

Foresight

In Siam, if you wanted to build a seaworthy boat, you went to the forest, brought back some suitable trees, and sank them in the harbor in exchange for the ones your great great grandfather put there. Wood cured underwater for a hundred years made a much more watertight and durable boat. The building of a quality boat required a sense of future and a sense of responsibility that spanned many generations.

In the foothills of the Himalayas they build beautiful sturdy bridges by guiding the roots of live trees. It takes thirty years to build a bridge, but it should last for around five hundred years.

Much of human civilization has been built with endeavors that spanned generations. How much of the infrastructure of our current civilization will endure for future generations and still be useful? Human civilization is currently very dependent on a complex interplay of non-sustainable technological infrastructure. A breakdown of any one of many parts of a system can break the entire system. Cheap stuff is only cheap when energy and resources are plentiful. Cheap will not get us through the coming crisis. Quality, durability, and simplicity will.

Most of the contemporary fossil fuel dependent tools of eating such as cars and grocery stores, trucks and warehouses, more trucks and harvesters, tractors and plows, and manufactured soil and seed, will pass away with the end of oil, but we'll have plenty of knives and forks and spoons through the ages because they're made of stainless steel.

On September 1, 1859, a solar flare hit the earth with enough energy to disable half the world's telegraph system. Were we to encounter another such event, how much of our global power and communication infrastructure would be damaged. It could mean the immediate and brutal end of contemporary civilization. Solar eruptions are common on the sun, and it's only a matter of time and chance till we get hit by a big one again. We need to protect the power grid. If it turns out to be an expensive fix, don't gripe about the bill. There's too much at stake to gamble on this one.

The industrial and chemical revolutions have exponentially increased the number of poisons that we come in contact with in our daily lives. While no one particular substance is likely to kill us outright, the cumulative effect of so many physical stressors is rapidly destroying our health and comfort. This is not going to get better anytime soon, so we'll have to adapt and live with the environment we have created, but we need to stop pouring poisons into the only environment we have. When you buy a toy, do you think about the poisons associated with its manufacture, use, and disposal? Will we steal the health and happiness of our children to buy toys?

We will run out of fossil fuels. Those who dispute this haven't done their homework and are engaged in some very wishful thinking. The obvious goal if one believes in future is to make fossil fuels last as long as possible while we develop alternatives. Our addiction to abundant energy makes it tempting and

easy to not acknowledge just how precious and fleeting fossil fuels really are, but not recognizing the nature of our addiction will prove to be a painful and deadly mistake.

Much of the cheaply constructed and fossil fuel dependent infrastructure of global transportation and communication will soon become non-functional and non-replaceable, but there should be enough left to sustain a global community of some sort as we begin to build a new civilization. If we can maintain it, the internet has the potential to fundamentally change the nature of the rise of a new civilization. The comprehensive and immediate access to information allows us a potential for adaptation and change never before available, but knowing what to do is worthless without knowing how to do it. We have a dire need to understand the difference between work and a job. Work is action that provides us with our sustenance. The common contemporary definition of a job is action that provides a paycheck [a license to consume]. Few people actually see the end results of their labor, and the reward of a paycheck is generally seen as the only reason to work. If we are to avoid catastrophe, there's a lot of work to be done that has no immediate monetary reward, and many, if not most, of the jobs that currently result in a paycheck are worthless or counterproductive to the long-term happiness and survival of humanity.

If we wait for a paycheck to motivate us to get to work, it ain't gonna happen. Just as in the financial crash of '29, the money has gone to the top, and they're investing very little of it in jobs that create durable wealth. Money doesn't keep. If it's not invested in creating new wealth, entropy steadily destroys old wealth until we're poor and the money is meaningless. All the money in the world can't buy what never was made to replace what was so cheaply made that it's already in the dump. Do we wait for disaster to motivate us, or do we have the foresight and courage to change our behavior now in order to avoid the pain that will ensue if we don't? No one has any excuse for sitting on their butt when there's work to be done. Unemployment is no excuse for not getting the work done.

As our lives become exponentially more cluttered by the complexity of modern technology, we tend to become so overwhelmed by the demands and distractions of the day, that we lose sight of what we need for the long run. We are rapidly losing our sense of future. We've chosen convenience over quality, comfort over courage, and toys over tools. Our foolishness is about to come full circle and bite us in the butt.