



BIG CHANGES ARE EASIER THAN SMALL ONES

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It's amazing how easily big changes can occur, once we know they're possible. That's because big changes need only new perceptions. Let's start, by changing our heads with a quick overview of where our work and money go.

We are trapped in media mindsets to do things in ways that drain away our money and energy. That's how someone else gets rich. Getting us wanting too many material goods. Buying shoddy ones. Not sharing. Using credit. Buying through intermediaries. Allowing inequitable taxation and incomes and distribution of wealth. Supporting endless growth. Let's look at some numbers.

Paying for the infrastructure to accommodate growth absorbs about 33-40% of our total work. Yet stabilizing growth is easily possible. Another huge hunk goes to support inequality. The median US household income for wage-earners is currently \$44,000, with 13% of households under the poverty level. A fully equitable distribution of personal income would amount to \$60,000 per household. An equitable society could totally eliminate poverty and support EVERYONE at the current median income of \$44,000 per household. And do it with 27% *less* work, and equivalently fewer resources than our current society uses to maintain poverty and inequality!

Without growth and inequity, *every* American could live as well as the average American family does now. At the same time, we would save HALF the resources, work, and resource consumption involved.

Debt is another big item, accounting for 20% of total expenditures for families, governments, and businesses. We actually gain nothing from most of it. Debt, growth, and inequality together almost triple our cost of living.

Inefficient products and services represent another huge and unnecessary outlay. More efficient cars, homes, industrial processes and institutional operation offer incredible magnitudes of savings. Well-documented research is showing 90% reduction in energy and resources possible in a vast variety of situations throughout society. Think that's impossible? Today's toilets and light bulbs already use 75-80% less water and electricity than 20 years ago.

Add these efficiency improvements to the benefits of a no-growth, equitable, and debt-free society. With these four changes alone, we would be operating at a cost of only 3.8% of what we currently spend! That's equal to working less than 20 minutes a day to live as well as the average family does now. Yep, 20 minutes a day. Is it really, really, worth it to work an extra seven hours a day, just to create overpopulation, inequality, debt, and inefficiency? I know they're important, but

I doubt we'd ever follow such possibilities out to these extremes. But even if we decide to only achieve two-thirds of each of these savings, that still adds up to an 80% reduction from our present patterns - more than needed to operate this planet on a sustainable basis.

If we eliminate poverty by creating an equitable society, we eliminate the need for poverty programs. If we make an order of magnitude reduction in our demands for resources, and help the rest of the world to do the same, we reduce the need to fight over resources, or to pay for troops in the Middle East.

Economic equity also eliminates much of the desperation, fear and anger giving rise to crime. Restoration of self-esteem, mutual respect, and being of value to our communities heals the diseases of the spirit that lay behind drug and alcohol addiction, spouse and child abuse. These are some of the interconnected secondary benefits of these actions.

Not knowing our real goals in life sends us chasing after illusory substitutes. At root, what we want is to feel our lives are of value, that we are successful in doing something meaningful. We want to be loved, respected, and appreciated. We want to be a part of the joy of creation. We want to feel deeply the power that arises out of meaningful relation with other people and life.

When our work and our play don't give those satisfactions, we end up letting expensive consumerism and its transient happiness pinch-hit for what we really want. These things we really want involve little of the energy, resources, and work that are needed for the material possessions we pile up around us. Monetary poverty is not the real poverty that poisons our lives and society.

Big changes that truly improve our lives also produce huge savings. And what is most wonderful is that all they require is looking at things differently, asking questions that we've forgotten how to ask, and seeing what things truly cost.