes into play. The vote-counting system counts the second-place votes of all those persons who have not given their first place vote to one of the two leading candidates. These additional votes will then give a clear majority to one of these candidates. For example, in the last U.S. presidential election, if Nader were your first choice and Gore your second choice, you could have voted for Nader without thereby supporting your third choice, Bush. If most Nader voters had chosen Gore as their second choice, then Gore rather than Bush would probably have been elected.

Instant runoff voting gives minority party candidates a much larger impact in the public debate. It makes airing the wide variety of views a meaningful part of the election process. Candidates would no longer need to focus so much attention on swing voters. This would get us past the spectacle of watching campaigns in which the most important issues are not even discussed while two supposedly opposing candidates turn themselves into pretzels trying to appeal to the muddled middle of the voting spectrum. As Jim Hightower said in one of his book titles, "There is nothing in the middle of the road but yellow stripes and dead armadillos."

Election reform also needs some very **simple and obvious changes**—fair registration procedures, ending the intimidation of minority voters, and the nationwide standardization of voting machinery that actually works. Unless we get serious about straightening all this out, democracy will disappear entirely.

Apparently, a significant number of people do not want democracy. They seem to think that the rulership of the corporations is better. At least some politicians prefer being bought by the

³ Note that this illustration needs to be updated as events unfold.

corporations to retirement from office. So we can expect that election reform measures will be opposed, watered down, and circumvented. This will happen because those politicians who got elected by the old system don't like their chances in a new system. Furthermore, corporate wealth is going to pour millions of dollars into blocking any further election reform. Therefore, it will take enthusiastic interest on the part of citizens to get all the needed changes worked through.

Some U.S. citizens already feel that our political system is so hopelessly corrupt that we can no longer work with it at all. I do not believe that is true. However corrupt our current national democracies may be, they are the only vehicles presently available that are powerful enough to limit the rulership of the corporations. We cannot simply walk away into the woods. We have to win back our democratic governments step by step, office by office, issue by issue. We have to become wise voters, and we have to heal the voting process.

Yet I agree that something more than simply voting is needed. I would be in favor of about 20 million people going to Washington D.C. and simply camping out there on the streets until effective public financing of our elections is passed into law.

Limit Corporate Control of Existing Democracies

We have been talking about this first box in the first row of the chart: **Limit Corporate Control of our Existing National Democracies**. This is not going to be easy. We need to move beyond mild-mannered persuasion and learn how to insist with public force. We need to provide public leaders with offers they cannot refuse. We need to throw every roadblock imaginable into the path of allowing our lives to slip into ever greater control by the vast pools of corporate wealth.

Over the long haul, our huge national governments need to be decentralized, but for the short term national quasi-democracies are the best tool we have for restraining run-away corporations. **Limiting Corporate Control means using our existing national democracies as tools of power to referee the economic playing field and bring some law and order into the anarchy of corporation behavior.**

One way we can begin limiting the power of the corporations is to stop treating them as "legal persons" in our courts of law. Corporations are fictitious persons not natural persons with natural needs and responsibilities. The Supreme Court of the United States erred in granting corporations first amendment rights. Corporations began as institutions which were licensed by the overall body politic for specific purposes. These licenses are the criteria to which corporations need to be held accountable, not the bill of rights that was written for human persons. If corporations do not live up to their licenses, these licenses can be revoked by the governing bodies that issue them. This change in legal practice would result in some far-reaching curtailments of the overweening political and economic power of huge corporations.

End Corporate Rulership of our Political, Economic, and Cultural Lives

Let us look at the second box in the first row of our chart. Ending corporate rulership is the mid-range strategy. It will take time to build up the necessary political clout to fully end corporate rule. But building momentum toward this mid-range aim is more important than any short-term victory. **Our aim is to End (not Slow, not Limit, but End) the Corporate Rulership of our Political, Economic, and Cultural Lives.**

We need to build up a huge constituency of people who are clear that corporate rulership is **the most important current social evil**. Policing the terrorism of Islamic radicals is important and immediate, but ending the ongoing hidden terrorism of our multinational corporations is the priority of priorities.

Here is another way to talk about this: give back to our democratic governments the ability to firmly and fairly referee the economic playing field. Governments do not need to micro-manage, just referee; but they cannot referee well if they are beholden to corporations.

Can you imagine a football game in which the referees were hired by one of the teams and fired if they did not make decisions agreeable to the team that hired them? That would destroy the entire integrity of the game. This is what has actually happened on the economic playing field: the biggest players are hiring the referees and telling them how to do their job. Not only does this make the economic game unfair for everyone; it is also driving the entire human enterprise off the cliff.

Some of us find national politics so distasteful that we don't even want to think about all this. But the vanguard of the Earth must not work at local levels only. We must take seriously the important role that our current national governments need to play in this great transition. The full empowerment of local governments is blocked until we recover our national democracies from their current enslavement to multinational wealth.

Build Local Bioregional Governance in Planet-wide Cooperation

This brings us to the last box in the first row: **Building Local Bioregional Governance in Planet-wide Cooperation**. In the long range, the decentralization of our governing functions remains an important goal. As long as the multinational corporations rule our nations, we cannot decentralize national functions to the regional level. But as national governments recover their power, they can decentralize that power to more local decision-making bodies.

In the meantime, we can get ready for decentralization. We can define what we mean by "local regions." We currently live in a chaos of local districts: our zip code district, our telephone area code district, our congressional district, our county or parish, our state or province. All these and many other districts have been designed for narrow human purposes. They do not define our home places. They do not include a consideration of our natural region of the planet. We can begin preparing for meaningful local responsibility and governance by discerning in new ways where we live—what watersheds we live on; what types of soil and plants and animals characterize our home; as well as by learning the history, current conditions, and possible futures of our local regions of the planet.

We can begin conducting meaningful local meetings and shaping public support for local empowerment. But I repeat, *we cannot manifest a full move toward local empowerment until we have shut down corporate rulership*. At the present time, we have not even slowed corporate rulership.

Therefore, the strategies on row one of this chart need to be done in the order suggested. First, limit corporate rule. Second, end corporate rule. Then, third, build the new decentralized political systems—systems that are locally based and therefore more in contact with the needs of specific ecosystems and specific local planetary regions.

III. **Global Cooperation** rather than **Corporate Globalization**

Let's look at the second row of this chart. This master strategy has to do with the quality of our planet-wide relationships. We now live together on one planet. We cannot retreat to our local places and ignore the rest of the planet. Anything important happening anywhere on the planet now affects everybody everywhere.

There are, however, two very different ways to develop our planet-wide social existence. **Corporate Globalization** is a name for the harmful direction in which we are now heading. Ending

this trend toward ever greater corporate globalization does not mean isolating ourselves from the rest of the planet. Globalization itself is not the problem; the problem is the corporate-globalization quality of our global relations.

The name **Global Cooperation** indicates a different pattern of planetary relationships from the one now in motion. It means a pattern in which every local region is assisting every other local region to establish ecological integrity, health, justice, prosperity, and hope. As we all know, a serious health epidemic in one region of the planet threatens the health of every other region. This same principle applies to ecological health and social justice. We live on one planet. Perhaps the events of September 11th have made this more clear to us. It is now in our self interest as well as an expression of our compassion to assist every region of the planet to function in an optimal fashion.

In other words, “global” or “living together on one planet” does not need to mean having a “new world order” in which an elite coalition of wealthy corporations is on the top ruling the rest of the planet. And no part of the planet needs to control any of the other parts. “Cooperation” rather than “control” is the key word here. Cooperation does not mean violating our own interests as a region for the sake of other regions. Cooperation means realizing that the wellbeing of all regions enhances the wellbeing of our own region. Cooperation is an expression of self love as well as benevolence. Cooperation means workability rather than top-down oppression. **“Global Cooperation” means ending the top-down, oppressive, money-driven, power-driven, destructive trend we are calling “Corporate Globalization.”**

The Anti-Globalization Movement

In order to understand what I am pointing to with this term “Global Cooperation” it is useful to be aware of the existence and meaning of the so-called “anti-globalization movement.” The anti-globalization movement has conducted protests in Seattle and other places, most recently in New York City on February 2nd during the meeting of the World Economic Forum.⁴ These protests have been organized against the policies of our various world trade organizations which are all dominated by what I am calling “Corporate Globalization.”

The anti-globalization movement is not against planet-wide relationships or even against planet-wide trade per se. The anti-globalization movement is an expression of cooperation among a planet-wide aggregate of forces coming from every strata of society and every geographical place. “Anti-globalization” is a title given to this movement by its enemies, the corporate globalization forces. The anti-globalization movement is not against globalization. ***It is against corporate globalization.***

Most politicians, educators, journalists, and media pundits dismiss the anti-globalization movement—picturing it as some sort of crazy rejection of modern times rather honestly looking into the issues being raised. The “anti-globalization” movement is expressing the awareness that we citizens of the modern world need to take a fresh look at how we are allowing globalized power to develop. The anti-globalization movement is for democracy and opposed to having the corporations fill the vacuum of planetary rule-making with top-down rulership.

Here is an illuminating example of how corporate globalization destroys democracy. It became common after lead was removed from gasoline to use another additive MTBE.⁵ MTBE it turns out is a very difficult substance to contain and it invariably leaks out and pollutes water systems. This damage to precious water supplies became so extensive in California that the state legislature, after careful scientific research, passed a law banning the use of this substance in California. However Chapter 11 of the NAFTA agreement provides a means whereby corporations can recover their losses from governments that interfere with their profits. So using this provision, a Canadian company which makes one part of MTBE has sued the U.S. government for a billion dollars. This

⁴ Note that this illustration will need to be updated as events unfold.

⁵ Methyltertiarybutyl ether

suit, according to NAFTA rules, is to be settled, not before the Supreme Court or in any democratic body, but in a secret commission of NAFTA to which the public is not admitted. This commission is controlled by the corporations. If the Canadian company wins its suit, the U.S. government will have to pay that company a billion dollars and then perhaps reclaim its billion somehow from California. These dynamics place great pressure on our state and national governments not to pass needed laws that protect citizens from such pollution. Chapter 11 of the NAFTA agreement gives corporations the power to punish and perhaps override the decisions of our democratic institutions. This is corporate globalization. This is a means of tyranny by multinational corporations over our democracies. This must be opposed.

Contrary to corporate propaganda, corporate globalization is not necessary for human prosperity. In spite of its claims, corporate globalization is offering no hope to the poor in the developing world. It is offering near-starvation employment to the jobless while lowering wages worldwide. Corporate globalization is a consolidation of the top-down rulership by a power elite. It is conducting the final overthrow of both democracy and the market economy. It is the antithesis of genuine local democratic government. It has no interest in fair trade or the improvement of basic human and ecological conditions. It is a defensive movement led by the conservative establishment who see the post-modern world as a threat to their wealth and power. It is a bitter dogmatism clinging to delusory beliefs.

Corporate globalization even pretends to be the foe of all forms of terrorism. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 were inexcusable and such actions need to be policed; nevertheless, these attacks were in part a response to what we might call "corporate terrorism." ***Corporate globalization is itself a kind of terrorist movement of global scope.***

Corporate globalization is not healthy globalization; it is globaloney. And this globaloney is the evil that the so-called "anti-globalization" movement is protesting.

The specific thinking of the anti-globalization movement is hard to characterize because this movement encompasses such a wide band of perspectives. While diversity is part of its power, this movement has not yet arrived at a clear consensus on many topics. There is one topic, however, about which all these diverse forces agree: ***they know who the foe is. The foe is huge multinational corporations and their exploitation of the planet as well as their undermining of democracy, the free-market, and the power of every local community.***

Some of the forces that make up the anti-globalization movement are fairly conservative labor union supporters who are aware that corporate globalization is undoing more than a century of accomplishments by the labor movements. Corporate globalization is returning all working people, world-wide, to the position of powerless serfs. At the other extreme are anarchists who in the name of freedom have always been suspicious of any form of governance. In between these extremes are lots of other people who are critical of both labor conservatives and the anarchists within the anti-globalization movement. Most anti-globalists see a positive role for our established governments. They are coming together around a long list of important issues--reestablishing full democracy, ecological sanity, working conditions, feminine values, and other crucial matters that are being undermined by corporate globalization.

In this quick overview of the anti-globalization movement, I am trying to indicate that all of us who consider ourselves responsible people need to see ourselves as part of the anti-globalization movement. We need to bring our valid insights and our critical minds to this very important, wildly emerging movement. ***Just as the civil rights movement was the key movement in the sixties, so the anti-globalization movement may be the key movement of the first decade of this new century.***

The fact that this movement is messy, conflicted, and unclear on many topics is simply a common characteristic of all new movements.

Protest Massively and Disseminate the True Story Widely

I have been discussing the first box on the second row of this chart. In the short-range we have to **Protest Corporate Globalization** in every way we can. Every city that dares to host a corporate globalization meeting needs to pay the price of having thousands (why not millions?) of protesters clogging up their urban systems.

But even more important is the **Wide Dissemination of the True Story**—namely, that corporations are seeking to consolidate their rulership over every national democracy as well as over every dictatorship on this planet. We have to get good at disentangling people from the lies that support this trend. We have to get good at both bypassing and using the mass media to get out this message. Silent acquiescence to corporate globalization will not work. We need to be noisy to a degree that would make every ancient prophet and every modern boat-rocker grin in approval.

Educate the Thinking Public to the Full Crisis and the Winning Strategy

The mid-range task on this second row is: **Educate the Thinking Public to the Full Ecological Crisis and all these Winning Strategies**. This very course is intended to do part of this work. But this strategy is much larger than teaching a few courses. We must end the brain damage being done in our business schools, medical schools, law schools, religious-leadership schools, universities, colleges, churches, high schools, elementary schools, and kindergartens. The educational revolution being indicated here is vast. It includes transforming educational methods as well as educational content.

We are currently being educated by our media and our institutions of learning to simply fill slots in a civilization that is obsolete and destined to crash upon the rocks. We need instead to teach one another to think, to envision, to dream, and to act in ways that change the trajectory of history toward those fresh possibilities that scare us yet fill us with true hope.

Restore Local Autonomy to each Region of the Planet

In box three of row two is the long-range task that gives completeness to all our protests and educational ventures—**Restoring Local Autonomy to Each Region of the Planet**. We do not need continent-wide, corporation-sponsored news agencies telling us their selected half of the truth. We do not need continent-wide, advertisement-sponsored broadcast stations telling us what to buy. Local people, local information services, and planetary networks of local news agencies can assist local people to figure out for themselves what is so and what is needed. Local people can construct their own economies, their own political processes, and their own cultural developments.

Sharing with other regions all across the planet then becomes part of the fun of local autonomy. The current Corporate Globalization means telling lies at the top and then disseminating them to us supposedly ignorant, local robots at the bottom. Global Cooperation on the other hand means a two-way dialogue in which the truth of each group is expressed to every other local group. Global Cooperation means an arrangement in which planet-wide dialogue takes the place of top-down indoctrination.

IV. Local Innovation rather than Monopolistic Uniformity

The third row of the chart deals with overcoming **Monopolistic Uniformity**. By “Monopolistic Uniformity” I mean a McDonalds and a Wal-Mart and Coca Cola in every town on the planet. I also mean our trust in widely-distributed name brands over our trust in home-grown, locally produced products. By “monopolistic uniformity” I mean our trust in those ever-present advertising efforts that tell us lies, both small and gross, about what we are getting and about the social costs and environmental costs of our getting it.

“Local innovation” means each community and each region of the planet finding its own appropriate ways of doing things so that humans, all other life forms, and entire ecosystems are appropriately served. For example, the production of food could be much more localized. Our present food system pays pennies on the dollar to the farmer. The money we spend at supermarkets goes mostly for transportation and to various levels of middle-men, processors, and packagers. Is it possible that locally grown food could be moderately priced and still pay the farmers who grow it a generous thank you?

Agriculture is a very important topic, too vast to explore thoroughly in this talk, but surely a responsible and effective farmer does not have to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on petrochemicals, gasoline, and ever bigger machinery. Industrialized, technological agriculture can be still smarter than it is today. It can rescue itself from its slavery to the big corporations.

There are thousands of other locally solvable issues. Houses do not have to waste energy. Waste disposal sites do not have to use cropland and pollute their surroundings. We can drive more efficient cars, support more public transportation, favor rail transportation over trucks and planes. This list is virtually endless. Local communities can run their own lives better than the multinational corporations now run them.

This chart of strategies would not be complete without the hard work of local re-empowerment. Even if rows 1 and 2 were done, we the vanguard of the Earth would still have to do row 3.

The Vastness of the Ecological Library

How to live locally in an ecologically effective manner is no longer a question without answers. ***We now have an ecological library with tens of thousands of excellent books on every conceivable subject.*** What do you want to know how to do? There are at least 10 good books on your subject. Our problem is not a lack of knowledge; it is lack of common will to act on the knowledge we have. Each of us could be recycling everything in our trash cans, and most of us would be glad to do that if our local community made it convenient for us to do so. But in most cases, we don't have local community. In our world of corporate globalization, each of us has become a solitary consumer for the big corporations. ***We almost never get together and talk with one another about what we want and how we could have it.***

Demonstrate Viable Alternatives to our Current Ways of Life

The first box on the third row of this chart is about **Demonstrating Viable Alternatives to our current Ways of Life.** Creative innovators have been working on almost every issue we could mention for many decades. I am talking about things like organic agriculture, alternative sewage systems, recycling, imaginative public transportation systems, and this list is long. But more innovation can still be done. Perhaps little or nothing has been done in your or my particular local place. Demonstrating viable alternatives remains an important part of this whole picture of what needs to be done by the vanguard of the Earth. And nothing stands in the way of our doing this. There are always a few people who are ready to do something that truly betters their local community. And these small but relevant actions educate other people about the directions we need to move.

Construct Eco-Wise Economic Enterprises and Cultural Institutions

In the second box on the third row we see the mid-range expansion of box one: **Constructing Eco-Wise Economic Enterprises and Cultural Institutions.** With these words I mean to indicate building substantial, long-lasting organizations. A full-blown economic enterprise or cultural institution will require years to bring into full operation. Committing ourselves to new things when everyone else around us is trusting in the old taken-for-granted ways can be somewhat painful as well as hard work.

Bill Moyers, in his TV documentary “Earth on Edge,” tells the story of a Kansas farmer who has abandoned the old modes of agriculture. When European farmers began plowing the mid-American prairie, the top soil was many feet deep. Now only inches remain. So this enlightened Kansas farmer no longer plows the prairie. He leaves the stubble from last year to hold the soil. He plants seeds by making a half-inch wide depression in the ground. He uses no chemical fertilizers or insecticides. And economically he does as well or better than the surrounding farmers who continue to destroy the soil using the old ways. So why do these other farmers stick to the old ways? Because they have always done it that way. They think their innovative neighbor is crazy.

This reminds me of the story about the woman who always cut the end off her ham before she baked it. “Why?” someone asked her. “Because,” she said, “that is what my mother always did.” When they looked into why her mother cut the end off her ham, they discovered that she did this because her pan was too short. This reason did not exist for the daughter.

We can understand why farmers arriving from Europe plowed the prairie. It worked for them, and they did not know a better way to farm. But that excuse is now gone. Plowing the prairie because we have always plowed the prairie is a poor reason for plowing the prairie.

Persistent momentum from the obsolete past exists in almost every area. This momentum can be overcome by building enterprises and institutions that succeed in doing things appropriately and showing others how.

Building new institutions is one of the ways we teach the rest of society. A fully enlightened innovator is not doing new things simply to be righteous or because he or she likes being thought crazy. A responsible innovator does new things in order to lead others into doing these new things and thus toward changing the history of the planet.

Phase Out Obsolete Economic Enterprises and Cultural Institutions

The last box on the lower right hand corner of the chart is entitled **Phase Out the Obsolete Economic Enterprises and Cultural Institutions**. It is understandable that this is the last task on our chart. The momentum of the old ways will carry on throughout the lives of our great grandchildren. This is true even if we move full speed ahead locally, nationally, continentally, and globally. But phasing out obsolete organizations is still our aim, and it does not need to take a thousand years. We need to do this in the next century. Millions of people will be displaced by phasing out the old jobs and roles. We will have to include in our tactics retraining people for new jobs and new roles. For example, a transformed transportation system might need fewer truck drivers and more rail engineers. Perhaps oil-rig workers will need to become wind-generator repairmen or public school teachers.

As we travel this road of massive social transformation, many people will be uprooted from the lives with which they are most familiar. We will need, therefore, to alleviate that suffering. We will need to mitigate these unavoidable tragedies in order to keep the process of change flowing toward completion.

Also, we will need to prepare the next seven generations to continue this work and to preserve the work we are doing. All these awesome considerations are implied in this ninth and last box of the chart.

V. Concluding Words on Doing Our Part

Building Still Better Charts

This chart is a simplified overview on how to do the planetary transformation that needs to be done by the vanguard of the Earth. A better chart might be drawn, but this one gives us the basic directions. If we do this, our descendants shall live on an ecologically functional planet,

democratically governed, linked by global cooperation, and powered by local innovation. So, perhaps we should put this chart on our refrigerator doors and tell our friends and neighbors that **this is what we need to do with the rest of our lives.**

The Glory of Being Overwhelmed

If you are not a little bit overwhelmed by such a picture, you are not paying attention. Being overwhelmed is the appropriate way to feel about taking responsibility for all these changes. **Being overwhelmed is just part of the happy life of the vanguard person.**

Strategical Clarity Provides Hope

Even though it is overwhelming, a realistic picture of viable strategy provides hope. This chart, or the better one you or I may build next year, shows us what can be done to bring historical victories. Without vision and hope people do not move. When we hope, we make ourselves vulnerable to many disappointments along the way, but hoping such hopes will also open us to doing and succeeding with doing the actions that we can and indeed need to do. **Without hope and the action that flows from hope, we will perish.** Perhaps most of us will live out our remaining years in relative comfort and die on clean sheets. But our great grandchildren will not be that fortunate unless we begin now embracing hope on their behalf.

Doing Our Part in the Vast Transition

So why don't we get started on all these strategies? Each of us can find the roles that we can play. Each of us can join with and support organizations of people who are doing parts of this picture. Each of us can vote more wisely than we have in the past. Each of us can live more creatively than we have in the past. Each of us can learn more about how to do better whatever it is that we are volunteering to do.

Nothing, absolutely nothing, stands in our way but the inertia of our own minds and bodies.

Let's talk some more.