

Why Are We Killing the Environment?

In recent years the issue of climate change and environmental issues has come to the fore. People all over the world are now taking action to bring these issues to their society's attention. The crux of the matter is that we have already destroyed a lot of the world's natural possessions and things are now coming to a head, where the major polluters are making a stark impact on the world's environment.

When we talk about pollution, we should be clear what type we are talking about. There are a number of types of pollution:

Air pollution and gas emissions. Carbon dioxide is one of the gases polluting the air. There are two sources of carbon dioxide pollution emissions. One is from natural sources and the second one is from human activity and practices. It should be known that the natural emissions of carbon dioxide is within the natural balance of the environment and does not cause any harm.

Now, although the human amount of carbon dioxide emissions is relatively low compared to the natural emissions, it has nevertheless caused the environment much harm with, for example, the global warming and raising of the environment's temperature.

The cause for the raising of the environment's temperature is the emission of what is known as the greenhouse gases: carbon, methane and others. It is also understood by the world's scientists that these gases are released into the atmosphere causing the rising of the Earth's temperature by, for example, farming practices. Factory farming and industrial plants, for example, are known to release huge amounts of gas into the atmosphere contributing to global warming and thinning the ozone layer.

Furthermore, the air that we breathe can be polluted by air toxics such as xylenes, toluene and benzene which are all present in gasoline.

Water pollution. Many companies still illegally dump waste into rivers and seas. This naturally causes harm to fish and other water-based life. This must stop. In an age of adherence to the law and common awareness of environmental issues, companies must be held to account for their actions. Where there is proven illegality, prosecutions must follow and a strong message sent to those who may be thinking of polluting, that their actions will result in prosecutions.

In addition, there should be a substantial awareness campaign to appeal to the better natures of organisations that they should be concerned about environmental issues and invest in a greener future.

Soil pollution. The main polluters of the soil are agricultural practices such as the excessive use of pesticides which get into the soil and poor waste disposal methods which are really poisoning the soil that we all rely on for our food.

Thermal pollution. This type of pollution is the wasted heat or by-product of business practices which raises the heat and temperature of rivers (adversely affecting the ecosystem of rivers) and also affecting the air in the Earth's atmosphere.

Radioactive pollution. We have all heard of radioactive pollution. This type of pollution is amongst the most dangerous and long-lasting. We saw for ourselves the damage the radioactive pollution did to humans and wildlife when the Chernobyl nuclear power plant exploded. Humans developed cancer or sudden death. Even small amounts of radiation can impact human health and it can cause diseases over time. The destruction of the nuclear power plants in Japan after being hit by a tsunami is another example of how things can go wrong.

Noise pollution. This type of nuisance is something probably all of us have experienced at some point in our lives. And for some, this can be very serious as it can affect one's sleep and general living standards. When major building works are carried out for example the neighbouring and surrounding building blocks may be affected. And sometimes these are residential blocks and the residents are much inconvenienced and troubled.

However, there are many things that can be done to reduce and minimise noise pollution. For example, the windows of residential blocks can be fitted with sound-proof windows and working times can be arranged so that residents' sleep is not affected. Steps such as these and many more, of course, depend largely on how much understanding, empathy and proactive planning companies are willing to put in to their building projects. These steps also depend on how local and national government require companies to follow rules and regulations to compel them to be considerate for all interested parties.

Light pollution. This type of pollution is less well known. The media have not publicised this type pollution which arguably is very serious for humans as well as animals and their habitations. Light pollution is basically the artificial light placed in places where it is not needed or where it adversely affects wildlife. It is known that man-made light adversely affects birds migrating from one place to another; basically it confuses them.

Offenders

So it is clear from all of the above that there exists a plethora of methods of pollution forming a real threat to safety and existence of not just of human beings but to wildlife and nature. It is sad that companies are still engaging in destructive practices all over the world.

The Amazon Rain Forest, for example, is being decimated by private companies. Major companies such JBS, Mafrig and Cargill are responsible for deforestation in the Amazon. Their products are then sold to companies like the US giant Walmart.

Donald Trump and his administration have withdrawn from the Paris Accord of 2016. The accord in fairness is at least some attempt at doing something positive towards environmental issues. Donald Trump has declared war on the environment.

USA, China, India are amongst the biggest polluters on Earth, yet there is scant concern about what they are doing to the environment.

If we look to India, for example, the air pollution level for Delhi is at astronomical levels. Recently the government of India had to cancel or prohibit the number of cars on the roads of Delhi due to the level of smog in the air. One wonders why this is not a permanent policy. Not only is this level of pollution bad for the environment, it's damaging the health of citizens as people have complained about respiratory problems.

For more than two centuries, coal and other fossil fuels have driven global economic growth, from the Industrial Revolution of the late 1700s to the development of emerging markets, particularly across Asia, today. But the days of 'dirty' fuel may be numbered. In many countries, fossil fuels from crude oil to natural gas are slowly being deserted in favour of more sustainable and renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind and tidal power.

The fact is that big business will not allow for governments to restrict their activities as the companies could have lobby groups influencing government policies. In addition, there's nothing stopping these companies from making party donations in return for influence and favours.

The reason why big business and unscrupulous governments want to continue to annihilate the environment is because any steps to decrease in pollution levels will adversely affect their business.

It is only in the last few decades that world leaders have had to at least be seen to be acknowledging the problem of environmental pollution. But there lies a situation that polluters blame each other for the pollution being caused to the environment.

Hope

But I feel that some real progress has been made as a result of the dogged determination of environmental campaigners. There is now this growing public opinion in at least the UK that something has to be done.

And the major political parties in the UK have environment-friendly policies. For example, the Liberal Democrats have said that they will plant 60 million trees a year in the 2019 General Election. The Labour Party were promising 1 million green jobs. The Conservatives promised to tackle plastic waste, work towards cleaner air for the next generation and other initiatives. The global green economy is now worth £3 trillion. So, there is also a financial incentive for people to get into green issues and protect the environment.

And it's not just political parties who are now seemingly concerned about the environment, it seems that businesses are now talking about environment-friendly aspirations.

When Ryanair recently published its financial statements, it made a point of publishing what it is doing as a company in relation to climate change.

It has to be said that airlines are amongst the biggest polluters of the environment so they have a duty to address the climate change agenda and make things happen. Companies all over the world are now facing increased pressure to publicise what they are doing to tackle climate change.

So, we do face a situation where being 'environment friendly' has become fashionable. In recent times, governments are facing up to the fact that climate change and environmental destruction is a real and present danger and tackling it is no longer just good for public relations but a real aspiration.

But we must not sit on our laurels. We must keep the pressure on governments and big business to continue to make changes to their harsh practices. But my beef is with the capitalist ideology which places capital and money above all else. So, we have a situation where capitalist companies are doing pretty much as they wish and may not be held to account.

The governments of Britain and France pledged to end the sale of petrol and diesel cars in their countries by 2040, while China is expected to set a deadline for automakers to end sales of fossil-fuel-powered vehicles in the world's largest market for automobiles. Norway and the Netherlands, meanwhile, are considering other ways to kill fossil-fuelled cars. The incoming bans on internal combustion engines will force global manufacturers to focus on introducing more zero-emission electric cars to help curb carbon emissions and clean up smog-choked major cities. Volvo has said it will stop making petrol-powered cars and go all-electric.

You see, big business should really come to their senses and realise that protecting the environment is within their interests. So, for example, reducing waste, better usage of materials and lowering the level of energy usage all go towards increasing profit and efficiency.

All said and done, I feel things are moving in the right direction but at a slow pace. So, we as concerned citizens should make increased effort in bringing environmental matters to the attention of those who matter and hopefully we can leave a better world for our future generations.

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