



Economic growth and politics:
A deadly combination

Description

An economic system that governs our politics while often destroying the natural environments that sustain us

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We live in a world where economics rule and politics dictate the manner. Some argue that economic growth and jobs must be our priority. Others take a pristine, almost holistic approach to the environment while a third group embraces a cooperative approach.

In this seemingly never-ending debate, these perspectives argue their versions of science, culture, history and population dynamics. All three factions are steadfast in their views and are convinced that their approach is the only pragmatic one.

Human impact

When considering which approach might be best, only two of the three perspectives, recognizing the importance of synchronicity, include animals within their equation.

Despite evolving views, every effort is made by lawmakers to undermine attempts at eliminating institutionalized animal cruelty. These efforts are patterned after the old British divide and conquer tactic. The “us or them” approach makes it so much easier to kill, cull, dissect, eat or otherwise abuse animals.

Issues of despair, displacement, family break-up, death, exploitation, habitat losses and environmental destruction, whether human or non-human, are the same. What impacts the one will inevitably impact the other.



Profit and loss statements, economic growth, market share, and an industrial military complex that, in the United States, anchors their gross domestic profit, are the gospels of our corporate and elected leaders.

In the Saudi Arabia and Yemen conflict, one child dies every minute from starvation while 85,000 have already perished. We are told by the United Nations Environmental Protection Agency (UNEP) that every year almost a billion people go hungry, while one third, or 1.3 billion tons of the food the world produces is lost or wasted. In the United States, 30% of all food is thrown away each year, which is the equivalent of 20 pounds of food per person, per month. By extension the same could be said of Canada. In the UK, 6.7 million tons, or 32% of all food purchased is wasted (UNEP).

Regardless of the data, or of its origins, it's irrelevant; it's meaningless to the starving mother holding her dead child. This obscenity is caused by an economic system that governs our politics while often destroying the very natural environments that sustain us.

Profit and loss statements, economic growth, market share, and an industrial military complex that, in the United States, anchors their gross domestic profit, are the gospels of our corporate and elected leaders. They are of little comfort to the starving in a world, lacking not in food, but in compassion.

Environmental impact

Global fishing fleets capture two to three times more fish than our oceans can sustainably support. Over 50% of world fisheries are fully exploited and 32% are over exploited, depleted or recovering. The top ten marine fisheries, accounting for 30% of all capture fisheries, are fully or over-exploited. Despite this knowledge or the impact of climate change, there are those who argue that alternatives are not pragmatic.

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These comments originate from the same mindsets that have governed our environmental files for six decades. This culture has always dictated that you can both defend and exploit at the same time. This is the rationale that has seen us lose 60% of the world's known wildlife in the past 50 years.

It is wise to remember that The Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (C.I.T.E.S.) has existed for about 45 of those 50 years. If this were truly a pragmatic world, the prevailing mindsets would have been given their walking papers 40 years ago. No business would accept a market loss of even a fraction of 60% without making immediate and significant boardroom changes (assuming they're still in business).

Conflict of interest



Make no mistake, I commend C.I.T.E.S. for their efforts in protecting species and I recognize that we would be in far worse shape without them, but I also see them as a Clydesdale in a horse race to save endangered species. A good metaphor for C.I.T.E.S. is a court of law. In a court of law you have a judge, an accused, a jury and two lawyers – one for the prosecution and one for the defence. What you do not have is one lawyer who both prosecutes and defends the same suspect in the same case. This would be a flagrant conflict of interest and a gross miscarriage of justice. The problem here is that this is exactly what we have with C.I.T.E.S., as well as with the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNRs), our Wildlife Services, and Environment Ministries, that are presently politically staffed and governed.

In some jurisdictions, scientists have been muzzled by the powers that insist that the economic approach is the only pragmatic direction. This mindset might have some legitimacy if it were not for the fact that the approach they are seeking is more political than scientific and dictates our treatment of the poorest among us, including Yemen.

Conclusion

We cannot save the world nor change the people in it. We can however change ourselves and by so doing influence others. One of the options available to us is that we can insist that the terminology used is not politically corrupted. We can also argue that the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNRs) should better reflect the values of the people they represent through proportional representation. We can insure that issues of cruelty to animals, loss or endangerment of habitat are not dismissed by the use of the either/or argument.

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As for the loss of employment that might occur through the unlikely shut-down of the tar sands, I have too much respect for today's workforce to accept that their temporary employment somehow justifies their long-term impact on the environment.

We are responsible for our present dilemma and we can adapt reasonably well to our changing reality, including unemployment. We have the tools, the experience, the education and the social infrastructure to support us during a transitional period. This cannot be said for the wildlife that can only adapt over time or for the poorest in countries less fortunate.

We claim to love our fellow man, to want to preserve for future generations, unfortunately, what we say and what we do are often very different.

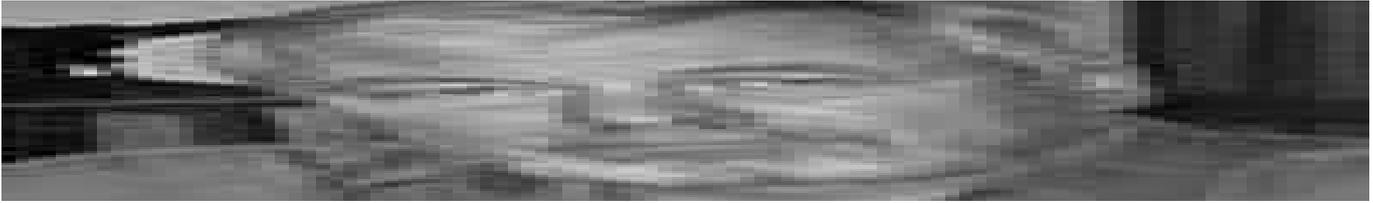
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Georges R. Dupras has advocated for animals for over fifty years. A member of the International Association for Bear Research and Management (IBA), a Director of the Animal Alliance of Canada (AAC), Quebec Representative of Zoocheck Canada and past Board member of the Canadian SPCA, he worked on the original Save the Seal campaign in 1966 that culminated in the founding of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) in 1969. Georges Dupras has published two books, *Values in Conflict* and the eBook *Ethics, a Human Condition*, and currently lives in Montreal, Canada.

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