

**ID NO:292**

- *"Faced with a food and energy crisis how can society improve its wellbeing?"*

Summary: This essay discusses the way in which greed for capital affects humanity and the way in which it has impoverished our wellbeing as a society and caused the current food and energy crisis. I will be referring to ideas that suggest ways in which we can improve our wellbeing as a society. My essay includes minimum statistical examples, instead drawing more personally on the problem our unsustainable way of gaining energy has effected uncontacted tribes, taking a look at the issues from a social point of view, exemplifying the importance of being moral in the way in which we obtain resources.

The society we have adopted is one where capitalism reigns supreme. We know what this means for our economy but what effect has this had on the moral wellbeing of our society? We can argue that greed and moral degradation has brought us to the stage we are at now, with a global food and energy crisis, but it did not begin like this, is it not in fact the sustained accepted ideology which has brought us to this, foreseeable, end of our means? Tim Lang, professor of food policy at City University, in London, has asserted that "We have got to decide whether we want cheap, unsustainable food or a sustainable food system. This is a new imperialism... we're using other people's land to feed ourselves, literally taking food out of the mouths of others".

A prime example of such a case which is being dealt with now is that of the oil company Perenco which has recently been given permission, by the Peruvian government, to begin drilling for oil in a remote part of the Peruvian Amazon which is inhabited by uncontacted tribes. Survival, the international charity which fights in defense of uncontacted tribes has reported that "Peru's national indigenous organization, AIDSEP, is opposed to Perenco's plans. It has appealed to Latin America's top human rights body, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, urging it to help prevent Perenco working in the region. Despite this, Perenco intends to construct 14 oil wells and transport between 1400 and 1680 workers into the area. Contact between them and uncontacted Indians could end in violent conflict or the decimation of the Indians by disease" clearly asserting the destructive nature of the project.

This was reported on the Survival website on January 7<sup>th</sup> 2009 by Survival's director- Stephen Corry- who further wrote: "Perenco seems determined both to push ahead with its mega-project, and also to deny that the uncontacted Indians even live there. It ought by now to realize that the seemingly isolated jungle it is operating in is actually the ancestral home of several Indian groups, who will very likely see its workers as invaders. Everyone else has acknowledged this...". Evidently the rights of these people are not been taken into account, instead Perenco and the Peruvian government are championing non-renewable energy sources over the real lives, rights and homes of the tribal people of the jungle. Yet there is no mention of the casualties of the system by which the world obtains its energy, the luxuries of oil, food and money champion moral wellbeing and the treatment of these people acts as nothing less than a contradiction to our supposedly human-rights centered society.

Perenco website tells nothing of the environmental dangers caused by oil mining, nor the aboriginal lives it affects adversely but advertises the possibility of new job vacancies "an ambitious development strategy is driving Perenco to create a wide range of new and

appealing career opportunities". Does this creation of 'new and appealing career opportunities' improve society's wellbeing in any way, will the products that follow it do so? Is it not more important to be ethical in our approach to gaining food and energy?

In December the UN reported that the number of people facing starvation rose 40million to 963million during 2008, one of the key results of rising food prices, a mark of global poverty where the basic need of food seems, for a large number of people, to be unattainable. Einstein once said "I believe, indeed, that over emphasis on the purely intellectual attitude, often directed solely on the practical and factual in our education has led directly to the impairment of ethical values... without ethical culture there is no salvation for humanity", blaming our education system for putting so much emphasis on monetary success and career goals and not enough on the importance of morality and humanity. This is similar to the ideas expressed by Maria Petrie in the book 'Art and Regeneration' in which she writes 'The present series of wars all over the world are not only due to economic causes, but to lack of understanding between fellow creatures, to misdirected energy in loving and hating and to brutal and unrefined instincts'.

These quotes express ideas which echo my own; they argue that our hunger for capital and monetary success as a global community has led to a lack of respect for our natural resources and clouded our morality. Einstein and Petrie are clearly in favour of, a re-education or rather a new system of education whereby we may become more aware and appreciative of the situation and thus be able to address more tentatively the ethical issues of the means by which we gain our energy and food. By putting emphasis on human rights, morals, respect for our natural resources and moderateness as opposed to a competitive career driven education we may develop a more socially aware society which can appreciate our effect on the environment, the lives of others and the future of the world we live in and work together to better adapt our approach to gaining food and energy.

We need only to look at Cuba, where the literacy rate is at 100% and the economy is very weak yet the people are thought to have some of the highest quality of life in the world to see that a good economy does not necessary equal a higher quality of life and that if we are to improve society's wellbeing our basic education system may be a key place to start. This echoes Petrie's idea that 'If the regeneration of man is our object, we must therefore use the educational means at our disposal during those first years to bring this about'. If we are to improve our society's wellbeing and truly be ethical and considerate in our consumption of food and energy we must be active in our approach for as H G. Wells once, so eloquently, said 'our true nationality is mankind'.