

Devour the Earth

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No one knows how or why, but some 4000 million years ago the planet earth came into being.

In that time life has evolved on its surface and beneath in its waters and in its skies.

And time is running out.

Imagine the complete history of the world condensed into one year. A year which began on January the 1st.

A few days later the first bacteria emerged.

A miracle of evolution followed and every expanse of water, layer of mud and track of land is inhabited.

Jelly fish and spiders didn't make an appearance till the beginning of November. The first ferns popped up on November 20th.

About the same time as fish began inhabiting the waters, winged insects took to the air.

A few days later from December 1st to the 15th, dinosaurs ruled unchallenged.

At fifteen minutes to midnight on December 31st, human kind emerged.

Just 2 seconds ago, the start of the industrial revolution, we began an onslaught on the earth which brought it to its knees.

Wasted Food, Wasted Land

The environment is a finely woven mantle which is beginning to unravel before our eyes and meat-eating carries much of the blame.

We have no physical need to eat meat, yet the world now contains 3 times as many farm animals as humans.

Livestock have huge appetites for grass and corn and wheat, so much so that nearly 80% of all agricultured land in Britain is used to support them.

It takes as much as 10 kg of vegetable protein to produce one kg of meat. The most wasteful recycling program ever devised.

So demanding are they that the soil is pushed beyond its capacity to cope, force fed on a diet of pesticides and fertilizers.

Pesticides are poisons used to kill seeds, insects and fungi.

They can and do kill humans.

We know that they destroy species other than those they are aimed at and can upset the natural balance of ecosystems.

We know that they increase in concentration as bigger creatures eat smaller creatures.

A water bird like the grebe at the top of the food chain can have pesticides in its body 80 thousand times stronger than those in the water in which it lives.

We know that 50 of the chemicals used are suspected of causing cancer.

We know that meat contains about 14 times more residues than vegetables.

There are pesticide traces in almost all the food we eat.

We know that without the need to feed animals, farmers could return to crop rotation.

They could farm organically and turn their backs on these nerve gas derivatives.

Constant demands on the land to produce more crops to feed more animals are unsustainable.

These hyped up production levels can be achieved only temporarily by swamping the soil with expensive nitrogen-based fertilizers.

Some nitrogen runs into rivers spurring the growth of algae, boosting the growth of bacteria and choking all life from the water.

Some floods down into underground reservoirs and yet if we stop eating animals the whole population could be fed from just 30% of the land with no need for chemical fertilizers.

It would breathe again, regenerate itself, recover its health.

FACTS 1:

38% of the grain in the world is fed to livestock.

On average, for every 10kg of grain fed to animals only 1kg of meat is produced - the rest becomes manure.

It takes more than twice as much land to feed a meat eater than it does a vegetarian, and half of that again is required to feed a vegan.

Britain alone could feed 250 million people on a pure vegetarian (vegan) diet.

If the whole world followed the USA-style diet, only half of the current population would be fed.

Deforestation

Rainforests in the world are breathtaking in their complexity.

They house over half the world's animal and plant species.

They give us many of our medicines: anaesthetics, anti-cancer drugs, the birth-control pill.

They hold the soil together, absorb rainfall and new growth feeds on the decay of the old.

They produce oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide.

They are nature in balance. And our response is to destroy them.

Before 1950, 14% of the world's land was tropical rainforests, half is now gone and each year a further area the size of Britain disappears, and for what?

Largely to provide grazing land for cattle or to grow soya beans to feed to cattle, most of which comes to the developed countries.

In 7 years or so the land will be almost lifeless and barren.

FACTS 2:

Tropical forests are home to up to 90% of all the Earth's species.

Tropical forest is being destroyed at a rate of over 164,000 square kilometres per annum.

In Costa Rica 71% of all deforested land is pasture. Nepal has lost around half of its forest land in the last 20 years mainly to sustain livestock.

Even newly cleared pasture can only sustain one head of cattle per hectare.

Latin America exported almost 8 million tonnes of soya beans in 1991, mainly to feed our cattle.

Global Warming

In 1989 the crew of a space craft watched a smoke cloud from thousands of fires spread across a million square miles of Amazonia.

It was rainforest being cleared for cattle ranching.

With the burning of vegetation, huge reservoirs of stored carbon dioxide are unlocked, released to float upwards and provide yet more insulation to prevent heat escaping from the earth.

When the cattle arrive, each one belches out 60 litres of methane every day adding another twist to the spiral.

Together, burning and belching provide the 2nd largest contribution to the greenhouse effect.

FACTS 3:

Since 1970 the destruction of rainforests in Latin America has contributed over 1.4 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere.

Methane gas is responsible for 18% of global warming, with the methane gas content of the atmosphere increasing by 1% per year.

18% of world methane emissions are from livestock. There are more than 1.3 billion cattle in the world.

26% of UK methane emissions are from livestock.

UK livestock emissions contribute 1.15 million tonnes of methane to global warming every year.

Soil Depletion

The United States, the world's largest consumer of meat has lost 1/3 of all its topsoil. Huge areas of the Western states can no longer support the agriculture and the land may well return to buffalo pasture.

Underground water supplies are depleted faster than they can be replenished with rain.

The soil ceases to provide even grazing and as they do, they consume more water in new places.

Livestock's demand for water is as destructive as its demand for food.

In the case of beef grown on irrigated pastures 12 times as demanding as vegetables.

In Britain, nearly 1/2 of all arable land is now at risk of erosion as intensive farming destroys the very structure of the soil.

Acid Rain

The world has a new problem - an endless supply of animal excreta, stored in slurry form a 100 times more polluting than human waste - it just keeps on accumulating, too prolific to be absorbed by the land.

Bacteria turns its ammonia into acid, it evaporates, joins with nitrous oxide from fertilizers, combines with industrial pollution and forms acid rain.

Its legacy is sour unproductive soil and dead and dying forests, rivers and lakes.

Almost forgotten in the avalanche of other environmental disasters, acid rain is devastating the northern habitats of Europe and America. In some countries, slurry is its principle cause.

An end to livestock production would dramatically slow the decay.

FACTS 4:

A single cow can produce 23 tonnes of manure a year.

10 pigs can produce 21 tonnes of manures a year.

Spread over the land this contributes to acid rain, soil and water pollution.

Ammonia from animal farming is recognised as a major cause of acid rain, causing over 70% of acidity in some areas.

In Holland, where livestock outnumber humans by over 7 to 1, farmers have been told to reduce herds by a quarter to help save dying forests.

Suffering Seas

Trawlers and seine netters cross the world's oceans scooping out increasing numbers of ever smaller fish.

Heavy trawl boards smash their way across the ocean floor, destroying everything in their path.

Every year more countries scramble to join the killing fields of tuna drift netting and with each net go the lives of more whales and dolphins, rays and seabirds, turtles and sharks. Some countries continue with their slaughter of whales. Mammals with a language more complex than our own, but of which we understand not one word.

Intensive factory farming has also come to the seas of Europe and it is salmon, mysterious migratory creatures which are the chosen captives.

It is like caging swallows.

Crammed into cages they can only survive with the use of antibiotics and pesticides and are made marketable by colouring their flesh with an additive banned in the USA. And to feed these imprisoned creatures, the seas are trawled for other fish, industrial fish.... 5 pounds to produce 1 pound of salmon meat.

PCBs are industrial chemicals, some of the most poisonous substances known, these now infect almost the whole of the oceans' food chain.

FACTS 5:

Nine of the world's 17 major fisheries are in serious decline. All of the others have reached their limits.

Worldwide 124 billion dollars are spent every year catching just 70 billion dollars worth of fish.

Recent surveys suggest that over 40% of fish caught in the North sea are diseased - often with cancerous tumours.

An estimated 240,000 tonnes of PCB's (effectively banned in the UK since 1980) are thought to have entered the world's oceans.

Strongly migratory salmon are factory farmed at stocking densities of 15kg per squaremetre.

Health + Welfare

Supposedly we are the most intelligent of all creatures, capable of complex feelings and what do we do?

We imprison other intelligent creatures in solitary confinement, until they go mad. We deny them the ability to fulfil their most basic instincts.

We treat their living, feeling young as inanimate commodities and then we eat them.

Restlessly wandering fowl are crammed into cages too small to even stretch their wings.

All are quickly fattened in damp, dark sheds often crippled by their ballooning weight and all face the same end in an automated production line and then we eat them.

Pain and suffering are relative concepts we are told, in the pursuit of cheap meat do not concern yourself, we are told, about the infections that come with cheap meat.... campylobacter, salmonella, mad cow disease. "Meat to Live" we are told, ignoring the heart disease and bowel cancer and other ailments which go hand in hand with eating meat.

Profit has no conscience, only a balance sheet.

In its name both animals and people are there to be exploited.

FACTS 6:

Heart disease is the major cause of death in the UK and the developed world.

Studies have shown vegetarians to suffer 30% less heart disease than meat eaters.

Cancer accounts for a quarter of all premature deaths in the UK.

At least one third of all cancers are directly related to diet. Many risk factors are significantly reduced on a vegetarian diet.

Research shows the incidence of colon, breast, prostate and other cancers is lower among vegetarians.

It's estimated that about 2,000,000 people suffer from food poisoning every year (in the UK). Almost all food poisoning is from meat + dairy products.

In the last 2 seconds of our evolutionary year we have destroyed and poisoned in a rate unknown in the history of the earth.

Growth and consumption have caused the problem, yet we are told that even more growth and consumption can cure it.

Are we any richer, any happier, any more ennobled for all the death, the pain and the destruction?

We have bequeathed our children a world which contains less wonder than when we inherited it.

We have poisoned their water, polluted their air and laid most of their land waste.

We are handing them a world which to us looked certain, but is now teetering on the brink of catastrophe.

And still governments do nothing, but you can.

Simply by giving up meat, poultry, fish and slaughterhouse by-products, you'll make an immediate contribution to ending the pain, the cruelty and the destruction.

Stop the killing by becoming vegetarian, you have the choice.

You can help stop the cruelty and destruction today.

Join the Vegetarian Society. Join the fight for life.

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