

Vinyl 2010 Essay Competition Submission Template

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Summary:

Scientific papers concerning ecology issues predict dire consequences for the water and food crisis people in different corners of the world are being confronted with. Governments' attempts to make a change have failed because of numerous reasons and now, thanks to the negative media attention given to this subject in the last few years, a feeling of "Armageddon" has been established among people. And still there are people who fight daily for this cause and until now precisely these people have managed to make a difference. Great things have small beginnings...

Essay:

The contemporary western civilization, whose prototype is the U.S. consumer, is a society of abundance, where markets are saturated with all kinds of products by firms which compete in satisfying the most exuberant necessities of their insatiable consumers, whose purchasing-behaviour is dictated by the motto "the sky is the limit". Although the current recession that is affecting most countries is about to change the buy-more-than-you-can-afford-with-your-credit-card mentality, most people still find it difficult to imagine a life deprived of basic products like: running water, energy or food. Well, don't kill the messenger, but if we take a look at the scientific papers that have been recently released by non-governmental agencies and governmental bodies concerning the ecological state of our Earth, one simple conclusion can be drawn: start saving water!

Fact is: water has become scarce; and it will probably also become very expensive. Numbers tell us that there are approximately 450 million people in 29 countries currently suffering under severe water shortage and by 2025 the population of our planet will reach 7.8 billion, thus raising the water demand by 20%. On top of that half the world's rivers and lakes are seriously polluted, shortening consequently the supply with fresh drinking water. In a logical order less water means less food. Taking into consideration the rapid economic growth of developing countries China and India, with their population counting for 50% of the Earth's total and their raising demand for animal protein, milk and vegetables, I think one might dare to say that hunger and water shortage, if not well managed, will lead to serious social and political instability.

The causes that have led us to this crisis are of various natures: pollution, along with governments' failed attempts to redress the matter; erosion of soil, by deforestation or by using destructive agricultural practices, which have damaged the soil's productivity; and the increased usage of land for the production of "green-fuels", whose efficiency has actually not been fully scientifically proven.

All measures that have been implemented until now, most of them unsuccessfully, have been developed by centralized bodies and have neglected the average people, who actually know best what is right for their land and are directly affected by natural calamities. Moreover many governmental decisions have infringed the economic

development, thus increasing people's aversion towards ecology, being seen as an obstacle on the path to a better life.

This is why I believe it's time we focused our attention on the average people. I believe the best solution is empowering people by providing them with an "eco-friendly" education and by delegating them the power to initiate projects that not only improve their welfare but also help their environments. My suggestion is thus: help people improve their well-being themselves.

Empowering people is essential in my point of view, because years of practical experience have proved us that intergovernmental measures have either failed or have taken too long to be implemented. This had various reasons: firstly the difference among nations' opinions concerning ecological issues, culminating with the indifference of Bush's administration and its rejection of the Kyoto protocol; poor allocation of funds, given by the secondary role of ecological issues on governments' agendas; and last but not least political and social instability, which has stopped the UN from being more active in severely affected regions of Africa. Another argument is the asymmetric information between national or supranational bodies and the inhabitants of affected regions. People are directly affected by climatic changes and food or water scarcity and they also know what is best for the land they live on. This is why I think that centralised measures coming from a supranational institution may not only be too costly, but also ineffective.

Education today has become too abstract and is saturated with standardised tests and tops. I think this has caused people to lose touch with nature and forget the long-run effects of their actions, concentrating only on short-run success. I also think that this has led to a diminishing of their creativity, patterns being now preferred. I suggest a "back-to-the-roots" approach, an educational system with more outdoor activities, excursions and involvement in ecological projects. An "eco-friendly" education is essential in rebuilding the relationship man-nature.

The last and most important thing is to help people improve their own lives responsibly. In order to do so a system of institutions is required. I envision a supranational body, under which government representatives of all participant countries meet regularly and decide on the objectives to be reached and their timeframes. Decisions are then to be transmitted to national and local bodies for operationalisation and implementation. Necessary institutions should be funded in order to teach people during seminars how to write and initiate their own projects. At this stage collaborating with NGOs would be extremely beneficial, because it would externalise costs. A database, which stores all project-drafts, should be created and continuously checked by local authorities for feasible projects. Realistic projects should not only be financed, but also benefit of great media attention, so as to encourage other people to get involved as well. It is important for people to understand, that they don't have to do extraordinary things, but the right things.

My proposal does not eradicate centralised decision making, but it does remove its monopoly, by letting people decide on which projects should be run, what time and place. Also by cooperating with their governments, people will feel they are being represented by someone who shares their goals and strives for their well-being. The competition between draftsmen will also lead consequently to a steady improvement of project-drafts. I think such a model would create a balance between governments and

people's wishes, which will eventually lead to the implementation of projects that will help us secure life on Earth for future generations.