HOW DO WE GET FROM HERE TO THERE?

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The visionary essays in this book are both practical and profound. They offer us choices. When we hear so much bad news about the environment and human suffering, a bleak future can seem inevitable. It's not. When we see so much dominating power at work in our society we can feel helpless. We're not. There are solutions that will see us through to a safer, more ecologically and socially harmonious future. The challenge is primarily political. The dominant forces and leaders in our society, along with many average citizens, are resisting the necessary changes, for a myriad of reasons. This chapter suggests strategies for overcoming these obstacles.

The quest for sustainable development is the supreme challenge facing humanity today. In 1987, the Bruntland Commission defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Right now, we are not remotely close to achieving this goal and the longer we put off facing facts, the worse things get. By 2050, the planet will have some 10 billion humans, up from just over 6 billion at the start of this century. Global consumption of water, energy, food, fish, and wood keeps rising, even as the resources grow scarce and our waste products, especially global-warming gases, skyrocket. Meanwhile, half the humans on the planet—mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers—can't find sufficient food and water. A few are taking things into their own hands, inciting conflict and violence. Perhaps they feel they have no choice. Many of the rest of us do have choices. Future generations will either lament our shortsighted refusal to face up to the problems of our time or marvel at our creativity and courage.

The good news is that we have remedies—technologies, policies, and model programs. The authors in this book describe many of them. But this phenomenal innovation won't move forward without greater public support. Quite simply, we need more power. We don't yet have the political or economic muscle to implement many
of the remedies. Too many people are still unaware of any need for change, or they remain in denial. Too few feel hope. Others cling to simplistic descriptions of reality. The dominant power structure reinforces this inaction through extraordinary distraction from the real issues of our time. We are considered patriotic if we shop and anti-American or quixotic if we work for change.

Ultimately, the authors in this book are posing one central question: What really matters? This question illuminates their vision of a different future. Can we refocus our attention on this question as we make choices about our future?

There are useful parallels between our current dilemma and at least one earlier struggle. The issues at the heart of the nuclear power debate in the late 1970s were similar to the tensions currently underlying the quest for sustainability. Those in favor of nuclear technology promised a better quality of life, cheap energy, good jobs, and a clean environment. Energy for unlimited economic growth was to be available almost “cost-free,” economically and environmentally. The risks were manageable and the waste products could be safely buried for thousands of years. Yet the highly consolidated nuclear industry and its utility allies failed to calculate or reveal the true costs of nuclear energy—in particular, the need to store and ultimately dispose of thousands of tons of highly radioactive waste for the next 250,000 years (the projected half-life of plutonium) as well as the potential health threats to nuclear workers and the general public. Advocates of safe energy were able to capitalize on the hidden costs of nuclear energy and through legal and political channels bring those costs to public attention. The result was to bring the nuclear expansion to a standstill.

Likewise, today’s dominant model of economic expansion on a global scale hides the true costs of doing business. We are told that growth-oriented economies and corporate-dominated development are the path to poverty alleviation, vibrant democracies, and environmental stability. Increasingly, these claims ring hollow. Promises of universal prosperity tied to the immutable forces of economic globalization and ever-increasing consumption have lost credibility with millions of citizens around the globe.

Several important and relevant lessons stand out from the an-

tinuclear movement: (1) It took many years to raise public awareness and engage numerous key constituencies in the struggle for change, but ultimately those public education and organizing efforts were fundamental to success; (2) the critique of nuclear energy by prestigious scientists and economists was crucial in influencing both public and elite opinion; (3) a national network of elected officials, ratepayers, young activists, academics, health professionals, labor union members (including nuclear plant workers), and artists, along with over one thousand community-based groups, constructed broad-based coalitions that worked collaboratively for positive change; (4) nuclear power as a dominant economic model was stopped at the local and state levels, through public utility commissions, state legislatures, and the courts rather than at the federal level, through policy reform; (5) people involved in the struggle were able to articulate a clear vision of feasible alternatives that could safely replace nuclear energy as affordable sources of electricity—decentralized and plentiful renewable energy, conservation, and a slow transition to a hydrogen economy; (6) victory was connected to the marketplace—when nuclear energy became risky for investors and too costly for consumers, plans to build new plants were canceled; (7) the network of organizations and experts were sufficiently organized and connected to bring nearly half a million people to Washington, D.C., just six weeks after the Three Mile Island nuclear accident, in an outpouring of human protest, adding to the pressure for change; and (8) the issue captured the imagination and sparked the involvement of countless young idealists and activists who brought their boundless energy to the struggle.

In the end, further development of nuclear power was stopped in its tracks in the United States because the public began to see it as a public-health threat. The risks of nuclear technologies outweighed the potential benefits. When diverse constituencies banded together to insist that the industry pay the true costs of production, investors shied away and the industry could no longer muster the capital for new plants. No new plants were ordered in this country after 1978.

The accelerating pace of climate change linked with cata-
Trophic shortages of food and clean water worldwide are proof that time is running out to create a sustainable planet. While avoiding the frenzy of survivalist panic, how can we create a political climate for sustainable economic policies, technologies, and household practices? What can we learn from our political victories in the past?

**RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND BUILD A LARGER BASE OF SUPPORT**

There's no getting around it. People are the source of power. As citizens, workers, investors, consumers, and innovators, people make things happen. The overwhelming priority in the short term is to raise public awareness and attract more people to our cause. (Throughout this chapter, when I refer to "we," I mean a broad network of concerned individuals, nonprofit groups, companies, government agencies, students, academics, and civic leaders dedicated to sustainable development.) Some dismiss public education as too time-consuming and costly. Yet, without greater public support—not just reflected in opinion polls but manifested in human actions—few of the solutions outlined in this book will gain traction.

Why aren't more people getting involved? For some, it's simply lack of understanding. A large number of Americans have not connected the dots, often through no fault of their own. Many still don't see any relationship between driving a large vehicle and global-warming gas emissions or rising consumption of paper and the loss of ancient forests. We must help people make these kinds of associations.

Once individuals grasp the scope of the problem, they often resort to denial. Political leaders reinforce this resistance to change, proposing remedies that skirt the real problems at hand. This has been blatantly obvious with the debate over global warming where American political leaders have continuously deflected public attention from the urgent need to curb fossil fuel consumption while the problems associated with greenhouse gases rapidly worsen.

Ronald Helfetz, director of the Leadership Education Project at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, argues that people's defenses deserve respect. "People need time to see their lives in a different light—to change their images of the future." Those working to galvanize the public often feel we don't have time to help the public adapt. They must change now! Consequently, sustainability advocates come across as Chicken Little, shrieking that the sky is falling. Even if the facts are stark, this approach just isn't working. In fact, recent polls show a decline in public concern for both social and environmental issues.

Lack of awareness and denial of the problems are only two obstacles to engaging people. Extreme individualism is another. Many Americans draw the boundaries of their self-interest very narrowly. Our culture's emphasis on individualism and competition reinforces an attitude of isolation and impotence toward global problems.

Finally, while political leaders play to the public's desire for easy fixes, environmentalists err in the opposite direction, provoking undue distress by constantly describing ecological devastation and human suffering. People turn away from these overwhelmingly negative messages.

We clearly have not yet mastered the science and art of broadening and deepening public support for our cause. The private sector sells shoes, cars, potato chips—and introduces *some fifty thousand new consumer products in the United States each year*—by speaking to people's nonmaterial needs for love, friends, safety, and adventure. The goal is to make an emotional connection with people and then persuade them to take action, i.e., make a purchase. We must do a better job of speaking to the same nonmaterial needs—not to sell more stuff but to attract support based on the genuine human needs for hope, security, and greater connection. Too often, we overemphasize the bad news, prompting potential supporters to withdraw. What's more, individuals need to know that the actions they take will make an impact, and that they are not acting alone. These feelings of isolation or powerlessness are primary causes of burnout and dropout. To succeed, we must help people overcome denial, recognize their power to make a difference, overcome feelings of isolation, connect to deep values and aspirations, and focus on positive solutions more than negative consequences of inaction.
A CASE STUDY

I have spent much of the past decade wrestling with the thorny problem of U.S. consumption as a root cause of many environmental and social problems. As a nation, we consume a hugely disproportionate share of the Earth's resources and produce the largest volume of waste per capita. The environmental consequences of our "more is better" definition of the good life are severe, yet consumption is perceived as patriotic and even as the purpose for living.

I bring up consumption as an example of a problem that initially looks far too negative to take on and because my organization, the Center for a New American Dream, has made considerable progress in overcoming such communication challenges (though we still have much to learn). Our goal is to connect to people's deepest values and then support them in taking some positive action: to consume wisely (not to stop consuming) in households and workplaces or engage in national advocacy efforts. Our research indicated that people couldn't handle a lot of depressing data about the planet; they're too busy coping with day-to-day life, and therein was our entry point. Rather than focus first on the need to change consumption patterns to ensure environmental survival, we focused on the ways in which consumer culture feels bad to people in their daily lives—the sense that life is out of control and that the chase for more may not be worth the required effort. And rather than talk about having less, we talked about having more fun and fulfillment and focused on the benefits of resisting excess materialism. We stressed finding personal balance, simplifying one's life, and protecting kids from advertising. This positive approach to engagement has been well received. In short, we seek to help people move from denial to awareness to meaningful action.

EXPERIMENT WITH NEW APPROACHES TO PUBLIC OUTREACH

Data shows that Americans get insufficient sleep, work longer hours than their European counterparts, have no more than a week of annual vacation on average, and must juggle family and work with minimal support. It's difficult to engage people when they're tired or simply overwhelmed by all the bad news. In this context, how do we galvanize people to participate in the cracks of their otherwise very busy lives? Several organizations working to advance sustainability are achieving results by experimenting with new models for civic engagement.

The Appalachian Mountain Club builds trails, takes people on wilderness excursions, and subsequently signs up folks to push for policy reform to protect the lakes, mountains, and trees they've personally experienced. The South Carolina Conservation League in Charleston, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation in Annapolis, and the national Sierra Club similarly link environmental advocacy with personal experiences of nature. Each of these organizations tries to connect to the hearts of its members—not just to their wallets or computer terminals—by providing them with opportunities to experience the beauty of life, and then asking them to help protect the source of their wonder.

Alice Waters, owner and chef at Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California, follows a similar approach, helping people from all walks of life connect the dots from the vegetables on their plates to the farmers toiling in the fields. Her strategy: Link the pleasure of eating and the desire for good health with a willingness to take action on food production and consumption practices. From her small restaurant, she has literally launched a movement of children and adults dedicated to sustainable agriculture. Other organizations are exploring the successful strategies of groups such as Weight Watchers and Alcoholics Anonymous, which help people examine their addictions in the context of their genuine unmet needs for love, connection, and hope in a fractured world.

We can reach more people and establish longer-lasting relationships by connecting to their deeper aspirations. Activism is more likely to be sustained when people act because they love hiking in healthy forests, want to simplify their lives, yearn for more fun and less stuff, or feel a deep concern for malnourished children in southern Africa or Harlem.
CREATE NEW INSTRUMENTS FOR REACHING THE PUBLIC

For good or bad, most people receive information about the world primarily through electronic media, especially television. Americans in general spend 40 percent of their free time watching television and children are the most avid viewers, watching 2\(\frac{3}{4}\) hours a day. Television programming and advertising is driven by commercial interests. Public debate is skewed and democracy is constrained because we have no alternative vehicle for reaching the public. Sustainability proponents need a noncommercial vehicle for news, feature stories, and family entertainment. Universities, public schools, nonprofit groups, and private companies should pool resources to purchase and launch a national cable channel devoted to commercial-free programming for a better world. Ambitious, but not impossible. This would revolutionize public debate and deepen public understanding about our world and where it's heading.

BUILD POWER AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Satish Kumar, president of Schumacher College and a student of Mahatma Gandhi's movement for Indian independence, argues that one key to increasing our influence is to work first at the periphery of the dominant system before leveraging change at the center of power. Starting at the point of maximum resistance typically brings defeat. In other words, don't expect to go to Washington, D.C., or in Gandhi's case, to the British Parliament to pass a new law or fundamentally revamp existing policy before building political support in communities, churches, unions, city councils, and state legislatures across the country. It took Gandhi fifty adult years to achieve success.

Many hoped for successful policy reform during the Clinton Administration, especially in support of sustainability, a new concept in the early 1990s. But when President Clinton proposed an energy tax early in his term, it was defeated within days, largely because no political infrastructure was in place to ensure success. Hopes for the elimination of harmful federal subsidies to mining, timber, and grazing interests, for new indicators of economic progress, a reordering of federal budget priorities, and for investment in urban revitalization and public transit were soon dashed. Within two years, the entire policy agenda for sustainable development had collapsed. There were many reasons for these defeats, but the main problem was a tendency to seek policy reforms in Washington without sufficient investment in building a political base to win the fight on Capitol Hill.

When it comes to energy policy and other model programs, we must continue to do what is politically possible in Congress, where the oil, gas, and automobile lobbies are formidable, while focusing more resources in local jurisdictions. We should put more emphasis in a place like San Francisco, where voters overwhelmingly approved two revenue bonds in November 2001 that will finance solar and wind energy systems, making the city the nation's largest municipal producer of solar electricity. Or in a place like Pennsylvania, where state colleges and universities are purchasing wind-generated electricity, making the state the largest purchaser of wind power in the United States.

Laws get passed by elected officials and we don't have enough enlightened leaders in office. Sustainability proponents need to identify and support local elected officials running as mayors, city council members, and state legislators. We need to build this power at the local level, keeping our attention on opportunities for wins at the Congressional level. If we hope to succeed, we need a cohesive team of elected leaders that collaborates across state boundaries and shares our vision of a sustainable world.

FOCUS ON REDIRECTING THE SYSTEM'S POWERFUL CURRENTS

The most powerful forces in American society today are enterprise and finance. The market economy is both the engine behind many social and environmental problems and potentially the mechanism for achieving positive change. It makes sense to use the power of market-based structures wherever possible. Think aikido, the Japanese martial art in which a physically weaker defender
harnesses and uses the force of the more powerful opponent to his advantage.

In the past three decades, efforts to curb corporate excesses and promote responsible corporate behavior to protect the environment and worker rights have focused on the policy and regulatory arena. More recently, proponents of sustainability have shifted part of their efforts to the marketplace, and several recent initiatives suggest that this is precisely how to achieve greater short-term success. There are several ways to harness the power of the market to simultaneously promote economic prosperity, social development, and resource conservation.

Several successful market-based campaigns have integrated consumer demand, shareholder resolutions, student and nongovernmental organization (NGO) protests, and nonprofit-corporate partnerships to promote sustainability. The success of NGOs in changing forestry practices, working with progressive elements of the forestry industry, is now familiar to many people. The Forest Stewardship Council has certified over twenty million hectares of wood and many forests are being managed wisely as a result of consumer and environmental pressure. Likewise, environmental advocacy linked with strong consumer demand has led to increased sales of organic food, growing interest in the Marine Stewardship Council's certified seafood, and consumer rejection of genetically engineered foods. More recently, the largest retail supplier of paper in the United States—Staples—responded to consumer and environmental demands with a pledge to offer a new line of products with 90 percent post-consumer waste content and 10 percent tree-free fiber. Staples—under pressure from consumers and environmental groups—is in a position to influence the entire industrial infrastructure for recycled paper and help conserve forests.

We live in a market-based society, so when conservation organizations, in concert with consumers, investors, and selected producers, get organized, they have clout and often move more quickly than federal policy makers. Borders Books, Hyatt Hotels, Safeway, and Starbucks began selling coffee produced with sustainable growing methods in response to consumer and environmentalist demands. Dozens of coffees are now on the market, certified to protect the environment, workers, and wildlife.

Government agencies can also play a constructive role in the marketplace. Armed with annual budgets for goods and services totaling $385 billion, state and local governments alone represent one of the largest forces for developing the market for green products. Dozens of states, cities, and counties purchase paper with a high-recycled content, directly helping to save forests around the world. Santa Monica, California, is buying 100 percent renewable electricity for all of its city facilities, and numerous local agencies are buying nontoxic cleaning products to help improve workers' health and the local environment.

There are other ways to use the market for positive change. Large corporations have a global impact when they ask their suppliers to change certain practices. McDonald's, for example, with encouragement and pressure from environmental and animal rights groups, dramatically improved chicken production practices in the United States simply by specifying new production criteria for all its suppliers and insisting on more humane treatment of animals.

These initiatives take advantage of existing market forces and redirect consumer and investor dollars toward products and companies that demonstrate superior performance with regard to sustainability. Universities, local school systems, municipal governments, and faith-based institutions can make sustainable procurement and investment practices a priority. The shift in purchasing and investment power, in turn, can quickly alter the way goods are produced, improving human well-being and protecting the environment.

Businesses that promote sustainability are often rewarded in the marketplace. Their environmental and labor practices attract both investors and consumers while frequently reducing operational costs. When British Petroleum broke ranks to support the Kyoto treaty on global warming, the company changed the political atmosphere—and attracted the interest of socially responsible investors. When Goodman Manufacturing, a heating and cooling
equipment company, protested the Bush Administration’s plans to lower energy efficiency standards for household appliances. It helped keep the existing standards in place. In response, consumer and environmental groups generated several thousand letters from individual consumers promising to buy Goodman’s appliances when they next made a purchase. Consumer and investor power can be used to reward companies that redesign products and production processes to promote sustainability.

**CREATE THE NEW RATHER THAN ADAPT TO THE STATUS QUO**

There is power in simply altering our relationship to the status quo. Author and activist Joanna Macy suggests that one path to gaining power involves stepping out of existing patterns of living by establishing new “self-organizing systems.” Often we feel trapped, complicit with a system that is moving in a reckless direction. Macy’s strategy involves altering the “givens” in our life. Imagine a circle dance where one, then two people move in a new direction. The others are inevitably influenced by the new pattern.

People need to see, touch, and experience the positive changes we advocate. This is why examples of lifestyles, communities, products, and businesses that promote sustainability are so powerful. Bill McDonough, one of the most visionary designers in the world, draws standing-room-only crowds, in part because he’s a superb public speaker but also because he can show people a piece of fabric that is so safe, so nontoxic, that it is literally edible. Mark Ritchie and his Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy in Minnesota are building new community models—farmers’ markets linked with rural agricultural development—that make people feel good about both their personal health and their contribution to saving family farms. When we buy from local businesses, we create new interdependent relationships and more self-reliant communities.

People experience new possibilities when they drive a Toyota Prius and create new systems when they purchase fair-trade coffee. Citizens in Oakland, New Orleans, and the Bronx have altered their relationships with the status quo by replacing hazardous waste sites with gardens, ball fields, and parks. And people begin to imagine new possibilities when they observe others who voluntarily consume less, work fewer hours, and play more.

New models give people hope in the face of all the bad news. When we see the beginnings of positive change, we know that more is not only possible but also probable. During the nuclear power debate, safe-energy festivals were popular. Parents and children would come to see and touch solar cookers, wind technologies, and inventive home designs for conservation, gaining a sense of excitement about the future. Today, Americans can enjoy the eleven thousand miles converted from rails to trails for biking and hiking and gain a vision of future transport and recreation. California’s recent legislation forbidding the sale of sodas and junk food in schools helps parents recognize that schools should be commercial-free zones. Habitat for Humanity’s straw-bale housing for low-income families demonstrates that sustainable development can and must address both a fractured environment and human needs.

Sometimes we just need to change one small piece in a larger interdependent system, and the ripple effect can be considerable. The good news is that this is happening. There are now school lunch programs supplied by local organic farmers, improving children’s health and strengthening rural agriculture; car-sharing programs run by municipalities that strengthen community while reducing greenhouse gases; tool libraries that help families save money and reduce material consumption and waste. We see new models in government buildings made with native, sustainable materials; community banks with social and environmental lending criteria; micro-enterprise that integrates job creation and environmental restoration; publicly owned utilities and small businesses that generate electricity from renewable sources of energy while reducing electric bills; and cities that are converting parking lots back to paradise.

**USE THE POWER OF NONVIOLENT ACTION**

Sometimes, when other strategies fail, we must assert power by creating greater tension in the system. In his “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” Martin Luther King described the importance of di-
rect action. "Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks to dramatize the issue so that it can no longer be ignored." Sometimes this is the only way to challenge dominating power.

As I've already noted, antinuclear protesters sent a strong message to Congress when they mobilized nearly half a million Americans to come to Washington. This same strategy has been used most recently to force a discussion of globalization and trade. Unfettered capitalism and sustainable development are not compatible. There are obvious limits to economic growth and expansion on a finite planet. Our real task is to stop avoiding this debate and get on with establishing appropriate limits on enterprise while rewarding and providing incentives for private sector innovation that generates wealth and employment, conserves resources, and improves material security for people around the world. Direct action, led predominantly by students, has cracked open debate on this taboo subject. We must expose the hidden costs and obvious dysfunction of economic globalization and its mediating institutions while preparing for the inevitable negotiations over how best to restructure our global financial and trade policies. In the short term, direct action is a crucial strategy for fostering a healthy tension over these core questions.

More Unity, Less Chaos

Power usually comes through people working together toward common goals. It's remarkable how difficult this can be. Hyperindividualism and competition for resources often prevent key stakeholders from sharing information or collaborating. If we hope to succeed, we must work together. In 1992, at the end of the first Earth Summit, few organizations were addressing the root causes of escalating poverty and environmental degradation. Just a decade later, thousands of groups are taking on pieces of the sustainability puzzle—from technological innovation to policy reform—even as they collectively debate the true scope of the sustainability problem. Yet in the United States, these organizations, companies, and agencies have few mechanisms for assessing progress, re-

viewing objectives, sharing information, or building synergistic relationships. The few attempts at establishing national umbrella coalitions have failed.

This phenomenal growth in positive activity is encouraging, yet it poses challenges for getting work done, especially while everyone copes with the cascading wave of new information relevant to their work. The web of related organizations, experts, and activists grows exponentially each year. At a minimum, we need a few well-designed national and regional retreats that bring leaders together. During the nuclear power debates, annual national and regional conferences were held to exchange news and resources and forge common strategies. This was critical to holding the many constituencies and groups together.

We also need to help concerned citizens find easy access to our networks and groups. The movement to freeze nuclear weapons gained momentum in the 1980s by using a national petition, in concert with state referendums, to involve the public and build a political base of hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of citizen volunteers in every state. Something similar could be crafted to unify disparate elements of the sustainability community.

Finally, we must collaborate on the overarching messages we use to reach the public and on the specific actions we ask them to take. Too often, overlapping initiatives have a negative impact on the very people we need to enlist. Rather than providing the concerned public with a clear lighthouse—a beacon for finding their way—our collective impact is often experienced more as a cacophony of noise. The public simply turns us off. We need new incentives for cooperation. Leaders must build friendships, not just professional relationships, to help transcend the competition for resources and credit.

BEWARE OF PITFALLS

Don't Confuse Activity With Effective Action

We don't have time to get lost or distracted. Since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, there have been scores of international and national papers, mandates, and conferences on various aspects of the
summit's action agenda—Agenda 21—and sustainable development. This explosion of activity by stakeholder groups is overwhelmingly positive. The sharing of information has been and will continue to be crucial. Yet with so much going on, it is increasingly difficult to know what meetings to attend, which host organizations have follow-through capacity, and whether the bustle of activity has any political significance.

The utility of joint summits and statements depends on the priority the relevant stakeholders—governments, corporations, NGOs, and interested segments of civic society—give to the process and outcomes. Sometimes the flurry of activity over language substitutes for the more essential work of building public support for change. In the United States, for example, the federal government has largely ignored implementation of Agenda 21. International gatherings from Cairo to Johannesburg have absorbed tremendous human and financial capital from American NGOs with minimal impact on the U.S. government's behavior. International conventions are important but more effort should be focused on building domestic constituencies capable of influencing federal decision makers.

At the international level, the United Nations and other international agencies should seek to streamline the hundreds of organizations and forums. It is impossible for any stakeholder to monitor the UNEP, CSD, UNDP, FAO, UNESCO, OECD, and other institutions addressing sustainable development.

**Be Conscious of Psychological Obstacles to Success**

Most of us are familiar with political and economic obstacles to change: The pervasive influence of money in politics, corporate domination of the media, and inadequate financial resources for the cause, to name a few. But there are less obvious pitfalls and basic human tendencies that frequently slow things down. We often opt for simplistic analysis—describing reality in terms of good and evil and blaming authority figures or other scapegoats for all problems. We hold on to past assumptions and fail to adapt to changing realities. We tend to externalize the enemy and fail to examine our own values and behavior. We jump to conclusions and get distracted by power struggles. It is helpful to be conscious of these underlying barriers to progress as we leverage our increasing power to make positive change.

**The Rising Threats of Centralized Financial Power and Militarism**

Two trends make our work more difficult. The first is the weakening of democratic government in both the United States and many other countries. Multinational corporations and their major institutional stockholders have, to a large extent, replaced governments as the supreme power brokers on the world stage. The largest one hundred corporations have incomes greater than half the member countries of the U.N. *Five hundred corporations direct 70 percent of all international trade.* These corporations exert tremendous influence over elected officials and often undermine success in the federal policy arena. Political democracy, economic democracy, and environmental sustainability cannot be separated. There are many implications for strategy, but one stands out: Every constituency that cares about sustainable development should join the national effort to further reform campaign finance laws.

The second trend is militarism—as government has become weaker, the military has gained power. The connection between security issues and sustainability is clear. Resource scarcity coupled with widespread human suffering creates perfect conditions for conflict, terrorism, and war. The United States is responding to this situation by placing greater emphasis on military readiness and less on foreign aid or debt relief. There is growing concern about America's military intentions, especially U.S. willingness to protect access to foreign oil at any cost. Similarly, many people are disturbed by rising American nationalism in the wake of the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001.

As this book goes to press, the Bush Administration has proposed the largest military spending increase in two decades and is rapidly seeking to modernize nuclear weapons. The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty has been abandoned and the Nuclear Weapons Council, made up of officials from the U.S. Defense and Energy depart-
ments, has ordered a three-year study of the development of a nuclear-tipped, earth-penetrating weapon that can destroy hardened underground targets. Opposition to these policies has been weak and muted.

These trends, in concert with growing concern about the loss of privacy, civil liberties, and a free and fair press, must be monitored carefully. Ultimately, sustainable development depends on a robust civic democracy. Strategies for change must incorporate partnerships with those working for campaign finance reform, a reduced role for the military in our society, and increased public ownership of and access to communications channels.

FROM WHENCE COMES OUR POWER?

As we make our way in a wounded world we need to do our best to stay connected to what is real and good. So much is artificial and superficial. Albert Einstein was once asked, "What is the most important question you can ask in life?" His response: "Is the universe a friendly place or not?" Most of us don't feel too certain of the answer, but Einstein believed the evidence came down in favor of goodness, that the universe is ultimately friendly. Whether you consider the universe friendly, neutral, or hostile is a matter of faith, but it's important to have personal strategies for tapping back into some source of strength beyond the self. Otherwise, it's too easy to get preoccupied with protecting our precarious isolated existence, fighting depression and a sense of isolation.

From whence comes our power? Ultimately, to stay grounded in a world that is out of whack, we must deepen our connections—to the natural world, to other people, and to the sacred, however we define that. We tend to think genuine power comes from exertion, smarter strategies, and more resources. These things can help on a tactical level, but our sense of vision and creative courage come more from surrender than resistance, from letting go than holding on, from trusting in the friendliness of the universe despite a preponderance of fear.

Proponents of sustainable development frequently burn out, have health problems, and lose our way. The demands of work frequently squeeze out other life priorities, including practices that keep us in balance. Some of us even get addicted to the intensity and pressure. Everything seems urgent. We must rest more and do less if we hope to stay the course. We need to experience more gratitude and less fear. It's not an intellectual or analytical thing. It's the letting go of resistance, of having to know what to do, even the letting go of results once we've given our best, and just resting in the beauty of what is. Gratitude comes from the opposite of struggle. It comes from acceptance of the good in life, from the belief that the universe tilts toward justice, peace, and human understanding.

When we take time to watch a sunset, meet a friend, or seek truth in silence, we tap back into those connections that sustain us through this work. If we hope to contribute to a better world, we cannot afford to operate strictly on our own juices. That puts a tremendous burden on each individual—an overwhelming need to compete, defend, and construct strategies for survival. If we go it alone, we must always ask, "How do I do this?" If we stay connected, we can spend more time listening, paying attention, and relaxing into this journey. Less effort sometimes leads to extraordinary outcomes.

All the great spiritual traditions suggest that authentic moral action stems from opening to the possibility of higher forces beyond the individual self. And while our struggle includes courageous political action, it is equally a struggle of our inner hearts. Perhaps our greatest need in this time of global and personal disequilibrium is for reconnection to the possibility of inexhaustible love. The quest for sustainable development is really the quest for more love in the world—for care of the natural world, of innocent people, and future generations. Our work is really about giving love back to the world and we can't give what we don't have. Try trusting that love is in our genetic code, that we are meant for it, and that it is our ultimate source of wisdom. It involves surrendering to not knowing while hungering to know. And perhaps this reconnection to what matters—through nature, human relationships, and the sacred dimension of life—will be the true source of power that takes us from here to there.