
COMMON SENSE II

Capitalizing on the familiarity and influence of Thomas Paine’s “Common Sense” pamphlets that provided American colonists with exposure to the conversation of great thinkers in the pre-Revolutionary period, this paper assumes the name COMMON SENSE II. Similarly, today’s series of pamphlets strives to give a direct response to great political events and ideas of our time.

April 2021

Environmental Issue

Vol. 16 Issue 4

The Pandemic’s Effect on Climate Change

By Vicki Andrews

The 51st anniversary of Earth Day is Thursday, April 22, 2021. Is it a time for celebration or despair? As we struggle through the COVID-19 Pandemic, has the pandemic had a positive or a negative effect on the Earth? There have been some positive effects on the climate from this year when our lives slowed down and many people quarantined in their homes, but there have also been some negative effects.

Various studies show that carbon emissions have declined—slightly. The reason for the decline is that we are doing less traveling by car, train, and plane. It is possible that emissions could fall 5.5% from 2019 levels. That’s the good news. There was a similar decline during the 2008 financial crash when economies slowed and people eliminated unnecessary travel. Unfortunately for the Earth, as the economy recovered, so did our ability and urge to travel. That will probably happen this time, also driving the emissions level even higher. That’s the bad news. The amount of electricity being used has remained stable but has shifted from business and school use to home use as more people work and attend school from home. There has been less gasoline used as people aren’t traveling to work or school, which is good news, but the amount of diesel fuel has increased as we order more items online that need to be shipped, generally in diesel fueled semis, which is bad news. As restaurant dining has slowed down dramatically, people’s picking up take-out orders has increased. Unfortunately, take-out meals are packaged in containers that most people consider to be single-use. So those containers go in the garbage when the meal is finished, and new containers come with the next orders. Where do they end up? Right, in the garbage as soon as the meal is over, which is bad news.



Some restaurants are experimenting with returnable take-out containers, which is good news. They either need to be made of material that can be sterilized between meals or the customer can wash them and bring it back to be refilled for their personal use. There is a company in New York City, DeliverZero, that aims to tackle the city’s mountain of take-out trash. Their take-out containers are made of reusable polypropylene and are BPA free. Customers order their meal, wash the container, and return it to a delivery courier the next time they order. The containers are sterilized and reused. If they don’t return the container, they are charged a fee. At least 135 restaurants in NYC have joined this program. Another program in Portland, Oregon, is called GO Box; it charges customers a subscription to use its containers, which they can use to pick up food from restaurants, then wash, and reuse. A similar program in Durham, North Carolina is called Green-to-Go and has a network of participating restaurants; they require users to pay a subscription that starts at \$25 per year.

The developer of DeliverZero, Adam Farbiarz, is planning to expand in New York as well as bringing the service to Los Angeles and Amsterdam. Long-term, he wants to build a more sustainable world and has dreams of creating a larger network of reusable containers that could be used at grocery stores. He says, “I think about my kids. I want them to grow up in a world that is sensible, that is responsible, that isn’t warming.” (From www.cnn.com article.)

So how are we doing in our crazy new world of climate change and COVID-19? Good news/bad news. Some things are improving, and many people are becoming more creative in dealing with climate change. Many others are still not paying attention. As Earth Day approaches, let’s all consider ways we can reduce our carbon footprint, reduce the garbage we send to the landfill, and find other ways to protect our precious planet.

The Soul of America on Trial

By Bob Passi

The blighted soul of this nation is on trial in Minneapolis right now. Can we finally remove the blight of racism and allow the true democratic soul of the nation to be redeemed?

The trial of former policeman Derek Chauvin is just one more in a string of trials about police brutality—and sometimes death—of especially black Americans, but it probably can be extrapolated to nearly all minority groups in America.

Although this trial is specifically about the death of George Floyd while in police custody, the event happened in front of multiple witnesses and in front of all of the world as the videos were broadcast to the public. The resulting community response in Minneapolis was understandable outrage especially by the black community, but this quickly spread to a large segment of Minneapolis and then to the nation and to the world. We all saw the blatant disregard for the calls for help from the victim leading to yet another death of a Black citizen by the police.

This is after dozens of similar episodes over the past few years, all leading to growing public concern and, at long last, calls for action on racial justice in this nation. We all know the history of this nation after white Europeans came to these shores. First were the indigenous peoples, the Indians, who were systematically exterminated, their land confiscated—eventually in a kind of genocidal frenzy—leaving them with only remnants of their once proud societies.

Then we used economic justifications to import tens of thousands of black laborers as slaves mostly to prop up the plantation system in the South. Even after the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation, we, as a society, found ways to punish and restrict those former slaves, creating a second class citizenry who could be manipulated, restricted, and brutalized. Lynchings were part of that process as were beatings and home burnings. There was little to no hope for redress from the courts nor any way to have much of a voice in the political or electoral process.



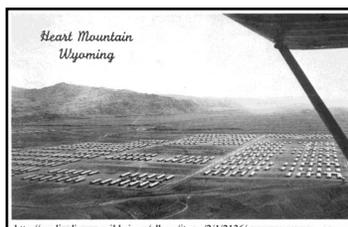
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cess.

Part of that legacy was reflected in other ethnic groups like Jews, Italians, Eastern Europeans, and any recent immigrant group. It was certainly practiced with other racial groups like Asian groups, especially Chinese laborers, and later with those from Mexico.

Most white Americans grew up simply accepting this as part of what being an American was about with perhaps some vague notion that something was wrong about it but not exactly feeling a need to face it or act on the basic injustice of it.

Even as these racial groups integrated into the workforce and proved themselves valuable assets, we paid them lower wages and gave them little respect, even though they had proven their patriotism fighting our wars. In WWI Blacks fought valiantly only to return to the same racism they confronted before the war. The same was true of WWII, which



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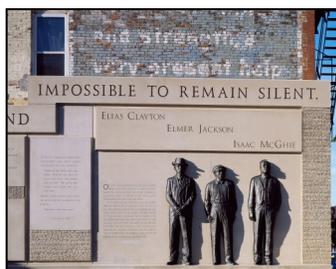
included other racial groups like the American Indians and the Japanese Americans as well as the black soldiers and airmen. Nothing they could do to prove themselves as patriotic Americans

seemed to make a dent in the racial norms that continued in place.

After the New Deal had finally helped give so many ordinary white American citizens a voice in their own futures and the future of the nation, the minority groups realized that there was little they could do to improve their plight unless they organized to confront the basic injustice of the situation. So, we saw the beginning of that organization which forced the seemingly complacent white citizenry to have to face the realities of what was going on.

The Civil Rights movement began to form and gain momentum; however, they faced resistance and backlash and a U.S. Senate controlled by Southern stalwarts totally opposed to integration. That blockage was finally broken by LBJ with landmark Civil Rights legislation aimed at voting rights, integration, housing fairness, and more equity in the courts.

All this happened with the grudging acquiescence of some powerful political groups who schemed to move the nation back to its former racial practices. They fought integrated public education and busing by setting up additional private schools. They found ways around housing regulations and devised ways to restrict who could vote or participate in the electoral process. With money being more and more the



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dominant force in all electoral processes and the institutional basis of this nation, those minority improvements were under continual attack.

Those who led this movement for racial justice were eliminated through assassination: John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and finally Robert F. Kennedy.

Police departments across this nation used blatant racism by profiling and much unreported brutality. Eventually, the police became even more blatant and public in their abuses. (I will stop here to recognize that most police officers are good Americans who do not directly participate in such racism, but until the police unions and departments begin to represent those police and to hold those guilty of egregious acts fully accountable to the public that pays them, their acquiescence will allow them to be painted with that same broad brush of racial brutality.)

As many in this nation and around the world lose their belief that these United States are willing to make the necessary changes to guarantee racial justice, and as the power structure seems incapable of budging on its racial stance, frustration grows. Who will believe when push comes to shove when confronting the power structure of this nation, that any racial group—or for that matter, any group that is not a part of that power structure—can hope to be heard or dealt with justly and fairly? What has happened to any semblance of democratic ideals and norms?

So, this trial is about yet another blatant example of police brutality and racial bias that led to death. The burning question is, “Will our nation finally face its past of racism and begin to redeem itself and allow the healing process to begin? Or will we continue on, finding some technicality, some specious justification to allow this horrible racist legacy to continue as our apparent national policy?”

This trial is about the soul of this nation and whether it can be saved. There are no technicalities, no obscure legal arguments that can be used to make such blatant and deadly abuse of power acceptable in any way, shape, or form. I understand the need to provide a defense for Derek

Chauvin as a matter of form and, yes, justice, but none of us can accept any verdict but guilty, unless we are willing to close our eyes to the blatant disregard for life that we all have witnessed and instead hang our future on continued racism and lack of racial justice for the citizens of this nation.

What will the world think of us and our empty rhetoric about democracy if we, once again, justify this atrocious act and turn our backs on so many of our fellow citizens?

This nation and the world is already up in arms about how we traditionally deal with racial groups in this country and around the world. We have seen the frustration of racial injustice reach a breaking point in the black communities after Rodney King’s arrest and treatment in Los Angeles. We saw the same frustrated response with the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. We have seen the effect when white citizens join in the protests going back to the Civil Rights Movement and, more recently, in the past few decades. We are seeing athletes confronting their employers and the controlling interests to join the modern movement toward finally insisting on and providing racial justice.

The soul of America is on trial. If, in any way, this trial seems to justify these actions by a public official operating in a police uniform, the nation will erupt. If we hope to salvage the soul of democratic America, we all need an unprecedented verdict supporting racial justice. The tipping point—the point at which much of the populace confronts the power of an entrenched system of racial injustice—is very near.

This is a tinderbox which could easily flash into a consuming flame if justice does not clearly prevail. Change must come. What will people be willing to do to save the democratic soul of this nation? Or is American justice “just ice,” responding coldly and calculatingly to racial injustice?

Will the true goodness of the soul of American democracy finally rise to the occasion? We can only hope.



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What You Can Do to Help the Earth

By Vicki Andrews

The enforced isolation we've endured has been difficult for most of us, but it has been a good thing for the planet, according to recent data from NASA and the U.S. Geological Survey. The air and water are getting cleaner; the Earth is getting greener. By coincidence, on April 16, 2021, The *CBS Morning News* had a report on a new documentary by David Attenborough, *The Year Earth Changed*, which shows how many animal species have been doing so much better with human beings out of the picture. What happens when we go back to "normal life"?

The April 11, 2021 issue of the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* an excellent article on "Five Ways to Help the Planet Today." Following is a brief review of that article. I encourage people who haven't already read the full article to do so.

The article said some of the ways we need to change our behavior to help the planet include:

- ◆ Stop throwing glitter down the drain! Glitter is used in children's art projects and in some adult make-up products. They contain microplastics that end up being consumed by fish that in turn end up being consumed by humans and other animals. Last year scientists found almost 2 million pieces of micro plastic in 11 square miles!
- ◆ We throw away 30-40% of our food supply—219 pounds per person in the U.S. every year. Not only is this deplorable when there is so much hunger throughout the world, but it is so unnecessary. Buy only what you need, and use

it up! Freeze left-overs, and use them later. Take appropriate food scraps (no meat or dairy products, please) and yard waste to a community compost site or build your own (but please maintain it properly).

- ◆ How about used clothes? Eleven million three hundred thousand tons of textiles went into landfills in 2018! Suggestions include:
 - * Think before you buy. If you don't need it, don't buy it.
 - * Patch up clothes when they need it; don't throw them in the garbage.
 - * If you have to get rid of them, take them to the Salvation Army or Goodwill or have a rummage sale or give-away day or pass them along to a friend or family member.
 - * Other suggestions include, plant a tree (or several), cut your plastic use as much as possible, recycle everything you can, and consider switching to solar energy (either a community garden or add to your own home).

Please read the full article if possible, and most important make whatever changes you can to help our Mother Earth. There is no Planet B.



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS: GET INVOLVED AND GET IT DONE!

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date /Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
DFL Headquarters Open (326-6296)	Thursdays 2:00-5:00	DFL Headquarters
Itasca Progressive Caucus (259-4490)	Suspended	DFL Headquarters
DFL Central Committee Meets	4th Monday	Zoom
DFL Social Club & Lunch	Suspended	DFL Headquarters
DFL Pot Luck (Open to the Public)	Suspended	DFL Headquarters
Working Families Alliance	Suspended	Dutchroom
Earth Circle	Suspended	GR Public Library
Circles of Support	Suspended	811 NE 4th St. GR
Haven: A Place for All	Suspended	Kiesler Center
Deadline for <i>Common Sense II</i>	May 7, 2021	conray@arvig.net

Anyone Can Save Our Bees

By Nancy Rudd

Our land of over 11 acres is part a grassy field, part woods, and part cedar swamp. There is the area where our cedar log home and out buildings sit, but the lawn is fertilized naturally. Outside, about 70 feet to the south, there are two small street lamp style lights that are run by a solar panel. These lamps, our inside lights, and even our nightlights all have long lasting LED bulbs. The outside light are set to turn on at dusk and turn off just a short while after we go to bed. We're very concerned about climate change.

There are many ways to say, "Be the change that you'd like to see in the world." Amanda Gorman, National Youth Poet Laureate and speaker at President Biden's inauguration, said it most eloquently in her poem, "For there is always light, / If we're brave enough to see it, / If we're brave enough to be it." I believe that if I want something to change, it starts right with me. I hope others will follow.

Bees are responsible for three out of every four bites of food we eat. Widespread use of pesticides, fungicides, and viral pathogens seem to be THE major problem in the collapse of bee hives. More land is being cleared, which destroys the bees' natural habitat, leading to their declining numbers.

Then we have neonicotinoids, which are used to dust cropland and to coat seeds. Although neonicotinoids are deemed safe for mammals, bees come into contact with the dusting during the time they start pollinating. The coated seeds retain the pesticide as plants grow, so the nectar is affected. Studies have found that neonicotinoids can sicken, debilitate, and kill bees and reduce the number of queen bees. Without the queen, another hive is lost. The EU has imposed a permanent ban on selling products with neonicotinoids. Now that we have a President who doesn't think climate change is a hoax, maybe the United States will follow.



the flowers are going to seed, I collect what I will

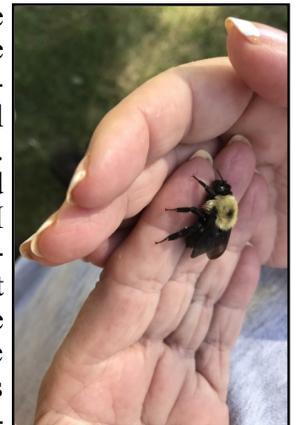
So my passion became to start the comeback of bees on our property. It wasn't that hard; anyone can do it. It took about three years for me to notice an increase of bumblebees. Their habitat on our lot is a pile of wood. In it, they make their nests; around it, I planted native wildflowers. They seem to prefer yellow and purple. When

need and sow them the next year. Dandelions and white clover are abundant here, so I let them grow. If you buy seeds, make sure the seeds are local and organic. Seeds can be treated with pesticides which will kill bees and butterflies.

You don't need 11 acres; you can start on a balcony. Bumblebee needs are simple. They need food and shelter and a small amount of water for hot days. Check farm bureaus, home and garden stores, or the internet for bee houses. They are small. A hanging basket of local flowers and possibly a tomato plant and a small amount of water will complete a balcony bee haven; plus a tomato plant will provide you with some delicious food.

Try not to buy tomatoes from commercial growers. Some of them have a nasty secret. They put bees in their greenhouses and keep the queen caged so she cannot establish a new colony. After about eight weeks, the bees are done with pollination, and they are incinerated! Tomatoes are easy to grow and can even be grown on a balcony. We all know home-grown tomatoes taste so much better! We find the difference so pronounced that if we don't have enough canned tomatoes to make it through the winter, we go without.

Sometimes bees need first aid. This can happen when they are too cold, when they seem sluggish, and when they get really wet. You can save one bee or many if the bee is a queen. If the bee is large and fluffy, it is most likely a queen. I keep a deep bowl of water outside the back of our house. All of our wildlife seem to appreciate it. One warm September day, I noticed a queen bee in the bowl which was too deep for her. I'm not sure how long she had been in the water, but when I scooped her out, she was pretty waterlogged. I wasn't afraid to pick her up, because bees are not aggressive. She warmed herself in my hands for a while, then she just started climbing up my sleeve. She wasn't yet dried out, and since it was late afternoon, I wanted to get her dry before the cool evening. It took her about an hour, but finally I could tell she was ready. I found a yellow flower near the pile of wood and made a bridge with my finger. She walked across to the flower. I knew she was okay.



If I can do it, I know that just about anyone can help save our bees. These are the basics, and you can find out more tips, but give it a try. Be brave enough to be the light!

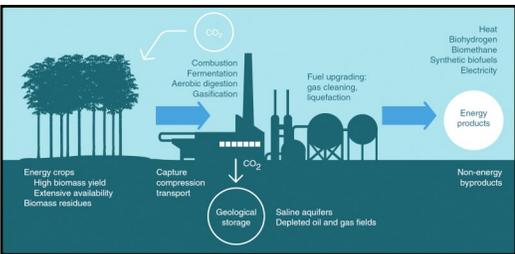
Deniers: Now “Progressive Inactivists”

By Eric Grimsrud*

The nature of the ongoing arguments concerning anthropogenic (man-caused) global warming (AGW) has recently changed, as is thoroughly explained in Michael Mann’s new book, *New Climate Change War*. A few years ago, the climate change debate was largely between those who believed in the science behind AGW and those who denied that possibility. Today the argument has changed due to the overwhelming evidence for warming that we have observed in the most recent decades. The former deniers of AGW now tend to agree that it is occurring and that it should be addressed in a timely manner. At the same time, however, they now promote only those techniques and policies that would not reduce our use of fossil fuels (FF) and, therefore, remain strong spokespersons for the FF industries.

The policies they promote for addressing AGW have not been proven to be safe or effective. Thus, this group can now be more appropriately labeled our environmental “inactivists” who promote dubious technologies for fighting AGW in order to take attention away from the most sensible methods that focus on the heart of the matter—that is, the reduction of fossil fuel use.

An example of this is the inactivists’ strong promotion of coal-fired power plants that would be modified so that they capture a fraction of the CO₂ emitted and store it deep in the Earth where it is hoped that it will never be released back into the atmosphere. While this concept has been intensely



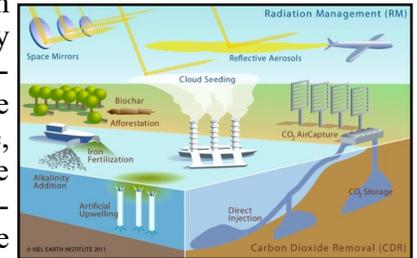
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investigated, it has not been shown to be viable at anywhere near the scale that is required. Nevertheless, the inactivists repeatedly suggest that this carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) scheme could eventually eliminate CO₂ emissions from the multitude of coal-fired power plants presently operating throughout the world.

Again, what’s missing in this CCS scheme is any evidence concerning its applicability at the massive scale required. Thus, CCS is presently used by the inactivists as a sales gimmick to mislead the public into believing that coal-fired power plants have a bright future in our attempts to reduce greenhouse gas emission.

With the relabeling described above, we can better understand the views most recently promoted by the inactivists. For example, the inactivists now promote the “gloom and doom” view suggesting that it is too late to do anything meaningful to address the AGW problem. This view implies that we should simply try to enjoy the fossil fuel party while it lasts, thereby allowing the FF advocates to continue to sell their deadly wares until that addiction makes conditions on Earth much worse than they already are. The “gloom and doom” attitude is promoted by the inactivists simply because it would allow the FF industries to squeeze every penny out of FF sales for as long as possible. It is not supported by science, however. That is, there is no scientific evidence that indicates that the Earth has already entered a runaway, irreversible state of change at this point in time. Our progression toward warming can still be arrested and reversed—but only if we stop burning fossil fuels—which, of course, is exactly what the inactivists are trying to prevent.

Another example of the duplicity behind the recommendations of the inactivists is their promotions of various means of “geoengineering” of our climate. For example, the intensity of solar radiation at the surface of the Earth can be decreased by putting reflective sulfate aerosols into the upper atmosphere, thereby cooling the Earth. Again, however, this idea and the numerous side effects



that are sure to accompany it have not been sufficiently tested and might do far more harm than good to our natural environment. Still the inactivists promote it simply because it would allow the continued use of fossil fuels for energy production, even though it would do nothing to reduce our emissions of CO₂.

Thus, the AGW war is now being fought between the activists who favor action directed at the heart of the matter (fossil fuel combustion) and the inactivists who promote unproven possibilities simply because they would allow the continued use of fossil fuels. So, yes, the former deniers of AGW have now joined the ranks of people concerned about climate change, but most unfortunately, their motivations are mainly to create distractions and chaos within the climate change community so that no meaningful action is taken.

*Eric Grimsrud is a climate scientist and invites you to visit his website, www.ericgrimsrud.org.

Why We Can't Breathe

By Valerie Conner

We're living in stifling times. In one form or another we all declare, "I can't breathe!"

In 1851 a French play, *La Cocarde Tricolore*, featured a character, Nicolas Chauvin, who was so blindly devoted to Napoleon and his country that his name became synonymous with over the top patriotism—my country, right or wrong, my country. Over the years the connotation of chauvinism widened to include any excessive attitude of superiority of one's race, gender, nationality, or ethnicity.



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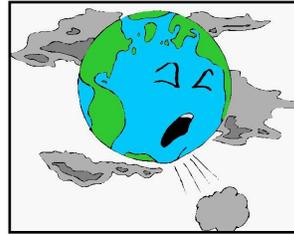
The excessive prejudice and sense of entitlement of Derek Chauvin, Nicolas' namesake, led not only to the death of one man, George Floyd, but also to the increased national awareness of the results of prejudice run rampant.

People quite rightly are outraged. That's step one to real change: admitting there is a problem. The next step is to determine to become the change needed. Until we rid ourselves of our systemic racism, sexism, ageism, nativism, and all the other "isms," our whole society will continue to choke and gasp for clean,

pure breath.

We're living in stifling times. In one form or another we all declare, "I can't breathe!"

Just as ingrained prejudice stifles our society, our refusal to admit and/or act to thwart climate change inhibits our ability to breathe. Unfortunately, the Republicans have made refusal to believe that climate change by human activity is real a tribal mantra. That chauvinistic badge of honor



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inhibits our all-out ability to make the necessary adjustments to our lifestyles so we can create a cleaner environment and a more just society for now and into the future..

The poem on the Statue of Liberty talks of immigrants' desire to "breathe free." We all have that desire, that need. By letting a breath of fresh air into our thinking, by refusing to accept the world as it is, by insisting that everyone be treated fairly, by honoring



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the Earth and its resources, by stepping up to do what is right, we can be the change we want and need.

Then we all will be able to breathe more easily.

STOP!

Stop the assault on the Environment!

STOP THE RAGE!

Stop the assault on minorities!

Rally for the Earth



Earth Day, 4/22/2021

Let's Celebrate Earth Day

Central School in downtown Grand Rapids (south side) Thursday, 4/22/21 3:30 – 5 p.m.

Please wear a mask and socially distance

Bring a sign or banner and stand up for the Earth

WE STAND FOR

Clean Water for healthy humans, fish, wild rice, and wildlife

Stop Climate Change: Build a clean, green energy future for all

End plastic pollution; wash and re-use over & over again



A New Read on an Old Book

By John Hanson

Only when we look at the Earth as civilized thinking men with enlightened insight will the full measure of human evolution be possible. We must know the values which once sustained us are still there in those parts of the world we have not ravished.—Sigurd Olson

I imagine most Midwesterners who love and care for the natural world are familiar with the writings of Sigurd Olson, especially his book, *The Singing Wilderness*. I also have *Reflections from the North Country*, published in 1977, but had never read it. I recently picked it up and was pleasantly surprised at how insightful, relevant, and eloquent his reflections remain as modern human beings are faced with the reality that we are putting the planet and our very human existence in crisis mode.



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Some quotations from the book will show Olson's relevance to today's concerns about climate change, environmental integrity, and recognizing our oneness with the Earth:

- ◆ We no longer face a physical frontier, but a change in philosophy, a complete reversal of our attitude toward the Earth that might open the door to a golden era far more resplendent than the old. Never in man's long evolution have such ideas arisen; never has he had a more dramatic choice or one that could change his life more drastically....Now we are on the verge of making the greatest decision of all, a change in the goals and philosophies that brought about the present ecological crises, a complete realignment of our rela-

tionship to the Earth, a man-land ethic that it is hoped will recognize our responsibilities and stewardship.

- ◆ The ultimate question is what kind of world we really want: more of endless exploitation or one involving proper relationship with our land? Would we choose wisely in the crucial years ahead?
- ◆ Without the love of the land, conservation lacks meaning or purpose, for only in a deep and inherent feeling for the land can there be dedication to preserving it.
- ◆ A basic ecological truth, which we still ignore, is the inter-dependence an interaction of all living things, including man. This is the guiding principle underlying human destiny, and we know unless we choose wisely in the few decades ahead the fragile and intricate web of life could become a web of death.

I hope you can see, as I experienced, the amazing relevance of his perspective on human interactions with the environment and what could happen if we don't heed what Olson and countless other environmentalists have been saying and continue to say about the crisis we have put the Earth in.

Other chapters reflect on concepts such as harmony, awareness, aliveness, oneness, beauty, simplicity, courage, freedom, tradition, and wholeness. This part of the book is worth the read itself. Olson also reflects on the faith concepts of immortality and the "Emergent God" that I, as a retired Lutheran pastor, find fascinating. He writes, "If the saying in the scriptures, 'The Kingdom of God is within you' has any credence, the new emergence of its true meaning becomes one of ultimate and conclusive simplicity, with God the symbol of a broader and more beautiful concept." That's a fascinating thought to me.

COMMON SENSE II is published by the Itasca Progressive Caucus in Grand Rapids, Minnesota

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