

HOW TO

We love how-to books and lectures. *Tell me what to do!*

For a whole week I played with a brilliant (I thought) idea that I would somehow stimulate a cabal of super creative people to invent a something that would stop all explosives from exploding. Missiles, bombs, IEDs, bullets. I had dreams of bullets dripping out of assault weapons, an atom bomb that just plumped down without atomic mayhem. Wouldn't that be something! Then it occurred to me that my imagined invention would also affect the explosions that run the engines we use for everything. I began to see that there might be consequences. In our world we don't consider consequences.

Inventions today are sold, made, marketed in a market that is convinced that anything new is therefore better. Progress we call it. Tomorrow is better than today. Economies have to grow forever. Anyone who knows even a little about the real world of nature knows that nothing on this planet can grow forever. Certainly not manmade systems like economies. We first were sold this idea after WWII. America had been able to turnaround industries from making peaceful stuff to war machinery. Now, equally as quickly, industries were expected to switch back to making stuff for consumers. And they did, in ever greater abundance. In the fifties of the last century every tomorrow was indeed better than today. Our children were raised with that expectation. Everything and anything can and therefore must be done. Every dream realized, any wish fulfilled. Historians tell me that changed in 1980, but most of us did not know that then. From that time a minority went out to put as much money as they could in their pockets. They discovered early that they must encourage inventions, improvements on inventions, own all the advertising companies that blossomed, own the media, and buy politicians. As the years went by the bankers got richer, the rest of us sort of dozed, dreaming the American Dream. not realizing that dream had been stolen from us.

Until the world collapsed, 2007, 2008. Today the number of unemployed is in the many millions. One sixth of all Americans have no health insurance. Food, gas, and everything else is getting more expensive as we rapidly get poorer.

But the only thing we know, and the only story our leaders tell us, is that we must get the economy to grow again. *That is an addiction, a habit, wrong thinking.*

Is it then possible to live in an economy that does NOT grow? Yes, of course it is, and what's more, it is not bad, perhaps superior to expecting change to be always for the better. There is a little story in my book Original Wisdom of a visit to a Malay village in Malaysia. The villagers were very proud of a man who had invented and made a "maseen." In the tropics hulled rice—rice ready to be cooked—does not keep, but unhulled rice does. Almost daily two or three women from each household hull rice in an oversized mortar and pestle. The pestle is a 7, 8 foot pole that two or three women lift and then let fall in the mortar. Their ancient design works well, the women sing and obviously don't mind, even enjoy the ritual. In that village a man who 'could not hear or speak'

had invented and constructed the same mortar and pestle but super size. He had figured out a system of pulleys, wheels and ratchets, to lift a tree-sized pestle pole to drop into a large mortar. A few women brought handfuls of unhulled rice. In a few minutes stepping on a pedal (the power of one skinny man), he hulled what must have been enough for at least one household, maybe two. The man and the machine were much admired—*but the villagers did not use it*. They were content with the old way. In our view obviously much more work, not “efficient”. That was not how the villagers thought. They knew using the machine would change their culture in unknown ways. Why change when something works well enough.

Most of us don't know there is such a thing as unhulled rice, or that people can live well without a refrigerator. Without electricity. We cook hulled rice in pans that turn themselves off when the rice is done. We have infinitely more complex, computerized machines. We have machines to make machines. In our western world admiring the man but not using his invention would be unthinkable. We are addicted to progress. *Always more. New is always better.*

No, new is not always better. Nothing on this planet can grow forever, not manmade economies, not trees. Our addiction to progress has spread around the world. If we can have washing machines and highways, so must everybody everywhere. Our addiction to change, always more, is killing us. Literally. Perhaps all addictions kill eventually. Do we need a car that proudly proclaims it has the power of 568 horses? Cars that tell us when to turn left or right in a foreign city; only a few years ago we would ask at a gas station. Do we need little gadgets that we play games on 24/7? Do we need HD flat screens the size of a wall to watch the same advertisements again and again and again?

It seems that now, suddenly, out of the blue, the system we were told was the best human minds had ever put together is broken. Millions unemployed. the house we could buy with nothing down and manageable monthly payments, that we thought of as our savings, has lost half its value in two years. We cannot buy the newest gadgets, we cannot even afford \$4.50 gas any more. It was not sudden, of course. We could have seen it coming during the last thirty years when our own elected governments systematically did away with regulations, syphoning all wealth up to the top; we should have questioned when we fought unwinnable wars against on borrowed money; wars against invisible, poorly defined enemies. The recession (or depression) did not come about during Obama's tenure. The bottom falling out of our country was the apotheosis of the Bush regime.

All we know has long been only what we were told, never what is. The truth is wrapped in bushels of meaningless words that have acquired resonance: patriot, democracy, freedom, terrorist, illegals. We don't question that we should spend billions on twenty-two “intelligence” organizations who don't talk to each other, but we are repeatedly told it is extremely necessary to reduce government spending on programs like medicare, medicaid, and social security. And the same people tell us we must un-tax the rich so that they will make jobs for us. Haven't they proven in the last three years that they use the

several trillion of cash money they sit on to play international poker. The rich don't invest in America because its economy is shaky.

Now it seems to dawn on the young people that the system is broken. MSM, the main street media, interview pundits to clarify what this 99% movement is about. Who is their leader, what is their program? How to explain the phenomenon. Very few pundits I have heard the last few weeks "get it." They too waffle and wimper that maybe tomorrow some program will emerge, and the politicians will get a clearer idea what the masses ask. Can't they "feel" what this is about? People are angry not at one party or the other, they are fed up with politics that is paid for by the one percent. They are mad at the Democrats as well as the Republicans. For a while we hoped, expected, that Obama would bring the change he promised us. But when we saw who he chose to advise him—the very bank people who had brought the house of cards down—it must have been clear that there was going to be no change, not in the system. Little puffs here and there, but no real change. A stimulus package that kept jobs for people who might have been laid off but it did not create enough new jobs. A terribly flawed supposed health reform that leaves the system in the hands of very profitable insurance companies.

Einstein said (one of the many memorable things he said): "No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it." We've come to today by a very aberrant consciousness: extreme arrogance and extreme greed. What other consciousness is there? Perhaps explosives can smothered by humans exploding in rage. An explosive uprising by humans against what has become inhuman denial of our humanity, the system of oppressive capitalism. Our steam is about to blow the lid off the kettle.

The French Revolution comes to mind. *citoyens* (citizens) fighting with pitchforks against guns. It took some bloody years but they threw out the king and queen, and created a whole new system. That revolution changed Europe and the world. Many years later Gandhi preached non-violence and changed the world again.

Man is a peculiar creature, trending to incoherent rages against real and imagined enemies. And yet I cannot believe that we are a ferocious species. I have known peoples who were truly peaceful. What set them apart from us is that they lived in small groups, did not yearn for change, and felt an integral part of "All There Is" that supported them while they protected it. They did not know "owning," could not imagine anyone being more important than another, adults allowed children to learn rather than teaching them. What stood out for me, and for other writers who wrote about those "primitive" and indigenous folks, was their joyfulness. They had a *joie de vivre* we no longer know. They sang and danced and did not make war on a neighboring island.

We have many consciousnesses and get stuck in them. We adapt to making wars when we are taught or paid enough—or when we are finally oppressed too much too long. Now we are reminded again that masses of humans are a formidable force for change.

In this strange world of the 21st century it has become very clear that not only our political system is taken over by corporations, but our idea of who we are and what the world is like, is the view the corporations want us to have. Not all that different from slaves and masters.

A long time ago, when we first emerged on this planet, we viewed the world as it was: Mother Earth, nature. We accepted what was. We could only survive by adapting to whatever our own unique environment offered, and we did that splendidly (I love Britishisms). We lived, thought, saw ourselves obviously part of nature for the first 120,000 years on this planet, our only home.

Then, 10,000 years ago, we turned a corner. Someone had the odd idea that we humans would be able to grow our own food on a piece of land, domesticate some animals. That required the idea of "owning" that piece of land; a concept never known before. From that came the idea of hierarchies. Humans smarter and therefore better than animals. I am better because I own a piece of land, better than someone who does not look like me. What we call agriculture was hard work. "By the sweat of one's brow," comes from farming. Yes, it is indeed possible to grow your own food, pigs, beef, chickens, but it needs all hands of a family 24/7/365. The idea of hierarchies brought leaders who ballooned to barons, lords, kings, presidents, and emperors. Some idiot invented money. Of course that too followed the same course, eventually ending up mostly in the hands of the top one percent. And we who believe in the reality of money—how can we not?—end up with nothing. Here we are. Empty pockets and a house full of gadgets we cannot do without. The politicians yell jobs, jobs, but they are owned by the few who own most of the money. They are bought to block every effort to start the economy improving again (while they talk jobs, jobs) and in the meantime do their very best to make abortions impossible to get, to make voting more difficult, and destroying unions. Who pays, wins.

But there is a current growing through humankind, a wave of something that is more than jobs, more than rights even. We want our dignity as humans, we want to be listened too, taken seriously. This is truly an uprising from the bottom up. The Arab Spring is continuing now in the Fall, almost Winter. Our MSM (main stream media) don't see, don't hear, don't talk. If they mention the uprising at all they ask *who leads this, what do they want, do they have a program?* No, no leader, no program. We want our humanity back. Non-violently; the violence comes from the owners.

Unfortunately the timing is way off. The revolution should have been 11 years ago, or even earlier. Now all this plays against the background of a rapidly warming globe, causing extreme weather everywhere. Enormous floods, enormous drought that burns forests. We continue to increase our number (expected to be 9 billion by mid century) while climate change decreases production of food. Our truly thoughtless destruction of the earth was and is rapidly diminishing biodiversity, essential for a healthy planetary

ecology. Who we now call the Elite, the super rich who own the corporations, who own governments, are now doing everything they can to prevent us from changing our ways to perhaps reduce the worst effects of global warming. I'm certain even the Elite knows what is going on. All I can think of is that they want to scoop up the last pennies from the poor and then build underground shelters for themselves to survive under a burning planet. Some writers have written that the Elites are so isolated from the rest of humankind that they really don't see or hear us.

The French Revolution was such an uprising from the bottom against a system that considered them slaves. Pitchforks against guns, but after some years they threw out the king and queen. There were some really ugly years following, trying to create a whole new governance. But what emerged was certainly a lot better than what had been. That is happening in Libya, and perhaps in other nations who got rid of a dictator. A new system has to be created where there was none. Is that easier than fixing a system that is broken? Possibly.

Today's backlash to unbridled capitalism may change the world. Will global warming wait for us to get enough control to get back to a more human-friendly world?

To be honest, I don't know how to. I only have ideas.

For instance, is it possible to get rid of money that is now based on nothing, a number in a computer? Barter has always worked. What if we decide a day that nobody in the world, buys anything. 24 hours not spending money. One day a month? No money changing hands every wednesday of the year? That would stir up the Haves. Local markets would feel it first but banks would feel it more I think.

Or, is there a way—can we, could we—elect people who are NOT bought? Is that possible any more? Whatever it is, fixing politics with bandaids is not what is needed. What we do must be grand. The 99% seems a very promising beginning. It is doubtful that either of the political parties will sincerely get with it, and that is good. Politics have become their own game, not by or for the people any more. It is the whole system as it has developed that does not govern any more.

I have no idea what the way out might be. Start over from Go. Too big for one mind. Let's put our minds together and think *how to*.

robert wolff, october 2011