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OLD SOUTH MEETING HOUSE

Paul Hawken

(~~PHF 56-2005~~, refers to Steve Green?)

Thank you Steve. I could tell some great stories about Steve as well. Thank you for inviting me. Thank you for allowing me to speak in this truly august place. I want to tell you a story about Erewhon which is, that when it first began, we began importing tea from Japan, called Kukicha, which is twig tea. And that's what Kukicha means, twig tea, and the FDA in Boston seized the tea under the 1872 Tea Inspection Act because it had too many twigs in it. And we went back and forth and tried to prevent its seizure, but eventually, and I'm not kidding, they dumped it into Boston harbor. So, we thought about that, and so then we bought rice bowls in Japan and we packed them with the Kukicha. So we labeled it "rice bowls." And they opened it up, they saw the rice bowls and put the lid back on and shipped it and let it go. It was no longer food, it was ceramics. And then we sold the tea and took the rice bowls home.

I just wanted to recount that story since we're here at the beginning of the tea party. I want to talk about a movement that has no name, and really for all intents and purposes, does not exist in the conventional sense of the word. And I think what I'm overall suggesting to you tonight is that change never happens from the vectors we expect them from. That we do not change history, that history changes us. And that the culture as a whole, including me most of the time, is generally looking in the wrong direction for positive signs of change. And as Steve said, this began as a count. This began as curiosity.

In the 1990s after I had published *Ecology of Commerce*, I began to give talks in this country, in Asia, in Europe, and Australia, New Zealand. And after those talks I would meet people. People would give me their cards, and since I had been on the board of Audubon and Conservation International, and Trust for Public Land, I had sort of a bird's eye view, I thought, of what the environmental movement was in this country - a sense of the landscape.

But repeatedly, as I received people's cards, I read the names of organizations that I had never heard of, again, and again, and again. Well, I would put them in various pockets in my backpack and take them home. Then after a week or so on the road I would pull everything out; this went to the laundry; these are my cards. I would read them all on a table in my houseboat in Sausalito and then I would put them in a kitchen drawer. So far so good. When I bought the houseboat I bought a housekeeper with it. She was 75, she actually couldn't clean, she was too old to clean at that time, but the tradition at the time in the dock was that you hired her because she didn't have social security, so we were her social security, and you could tell she had been at the house because it was completely rearranged. She was an artist, but nothing was cleaned, so I hired a cleaner on the side. And one day I came home and she had taken the cards from the drawer and she had placed them in a gold lamé Bergdorf Goodman shopping bag with white rope tasseled handles and put it in my closet where I got dressed every morning, and there they were. So I got to see them every day. And as the days and weeks and months went by, cards kept going into this bag until one day the bag was full. And that is the origin of this book, literally, which is, I looked at that bag and said, "Wait a minute, how many organizations out there are there out there working on behalf of the environment?"

At about that time I began to really redefine this thing called the "environmental movement." And for me, it included the social justice movement. And it included it for a very simple and

obvious reason, that both types of organizations although they maybe very specific in terms of what they were applying themselves to, with respect to some insult to a person or place. The fact of the matter is that they were dealing with the same economic political system, which was stealing the future and selling it in the present, in the form of GDP or net profit for a corporation. Now whether the theft was in the form of a clear cut forest in British Columbia, or in the form of child labor in a chocolate plantation, or in the form of toxic workers in a Chinese factory making things for big box retailers in the United States, it didn't make any difference at all. That fact is that there was a violation of people in place, in order to benefit and profit in the present time. And the fact that organizations had directed themselves to different aspects of it to me, was irrelevant to the idea and the concept, that in fact they were a part of one larger movement because even though they may be dealing with specific symptoms, they were dealing with one system.

And as I did that, the cards changed. They increased. My talks changed. My audiences changed and I began to then to do a hard count. As Steve said, I am a Berkeley Grad. I grew up there. My father taught at the library. I went from school to the library and I used to crawl around in the stacks and go up to any floor, go down an aisle, sit down on the metal floors and pick books out by the spine and read them randomly. And so there was as sense I had being the son of a librarian if your will, that you could find anything you wanted to find if you just searched well enough. So I began to try to find out how many organizations there were in the world that were involved with the environment and social justice. And as I researched more I had a difficult time in finding them. I found directories. I found lists. I found tax records to be sure, but in fact I found nothing that approximated what I was seeing out there. But I did extrapolate, so I could work with things, and I noticed the list go to 30 thousand, 40 thousand, 70 thousand, 100 thousand organizations. And at that point, at 100,000, then I began to look at the history of social movements themselves, which social movement here or anyplace else that approximated 100 thousand in terms of organizations, and I couldn't find one. So I began to surmise that maybe this was the largest social movement in the world. And on it went. And as I did that I then began to look at the history. Where did it come from? Because it would be easy to say if you will that it started in the 70s with Earth Day, or go back to Rachel Carlson, or go back to Civil Rights movement, or go pack to the 30s. You can trace it back, to the populace movements or women's suffrage, etc. I mean you can go back and definitely find the roots of this. We have in this country the greatest history of social movements in the world. But you would never know it reading the history books they give to our kids. But this was the birth, really of the most innovative social movements in the world, this country, the United States.

But as I pulled the string I got fascinated by the transcendentalists. And we're at a good place to talk about them here. And particularly because when I went to high school, I had a really hard time with the transcendentalists. And I had a very hard time because the teacher, Mrs. Smith, yeah I know, Smith and Hawken. Mrs. Smith was an undercover Berkeley policewoman. And she didn't realize it that everybody in the school knew that except her. And I took it upon myself that an undercover policewoman could not teach transcendentalism at Berkeley High. And she made it well known that she was in charge, and I was suspended twice. And finally one day the dean came in rather ashen face and said that Mrs. Smith had died in the faculty lounge. And I raised my hand in my best Oscar Wilde imitation and said, "How could you tell?" And he was furious, probably traumatized by what was going on in the faculty lounge to being with, and sort of yanked me and dragged me, literally, out of the school room into his office and suspended me

once again and said that I could not return to school unless I wrote an essay on rebellious youth. Exactly! Which I refused to do, and was expelled, which is a whole other story because it went rapidly down hill after that. But in revisiting the transcendentalists to research this book, I realized that the essays that they did let us read like Prudence, was really sort of like a Calvinist America trying to grope with this Unitarian minister and others who were really out there. And I don't know and I say this, figuratively speaking of course, what were they were smoking? But there simply is no way that a 17 year old lad can really incorporate what those guys and women were talking about. I'm sorry, it's just that you don't have the life experience. Not that it shouldn't be read then, but it should be reread much later and absorbed.

And in reading about the transcendentalists, one of the fascinating stories that came up for me starts in 1832 when Emerson's wife had died and he went to Europe, the Pilgrimage if you will, with Coleridge and Wordsworth and other friends of his. But he ended up, after landing in Malta, going up the boot of Italy and ended up, in Paris at the Jardin des Plantes in the Cabinet of Natural History, where he met the Jussieu family. And the Jussieus were quite well known botanists and taxonomists they had created a marvelous, marvelous botanical garden and displays of flora and fauna at the Cabinet of Natural History. And if you read his journals that night, it was clear that Emerson had truly a rhapsodic experience. It was really the first time of elation since his wife's death. And what he saw there, because of the way they displayed the flora and fauna in color and form and morphology, is that he could really see the web of life. He could see in a sense, evolution, although there was no term for either at that time. And in his journals that night, he's waxing on about nature - we are nature - our mind is nature. What is then the opposite? What is then the nature of the mind? What is the nature of governments? What is the nature of religion? In other words, he is just consumed all of a sudden by the connectivity of all things and how does it all make sense?

And as we know, he came back and wrote *Nature*, his first book. And one of the very first readers of that book was Harvard's first hippie, Henry David Thoreau. He avidly bought it and read it, and read it again, that was his senior year, and read it again a few months later. Emerson addressed the senior class that year. Later he was invited to Emerson's house in Cambridge and he asked him, having spent four years at Harvard, and having no job skills, "What should I do?" And Emerson said, "keep a journal," which he did from that day for 7 thousand or some odd pages until he died. And what is important about that is that is that 12 years later as we well know, is that Thoreau was arrested on his way to pick up his shoes by Sam Staples for not paying his Poll Tax. Now what isn't often written about is that that year he was particularly peeved because a sitting president had been elected knowing, before he was elected, that he was going to go to war. Sound familiar? But this was Polk and this was the Mexican War. And the history of that is really truly outrageous. Won't go into that, but it added fuel to the fire of objecting to a Poll Tax that prohibited African Americans and others for voting. And he spent a night in jail, he had hot chocolate and probably his sister bailed him out. We don't actually know which day he was in jail, July 25, 26, 27, somewhere around there. But 18 months later at the Concord Lyceum he gave a talk, later published as an essay on "Resistance to Civil Government." When he died in 1862 it was still known as "Resistance to Civil Government." And four years later it was republished in Yankee, Canada by Houghton Mifflin as, I believe "Civil Disobedience."

Why is that important? Now the first thing that is important about is was that he never used that phrase or word in any of his writings. Thoreau never used that term. Second of all, it became a

very, very important sort of phrase from that time on. Forty years, almost to the day, after that there was a meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa facilitated by a young solicitor named Mohandas K. Gandhi (also known as Mahatma Gandhi). In that meeting, 11 hundred Muslims and Hindus had decided to be arrested instead of registering according to the Black Act, the Asiatic Registration Act. And in his journal that night, Gandhi was quite disturbed in some ways by what they had and what he had agreed to do. He wasn't sure the implications to him and others especially a young solicitor of color in South Africa. And somebody from the *Indian Times* who, we do not know, gave him Thoreau's essay on civil disobedience and it had a remarkable effect on both his thinking and his demeanor. He was arrested shortly thereafter. He waived it to the press on his way to jail and said, "I'm going to study up more on this while I'm in jail." But what Thoreau did if you think about it was make going to jail cool because there was a stigma up until then. And what he said in that essay is that the government is unjust and that a just man is in jail. And the epochal story of Emerson coming to him and saying, "Henry what are you doing in there?" and him saying, "Waldo, what are you doing out there?" Although not true, was really true in a different way because it says that Emerson was upset with the stigma of going to jail. Thoreau however does what young people do so well, and that is take their teachers at their word. Emerson was saying that it was all connected. Which means that if he paid his tax for Texas Rangers to rape Mexican women for an illegal war, then he was raping those women. And he wouldn't pay his tax.

So almost 50 years after Gandhi goes to jail, Rosa Parks is standing at the bus stop December 1, 1955. And again, what we don't hear, was who she saw when the door opened. And it was James Blake. Well who was James Blake? He was the bus driver. James Blake was the person who physically manhandled and threw her off the bus 12 years before. And anybody that has been subjected to physical violence knows the "fight or flight" reaction or response that you will have if you see your attacker again. Even if they can't see you, your whole body will go into shock. And it did. And she looked in the eye of her oppressor and she got on the bus. That was probably the most difficult thing she did that night. Not getting up after that was probably a piece of cake compared to getting on the bus itself. Well why did she do it? Why? Well she was sent to the Highlander School that summer to study civil disobedience taught by Miles Horton. He was influenced by Mohandas Gandhi and sent there by Virginia and Clifford Durr. Virginia Durr was traveling around that year, and before, with Mary Bethune to fight the Poll Tax which was still in place in America at that time. And what we know is that five days after she was arrested, they then elected this wonderful young eloquent minister named Martin Luther King to be the head of the Montgomery Improvement Association, to lead the bus boycott. And within two months his house was blown up, the front of it, with dynamite, while Coretta and his two children were there. And that almost ensued in a riot. He quelled it. They sent Brian Ruston down from New York to talk to this emerging civil rights leader. He went to the King home. He sat down. They first time he sat down he reached under the cushion and pulled out a loaded gun and put the gun down and moved over to another chair and there was another gun. And the whole house was an arsenal. Ruston said, "I thought this was a non-violent movement." And King said, "It is." "But nobody better come in who is not invited." And King said, "No, non-violence is really a principle. Have you read the writing of Gandhi?" And he said, "No, but I've heard of it." So he sent Glen Smiley over the next week to bring the autobiography by Gandhi and Civil Disobedience by Thoreau.

Okay. Now. What is so important about this story is not Emerson, Thoreau, Gandhi, King, Parks.

Those people would have been magnificent, courageous leaders no matter what happened, I think. What is important about this story is the people we don't hear about - the Jussieu family in Paris whose taxonomy was used by Wallace and Darwin and expropriated quite freely with no accreditation. But that is another story. The French never get credit. Okay? What is important is, who is this person that renamed the essay? We do not know who did it. We have theories but nobody knows. No scholar knows to this day. Who is the person at the *Indian Times* who gave the essay to Gandhi? Who is this person? Who read it? Who knew about it? Who had given it to him? We do not know that person's name either. Do we know who Joanne Robinson is, the person who started the Montgomery Improvement Association? There's a leader for you, but we don't hear too much about her. She started two years before Rosa Park's arrest. And the Durrs, Clifford and Virginia Durr, and I can go on. What I'm saying here is when you look at these historical strings of events, what you find is these small, seemingly inconsequential actions that people undertook because of their conscience, because of their intentions, because of their care, had a decisive and amazing affect on history that followed. And when you look back and look out now and look forward to the history we face. When you look at the myriad problems that this world confronts, when you imagine the data that is coming from scientists with respect to climate change, the loss of fisheries, the death of our oceans, the peak soil, not just peak oil, peak water, not just peak oil, peak a lot of things, and you look at that, it is easy to go into despair, to start to think, "What can I do?"

And I want to ask you tonight to do one thing, which is to completely to give up the idea that you have any control over the future. You have none. But you can control one thing, and that is your intention. It's the intention that you can hold. This is a very Buddhist statement really. But your intention is something that is steady, clear deep, rounded, and now you can sing and dance because really we have no control over outcomes whatsoever. And again, as you read history over and over again, you find that was these small things, and we don't know tonight, tomorrow, an hour ago, the small things we have done, the things we might have said, the book we might have given to someone else, the invitation we might have extended. Who knows? We have the St. Bonny School from New Hampshire. Which one of these students or more will do something that is really unforeseen and superb and fantastic in the future because one teacher took the time to do something? That is really the way the world works. And we tend to focus on the big things and look back as if they were predictable, and as if we could have know them, but we're just making that stuff up. We do not know what will come. And having said that, what I'm suggesting in Blessed Unrest, is that we're lookin' in all the wrong places for love. In other words, we still are looking for the white or otherwise charismatic male vertebrate to show up and lead us. And I want to say he ain't comin'. And thank god, finally a movement that is not lead by a white charismatic male vertebrate.

There is this movement in the world that is lead by tens of thousands of people of every culture and every race, every language, in every city and every country, and we don't see it because our media, our TV, our schools, our education is still pointing us to isms. There is an ism out there. There's an ideology out there, maybe a political party, maybe there's a new candidate, maybe a religious leader, please won't somebody show up. And if we look the other direction, humanity is showing up, in an astonishing way.

So what I would like to do is give you a sense of the scale of this movement. This is the best way

to do it (power point presentation). My book is supporting the projector. And just move the projector slightly. Hit the space bar....

But these are just names of organizations, cities and countries and most of them you haven't heard of or seen before. Maybe you might have heard of one or two of them, and that's done easily and on purpose. These are from our database, Wiserearth.org, which I welcome you to visit and go to. But in order together a sense of the scope, the breath, but more importantly, the size of this. Imagine that we start playing this now, which is actually like credits right. And just about... you can read it and you really have to pay attention to read every one and you can't listen to me too much.

[plays powerpoint list]

Starting now we would have to watch this all night tonight and we'd be there all day tomorrow and we would be here all night tomorrow night, and all day Thursday, and all night Thursday night we'd still be looking at the names, and all night Thursday night, and all day Friday, and Friday night. We'd be Saturday and Saturday night, 24 hours. Sunday night. We'd still be here Monday morning, all the commuters come back to work and we'd still be here. Monday night we would be here for a week. And after we had been here for a week, we'd stay another week, then another week after that. And one more week after that. In other words we would sit here 24 hours a day for a month before we would have seen all the names of organizations in the world that are working to restore the environment and to address social justice and human rights. That's how big it is. Now I'm going to save you the trouble, and speed it up so you can go home tonight.

Now when I discovered if you will, this is between one and two million groups right now that we know exist and there maybe more. It is not only the largest movement in the world, the largest movement is history, it is the fastest growing. And I looked in the literature for language that described it. And I looked and read about other social movements, but the language, although interesting, seemed lacking in many ways. So I turned to biological metaphors. And the metaphor that I liked the most is what I think were seeing is humanity's immune response to political corruption, economic disease, and ecological degradation. And the immune system is an amazing thing. It is first of all the most complex system in the human body, more complex than any organ, more complex than your brain by far. And it is very ancient and very old. The immune system doesn't work as Donald Rumsfeld's Department of Defense, just shooting strange pathogens that comes it way. It works very differently. It works more like a chamber of commerce mixer. Every body talking to each other, "Hi, I do ice swans for weddings, what do you do?" In other words all of these molecules are trying to figure out what's going on. There is a high degree of connectivity in an immune system. And the immune system actually tries reproach mode or détente before it tries to kill something. And it has an amazing library, better than anything we know at Harvard, or University of California, Berkeley. It takes little bits and pieces of pathogens, even the whole pathogen will stick them on these follicular dendritic cells, live and dead and just keep them there and little peanuts of your lymph nodes scattered around your body just to have this sort of Alexandrian immunological library, carrying around so that it knows what it encounters in the world as you breath, and eat, and drink water, and put your finger in you mouth.

It is an amazing thing. But what we know about the internet it that what makes it more effective

is better connectivity. The better connected it is, the more resilient it is in terms of invasive pathogens. But what's so interesting about that is the analogue, the thing that we have in human society that is the closest to the immune system, that we have created is the internet. But the internet with this one quintillion transistors, and its one million emails per second, is much, much smaller than the functioning and the activities of the immune system of one human being - of one human being. Inside your body are one hundred trillion cells, there are 900 trillion other cells that are non-human. Interesting relationship there, right? You have quadrillion cells within one human cell. There's 400 billion molecules, there are 10 million activities going on in one cell at one time. In your body right this second, right now there's one sept- to one octillion activities going on. That's ten to hundred times more than all the stars in the 15 million light year universe going on right now in your body.

And I have two questions for you. And the first question is, can you feel it? It's a lot of activity. Seriously, can you feel it? And, if I may say so, the answer is, absolutely, you can feel it. You felt it since you were born and before. You felt it always so we don't know what to call it, except its called life and you're feeling it right this second. It just permeates your whole being and body. And my second question for you is, who's in charge? Who's managing this activity? Hopefully not the republican party! But if anybody tried to manage it, you would die. It is a community of communities of communities of communities. It is extraordinary and we do not understand really how it functions and how it works. This movement with the million organizations, with a hundred million people also does not have a management system. It is not managed. We don't recognize it as a movement because it doesn't have one leader. There's no centrality. There's no ideology. We have this picture, this frame, of what it is that we should be looking for and it's coming from the other direction. It is an extraordinary thing that's occurring. I want to show you one more clip and this one goes sideways, instead of up and down. And this emerged from us cataloging these organizations in wiserearth.org. And WISER stands for World Index of Social and Environmental Responsibility by the way so, that's what WISER, the acronym stands for. And what you're seeing and what you will see here is what we call areas of focus. When we say environment or social justice, what do we mean? Well, we decided not to decide that. But instead to look at these organizations one by one by one and have them tell us what it is that they do. What is their area of focus? Usually they have more than one, so not just one. And we came up with 414 categories, 20 thousand key words, tags if you will, and definitions, and that is on the back of the book. And what you see here, and this is my opinion now, is the curriculum for the 21st century. And it's really what humanity is arising to deal with. It is taking on the salient issues that government and corporations frankly are failing at - which is water, education, poverty, health, climate, you go right on down the list. I'm not saying that all businesses are failing or that all governments are failing. I'm simply saying that these issues, which we've known about for a long, long time are getting away from us. And people are rising up to do what they can in place, with the tools they have, with the capability they have, and with the resources they have.

Power is being, I think created from the bottom up because frankly, it is largely corrupt from the top down. And the bottom-up solutions are greatly seated on both sides of you tonight. They are our neighbors. They are our friends. They are our communities. They're values that we have held for hundreds and thousands of years. This isn't a new movement. It goes back to the transcendentalists, but it goes back to the abolitionists, to Clarkson and to Wilberforce in 1787 in London, who really created the framework and the means for the first NGO in the world. It's the

first time citizens had gotten together to organize themselves on behalf of people they would not know, would never know, and for which they would never derive indirect benefits. And they were called liberals, progressives, do-gooders, activists. They were mocked. They were made fun of. There was three out of four people at that time who were indentured or enslaved. They said they would destroy the British economy, etc. Well, so much for the opinions of conservatives. I mean this is always what has been said to human beings when they organize around values which we truly hold in common. And what we're talking about here really is a world of growth without inequality, or wealth without plunder, work without exploitation, a future without fear. And these values go way back in our history, back to the actual age. There's a great book by Karen Armstrong, *The Great Transformation*. It talks about the actual age, the birth of religiosity, not religion, but religiosity- but Socrates, Buddhist, Mencius, Lao Tzu, Jeremiah, Isaiah. And when you read her work, which you'll realize at that, time three things really happened. One, is these sages and philosophers and prophets really were producing social movements. This was about improving the lives of human beings. This was a time of great cruelty, great barbarity, and violence in the world. And people stood up and arose and turned away from it. And these people were not teaching monotheistic religions and building temples, anything like that. They were talking about what it means to lead a moral and ethical life. And the question I think we all ask, and these organizations ask is the same thing, given where we are at this time, the 21st century, what is an ethical act? What is a moral act? What is a meaningful business? What is a meaningful role to play in governance and education and religion, etc? And out of that time came things which we know so well now, but two things: One is the golden rule. It arose simultaneously from Asia right across from the Middle East to Greece, which is never, ever do anything to anyone you would not have done to yourself. And the second, was that all life is sacred whether it is a child or a creature or a culture. And those values which began and were instilled at that time, to me, are the underlying values of this movement. And it is a movement because if you ask these organizations, what their principles are, what their values are. What is it that they are dedicated to. And you write it down and you put it on a wall, one by one by one, and you go down this endless wall and you read it. You will find that they are all different, and none of them contradict themselves. This is the first time such a movement has ever happened in the history of humanity.

Thank you very much.

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