



## DECLARATION OF INTERDEPENDENCE

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As a schoolboy I was a geographer and a historian. “Everything is connected to everything else”, and geography is the study of the connectedness and interdependence of all things. The public sense of geography has withered in the twentieth century and with it our understanding of our interdependence. Policy failures in the Amazon melt the Arctic ice. Climate shift in the Sahel generates war and migration and we blame it on ignorance or the clash of religions. We seem incapable of following the simple logic trail of our own carbon emissions. In our secular self-confidence we just cannot see that our fossil lifestyle is today’s feedstock for the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

Politics is the institutional structure of our interdependence. Public affairs and lobbying are the bloodstream of democratic politics. The system just about works on a day-to-day basis, but it cannot cope with environmental disaster. Jared Diamond tells us in ‘Collapse’ that the first sign that a society is doomed is the breakdown of its political balance. Vested interests shout loudest, while apathy spreads amongst the people. “The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity”.

The real tragedy in the politics of climate change is that politicians know what needs to be done, but they find reasons not to do it in their term of office. The three F words are Funds, Favours and Fear. Exxon Mobil money helps to buy Ohio, so George Bush will burn with a fossil-fuelled flame. Palm oil money greases the palm of a corrupt official and the forests of Borneo burn. Lorries disrupt fuel supplies at Britain’s oil depots and a frightened Tony Blair ‘flared’ the fuel price escalator. If Heinrich Heine were alive today his famous quote about book burning would have become “Where they burn forests, they will end in burning human beings”.

An even deeper dishonesty marks some of our policy choices. We pour money into excusing the debt of the poorest countries. If we believed our own rhetoric about greenhouse gases, we would be concentrating on mitigating the rising emissions from middle class Chinese and Indians and would be putting real energy behind saving our remaining tropical forests. ‘Making poverty history’ gives us all a warm feeling, but it does little for global warming. What is the point of making poverty history if climate change is about to make history history?

And yet we know what must be done. The graceful curve of Aubrey Meyer’s Contraction and Convergence analysis tracks the history of our emissions and their geographical divisions. It registers the Contraction that is necessary by the end of this century and plots the path to historical equity in requiring the developed world to cut faster. It shows in the stark logic of its computer projections the eventual Convergence to per capita equality that India and China must achieve in their own self-interest.

Were all our strivings to be reduced to graffiti on the wall of a dead civilisation, our imperilled successors might ask who brought about this great catastrophe. The oil and coal companies who spread lies about climate change to protect their short-term cash flow would not be alone in the dock. The politicians who ranked re-election above reality, would be there beside them. The tired Sir Humphreys of the world’s Whitehalls, who reduced disaster to a ‘glass bead game’ of endless negotiation would be there. As would the NGO pashas of purity with planet-sized egos and a hatred of anything ‘not invented here’ who will be seen to have delayed unforgivably the global triage of termination. My particular scorn is reserved for those who are too grand, too evolved or too lazy to vote. Every unfilled ballot paper is a plus for the lobby of deceit. The politics of blame look backwards. Climate stability is not a lost cause if we the peoples demand humanity’s right to survive. Funds, Favours and Fear shall not stand in our way.

As a husband, a father and a politician, I now remember my childhood faith in geography and history. As a Burkean Conservative I believe it is my duty to leave a better world to my grandchildren than I inherited from my grandparents. We are interdependent not only with the family of man and the myriad other species, but also with the generations to come. The words of Edmund Burke now shine

for me in the laughing eyes of my granddaughter Lucy, born on Orthodox Easter Sunday last year. God willing she has a life expectancy of ninety years. The quality of her life will be determined by the quality of our courage in shifting 'business as usual' by an arrogant species into 'interdependence as the norm' for a people at peace with their only planet.



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