

Let's Schmooze

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Greenwash ~ the Flip-Side of Sustainability

Many things in life seem to be like a double-edged sword that can cut for good, or for bad. The popular concept *sustainability* has its own dark side ~ the deceptive behavior becoming known as *greenwash*.

Greenwash is basically lip-service to sustainability. It's the well-publicized pledge to clean up Earth's environments without any real follow-up action.

It is a profound example of fake news ~ that is, announcements that sound good, but that have no real substance or truth to them.

There seems to be an abysmal gap between saying and doing. Think of all the lip service that we have heard in the press from governments and big businesses regarding their widely-trumpeted determination to help clean up the environment.

This is where the fat should hit the fire.

But it doesn't. There's very little sizzle out there.

Getting government and big business to pledge action is not enough. That's just a warm-fuzzy publicity stunt designed for public consumption. If promises aren't followed by action, then the promises are hollow.

The Paris Climate Deal is a good example. The idea was to limit future global warming to less than 2 degrees Fahrenheit. Otherwise, global warming would continue at more than

double that limit ~ an unacceptable scenario. Coastlines would continue to flood, extreme weather would continue to worsen, and ice sheets would continue to melt.

In 2016, numerous nations gathered together in Paris to pledge to wean humanity off fossil fuels.

The various nations offer their pledges with a manufactured smile for the photo shoot, but then sneak back home and cheat on the other pledges in order to gain an individual advantage.

The problem is that if everyone sneaks back home and cheats ~ rationalizing that all the other pledges are complying, so that just one nation cheating won't matter and won't be noticed ~ then everyone ends up cheating and no one actually performs on the pledge.

Another case in point. For all the talk out there about decreasing the use of antibiotics in corporate agribusiness, the use of antibiotics is actually increasing. Antibiotics are used in the agriculture and livestock businesses to minimize disease in today's crowded feedlots, and to increase growth rates.

However, the aggressive use of antibiotics also results in the creation of super pathogens ~ the same super pathogens that are increasingly killing millions of humans today.

These are just two modern-day examples of the tragedy of the commons. That's how the commons were lost in England ~ the overuse of common resources by individual actors.

Is our beautiful Earth destined to go the same way? That would be a very unfortunate thing.

Now, we have a word for deceitful pledges regarding sustainability ~ *greenwash*. Let's not be fooled by greenwash. Let's be ever alert to sustainability pledges that are not followed up with some real, substantial action.

Let's demand some real "sustainable" action!

The critical task is to keep a sharp eye on actual performance. Given humanity's propensity to say one thing and to do exactly the opposite, any pledge, even when ratified, needs to be received with a critical ear and a watchful eye.

Corporate and governmental pledgers have to be forced to perform ~ their feet have to be held to the fire. Lip service alone will definitely not clean up our environmental cesspools.

Let's be more focused on what they actually do, instead of what they say.

Being distracted by the warm-fuzzy publicity stunts of environmental pledgers is akin to watching a magician's face instead of his hands as he works his magic. If you don't want to be fooled by the magic, don't watch the magician's face. Keep your eyes on the magician's hands.

That's where the action really is!

~ 'til we meet again ~