

Vinyl 2010 Essay Competition

ID number: 669

Title: Faced with a food and energy crisis, how can society improve its well-being?

Summary:

The term “world crisis” is closely related to the individual, whether it concerns food or energy crisis. An effort to raise awareness of the energy and food problems (and solutions) demands involvement of every one of us. Economic and political structures are considered as a “sole culprit”, but at the same time as the liberator, since they left us space to live in an imaginary world of consumption. The newest technologies and knowledge cannot provide a unique and final solution; solving the crisis is a long-lasting process that requires setting of new priorities and changing of our life philosophy.

Essay:

“Faced with an energy and food crisis, how can society improve its well-being?”

Such word order is just one of the ways to observe this issue. Maybe a slightly different point of view can lead to possible solutions. Did energy crisis lead to food crisis?

It is both ironic and frightening that in the age of intensive scientific and technological development, which is a base for social development and therefore the economic development as well, we are faced with global conflict over resources on one side, and food shortages and hunger on the other. Each day it leads us to more extensive and atrocious social conflicts, so one should ask himself if food crisis is a result of energy crisis or if a crisis of moral is the main cause of problems modern society is faced with.

Main energy sources that cover almost all human necessities, including the one for food, are still unrecoverable energy sources. This namely concerns fossil fuels and nuclear energy. These classic energy sources are limited and have increasingly bad influence on the environment, and consequently on the conditions of food production and finally, on human health. Nevertheless, processes of acceptance of new clean technologies which exploit renewable energy sources are still slow and commercially unrecognised, even though these technologies are more ecologically acceptable. The reason is not only a poor initial economic viability but also the ecological awareness, to be more exact, lack of it.

Today's modern society is aimed only at acquisition of capital in the fastest and easiest way. Supply and demand are foundation of world's economy. Products' primary function is to satisfy human appetites, instead of their actual needs. Resources of classic energy-generating products are becoming lesser and their price rises on daily basis. All of this reflects on production costs, and therefore on the cost of the product itself.

Despite all of what was observed above, developed countries are focused on searching for solutions that would provide functioning of economic system without implementation of the new and improved concept. The emphasis is not on well-being of the planet and society in whole – the key is to keep the “earning-spending” circle unbroken, so that

economically developed countries could preserve their “power status”. New solutions are suggested; utilization of bio-fuels, searching for the best technology for storage of CO₂ in order to decrease GHG, usage of coal due to increased oil prices etc. These solutions are presented to us as the best possible ones but are in fact short-term and aim only at financial growth.

Due to the lack of strong political and economical efforts to solve the crisis the world is faced with, maybe we should consider another attitude. In seeking solutions, we shouldn't wait for others to solve our problems; we have to start with the process of changes at the “lowest” but maybe the most powerful of all – at the individual level.

Producers are purchasers themselves. It is up to us what we buy and which kind of production we shall encourage. It is necessary to develop, i.e. to create awareness of responsibilities that arise from the pleasure given to us and to face the “demons” that drive us into irrational and hasty shopping. If we are not ready for such a drastic change of our life standard, the least we can do is to buy those products that have been produced by using the new, ecologically acceptable technologies.

When buying something, we don't just pay the product but also its transport to the final beneficiary. Encouraging local production – buying products manufactured in our “neighbourhood” is one of efficient ways to directly influence energy consumption and negative environmental effects. Indirectly, it forces political and economic structures to confront the necessity of implementing new measures and technologies.

Suppression of consumerist habits refers to a whole series of day-to-day life practices. Is the automobile really our “best friend”? Could we change our habits by using more frequently the public transport, bicycle or simply by doing some every day activities on foot? Is it really so complicated and time-consuming to separate paper, glass, plastic, bio-waste and other types of waste that emerge from our households? Facing the fact that we live in a civilized model where the influence of a single man is irrelevant, where social polarization and ecological imbalance reached its culmination, unsustainability of such model is ever more obvious. In order to achieve balance between social and individual interests we should return to the individual as the foundation of the society and go back to basic values - human and ethical principles.

Solving the crisis we are faced with seems rather complex, almost impossible. Subject is elevated to the level that almost excludes the role of a single person. Economic and political structures, newest technologies and knowledge cannot provide absolute and unique solution simply because it doesn't exist. To change our life concept, to develop and strengthen awareness of single person importance and of consequences of individual activities may be just one of many ways to start the change that could contribute to global empowerment and to winning this on-going collapse. *Consciously or unconsciously, every one of us does render some service or other. If we cultivate the habit of doing this service deliberately, our desire for service will steadily grow stronger, and will make not only for our own happiness, but that of the world at large* [1].

[1] Mahtama Gandhi, <http://www.mkgandhi.org/momgandhi/chap46.htm> (27.12.2008)