

Random Notes from: NO IMPACT MAN By Colin Beavan

A Few Websites from the Book

http://noimpactman.typepad.com/	http://www.worldchanging.com/
http://www.worldwatch.org/	http://bicyclesafe.com/
http://vegetablegardeningguru.com/	http://www.goveg.com/
http://www.localharvest.org/	http://simpleliving.net/
http://www.freecycle.org/	http://offthegrid.com/
http://www.energystar.gov/	http://www.nrdc.org/greenliving/toolkit.asp

A Few Quotes from the Book

"As I opened the door to my apartment that afternoon, I felt an unnatural rush of cool air....If I was the type of person who left his air conditioners on when no one was home, not only did I not have the professional authority to talk about the environment, I didn't have the moral authority, either....It was as though I wanted to change other people but was unwilling or unable to look in the mirror." (p.12)

"So this book, in short, is about my attempt with my little family to live for a year causing as little negative environmental impact as possible....My intention with this book is not to advocate that, as a culture, we should all give up elevators, washing machines, and toilet paper. This is a book about a lifestyle experiment. It chronicles a year of inquiry..." (p.15)

"Consider the reusable-cloth-versus-plastic-diaper debate....Only about thirty cloth diapers are needed to raise a child if you wash them twice a week. Admittedly, laundering diapers impacts the planet (the heating of the water and the water use itself, for example). On the other hand, that same child, by age two, would go through some 4,000 plastic diapers. How could pumping oil out of the fields in the Middle East, shipping it to factories in, say, China to manufacture plastic diapers, delivering those diapers back to the United States, and then burying those poop-filled 4,000 diapers not be worse than washing the thirty pieces of cloth 104 times?" (p.23)

"As long as we're talking about waste, it's worth noting that, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, 4.8 million tons—nearly 10 billion pounds—of disposable paper napkins, towels, cups, and plates is what the United States sends to landfills every year. I don't know why it never occurred to me before, but what we're talking about when we talk about 10 billion pounds of trashed paper productions is 10 billion pounds of dead trees." (p.48)

"The two biggest contributors to climate change are, first, the burning of fossil fuels and, second the destruction of forests. The forests are the planet's lungs, except that instead of breathing in oxygen as we do, they take that problematic carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. Trees could help save us from ourselves. We just have to stop killing them all in order to wrap our bagels." (P. 45)

"A thousand miles off the coast of California, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, there is a swirling soup of floating trash twice the size of the continental United States. The "garbage patch," as it's called, contains six times as much plastic, by weight, as bio-matter. Way out there in the Pacific Ocean, a thousand miles from the nearest human, plankton, jellyfish and fish are outnumbered (by weight) six to one by plastic bags, water bottles, and other throw away plastic tchotchkes." (pg. 54)

“The United States, with just 5 percent of the world’s population, is the largest producer of greenhouse gases, accounting for nearly 25 percent of these emissions. Meanwhile, about one-third of our carbon footprint comes from transportation. And, overall, our driving produces nearly a full half of the entire planet’s automotive greenhouse gases.” (p. 81)

Ghandi quote: “ Be the change you want to see in the world.” (p. 84)

(Regarding Why this farm isn’t “certified organic”): ‘No, no. But if a cow is sick or has an infected udder and the vet comes and says that the only way to cure the cow is with antibiotics, we treat the cow. On an organic farm, you’d have to send the cow to slaughter. We treat the cow, keep it off the milking machine until the antibiotics are clear from the milk. I think killing a cow because it has an infection is cruel.’ Ronny is proud that his cows live to be fifteen to twenty years old. No more than 25 percent of dairy cows in typical cattle farms live to be over seven years old.” (p. 136)

“Last on the list of preparations for the no-electricity stage, my friend Elizabeth got in touch with a company named Solar One that made, and was willing to loan me, a portable solar power system based on a single panel that was only the size of the average window.. ...Before you knew it, a suitcase-sized power pack was pumping juice into my laptop and Internet modem, along with charging a couple of large batteries hooked to LED lamps.”(p180)

“The only thing I could do was remember what Sean had said about the project making people think, even if it made them uncomfortable. The point of no electricity is not to try living without power at all. It’s to inspire ourselves and our friends and whoever is paying attention to begin looking for a better way of life, a more satisfying way of life that does not cost the earth.” (p. 184)

“In the United States , for example, the average single-family household uses some seventy gallons of water every day. A full quarter of that we use to flush our toilets. In other words, while 1 billion people in the world don’t have access to clean drinking water, Americans are flushing 2.5 trillion gallons a year down the toilet....Until I started reading about it, I thought this was someone else’s problem. You know, like the Southern Hemisphere’s. But Arizona is already out of water—it has to import it. California has only twenty years of drinking water left. New Mexico has only ten. The EPA estimates that in the next five years, if water use continues unchecked, thirty-six American states will suffer water shortages.” (p.193-194)

“It is the workers at the organizations I volunteer for who confirm for me that environmentalism is not about trying to use less but about trying to be more. It is not about sucking our tummies in but pushing our hearts out. Environmentalism is not about the environment. It is about people. It is about a vision for a better life—for people.” (p. 203)

“But, at the same time, I’m not sure that reducing individual resource use is the entire way forward. At their root, most religious philosophies say do less harm, yes, but they also say do more good. There is a limit to how much less harm I can do. But my potential for good is unlimited. All of our potentials for good are unlimited....The Question becomes not whether we use resources but what we use them for. Do we use them to improve lives? Or do we waste them? My life itself is a resource. How shall I use it?” (p.204-205)

“Paradoxically, it may not have been the creating less trash and other measures per se that made the greatest difference. Instead, what made the difference was publicly letting people know that I was trying, and trying hard, and having them see the efforts. Going to extremes for a year changed the way I think about these things—another result of the experiment.” (P.223)