

Can We Earn a Living on a Living Planet?

Chuck Collins, *The American Prospect*, Fall, 2014.

Workers vs. Environmentalists: The Conflict

Competing visions of growth

Distrust all the way round

Difficult issues raised

Workers and Environmentalists: Toward a Reconciliation

The Blue Green Alliance: One Example of a Way Forward

The Conflict

- **Seriousness of the Problem:** An Apocalyptic Vision
 - **A Source of the Problem:** Differing Visions of Economic Growth
 - Some Trade Unionists:**
 1. Economic growth is required for high wages, tight labor markets, and rising living standards;
 2. Purpose of growth is to provide the good jobs;
 3. Jobs, in the absence of an expansive social safety net, are key to security and identity
 4. Proscriptions for limits are advanced by the wealthy
- “Hungry and Out of Work: Eat an Environmentalist”**

Some Environmentalists:

1. The growth paradigm is a dead-end;
2. We have over-shot the earth's capacity to support the growth paradigm;
3. We are at the end of the cheap energy era;
4. Once we reach planetary limits, billions invested in growth will be wasted leaving a degraded earth;
5. We are destroying other species and habitat.

“The Party’s Over”

Competing Visions of How to Limit Economic Growth

- What hasn't worked: Sacrifice, Conservation, Thrift
- What should work: Energy efficiency and technological advances
- The only thing that will work: Drastic reductions in consumption

“Waking Up To a Century of Decline”

Distrust, Worry, and Grief

“Trade unionists have everything to fear from an environmental movement that is silent about workers.”

Can growth be redefined so that environmentalists and workers are both satisfied?

In the absence of a meaningful social safety net, how can we move to a post-carbon economy?

Is it possible to reduce carbon emissions and to create new jobs?

Is it possible to develop renewable energy at scale, without massive use of fossil fuels?

Toward a Reconciliation (and a story)

These are required:

- A “new economy” movement
- A new definition of what it means “to make a living”
- A new measure of “economic growth”
- A new Marshall Plan
- A price on carbon (with dividends)

A Caveat: My Presentation at a Union Hall

Afterburn: Society Beyond Fossil Fuels

The Blue-Green Alliance: One Example

The Alliance unites union members, environmentalists, business and community leaders to create and sustain good jobs

Facilitates dialogue

Designs public policies

Conducts research

Runs educational and advocacy campaigns

Projects now in California, Michigan, Ohio, Washington, Illinois, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin