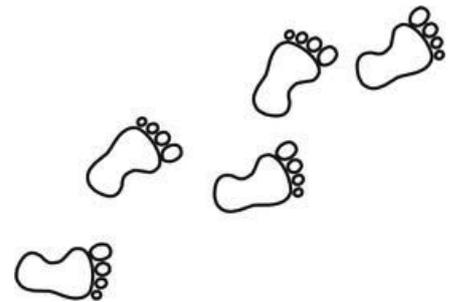


ENOUGH TO LIVE SIMPLY

A Day Conference at St. Thomas More High School, Crewe
15 October 2011



“Individual actions may seem insignificant but together the small steps of many people can have an astonishing impact”

(Catholic Bishops of England & Wales: Call of Creation, 2002)

Participants were reminded of these words during the Commission’s *Enough to Live Simply* event at Crewe. The day opened an inspiring contribution from the choir of St Mary’s Primary School launching *100 Days of Peace* especially written for the Christian peace initiative which will accompany the 2012 Olympics. After recalling the themes of April’s *Enough is Enough* event, and attending workshops on economics, sustainability, and the Live Simply Award, small group conversations enabled people to identify the small steps they might take – as individuals, in their local communities and at a national level.

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Setting the Scene

Maura Garside recalled the themes of April’s *Enough is Enough* event

Inspired by

Professor Tim Jackson’s

“Prosperity Without Growth: Economics for a Finite Planet”

- “Achieving a lasting prosperity relies on providing capabilities for people to flourish – within certain limits”.
- “Those limits are established not by us, but by the ecology and resources of a finite planet”.
- “Unbounded freedom to expand our material appetites just isn’t sustainable”.
- “Change is essential”.

www.storyofstuff.com

- “So you see, it is a system in crisis. All along the way, we are bumping up against a lot of limits. From changing climate to declining happiness, it’s just not working”.

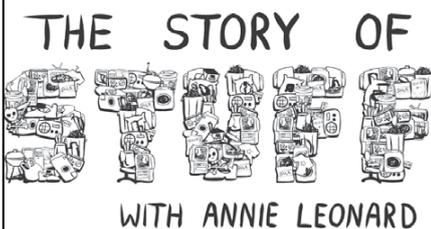
So what do we do?

- “Fix the economics; develop a new ecologically literate macro economics”.
- “The starting point must be to relax the presumption of perpetual consumption growth as the only basis for stability and to identify clearly the conditions that define a sustainable economy”.
- “Redefine prosperity; what does it mean to flourish?”
- “Prosperity has vital social and psychological dimensions. To do well is in part about the ability to give and receive love, to enjoy the respect of your peers, to contribute useful work and to have a sense of belonging and trust in the community”.
- “In short, an important component of prosperity is the ability to participate freely in the life of society”.

- “The capitalist economy runs on debt”.
- “Consumer society seems hell bent on disaster”.
- “So our only real choice is to work for change. To transform the structures and institutions that shape the social world. To articulate a more credible vision for a lasting prosperity”.
- “People can flourish without more stuff”.

Mandates for Change

- Change can be expressed through the way we live, the things we buy, how we travel, where we invest our money, how we spend our leisure time. It can be achieved through our work. It can be influenced by the way we vote and the democratic pressure we exert on our leaders. It can be expressed through grass-roots activism and community engagement. The pursuit of an individual frugality, a voluntary simplicity, is considerable.
- As Christians we have a unique perspective on what it means to prosper; to live as Jesus did.



and Annie Leonard’s cartoon

Christian Social Teaching

Extracts from Scripture and Social Documents

- “The first believers “[sold] their possessions and goods, [and] gave to anyone as he had need.” Acts 2.42.
- “He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.” Ephesians 4:28
- “Land will not be sold absolutely, for the land belongs to me, and you are only strangers and guests of mine.” Leviticus 25:23
- “Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these.” 1 Timothy 6.6
- “The apostle Paul describes his own experience - “Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty.” Philippians 4.11
- “Is not the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?” Isaiah 58.6
- “one of the underlying, evasive, moral and imaginative questions that arises in thinking about climate change and the wider environmental agenda is...this ingrained tradition of behaving as if we didn’t belong, as if we were not part of an interactive system, as if we were brains on stalks.” Rowan Williams, “Climate Change: a Moral Issue”
- “the creation stories of Genesis 1 and 2 see the creation of humanity as quite specifically the creation of an agent, a person, who

can care for and protect the animal world, reflecting the care of God himself who enjoys the goodness of what he has made.”
Rowan Williams, *The Climate Crisis: A Christian Response*

- “Man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will, as though the earth did not have its own requisites and a prior, God-given purpose, which man indeed can develop but must not betray. Instead of carrying out his role as a co-creator with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in the place of God and thus ends up in provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannised than governed by him.”
Centesimus Annus, 1991 (37)
- “The plight of the earth demonstrates that an individualistic materialism cannot be allowed to drive out responsibility and love, and that care for those in need, and respect for the rights of future generations, are necessary to sustain a proper life for all.”
The Call of Creation, Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, 2002
- “The current crisis obliges us to re-plan our journey, to set ourselves new rules and to discover new forms of commitment, to build on positive experiences and to reject negative ones. The crisis thus becomes an opportunity for discernment, in which to shape a new vision for the future.”
Caritas in veritate, 2009 (21)
- “What is needed is an effective shift in mentality which can lead to the adoption of new life-styles ‘in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices.’”
Caritas in veritate, 2009 (51)

- “Far from being self-contained individuals, we are, in truth, always mutually dependent.”
- “We are made for one another...”
- We are not isolated individuals who happen to live side by side, but people really dependent on one another, whose fulfilment lies in the quality of our relationships.”
Choosing the Common Good, 2010



The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace published a **Note on Financial Reform** (24/10/11) which can be found on <http://www.news.va/en/news/full-text-note-on-financial-reform-from-the-pontif>

Useful Websites

CAFOD
www.cafod.org.uk

Association of British Credit Unions Limited
www.abcul.org

Catholic Social Teaching
www.catholicsocialteaching.org.uk

Fairtrade Foundation
www.fairtrade.org.uk

Freecycle
www.freecycle.org

Live Simply Award
www.livesimplyaward.org.uk

Robin Hood Tax
<http://robinhoodtax.org/>

Shrewsbury Diocese J&P Commission
www.jp-shrewsburydiocese.org.uk

St Vincent de Paul Society
www.svp.org.uk/

Sustainable Blacon
www.sustainableblacon.org.uk

Rethinking Economic Growth for Rich and Poor Countries in an Uncertain World

Two reflections on the workshop given by Dr Chris Mulhearn, Reader in Economics at Liverpool John Moores University

From Peter Byrne

GROWTH: SOME ECONOMIC BASICS

Why is growth so important?

In the developed (rich) countries it is the key to living standards. In poor countries it can be the key to survival. How is it measured? By percentage changes in GDP, Gross Domestic Product. The total of all outputs capable of being expressed in monetary terms. What is not included? Environment, health, happiness. And it does not distinguish between forms of output. Someone, probably Galbraith – Dr Chris thought, once said that GDP did not distinguish between a poodle parlour and a children’s clinic. Nevertheless it is a useful measurement of material wealth. There have been attempts to humanise the maths. There is a UN Human Development Index based on: GDP per person; average number years in Education; and Life Expectancy. Britain comes quite low in this Index, though still in the top third, whereas in the GDP pp (per person) Index we are near the top.

The Dilemma is that growth is unsustainable in a world of shrinking resources. But de-growth causes instability and high unemployment in the rich countries. In any case the poorest countries do actually need to grow – a growth for which we must make room. Someone asked if that meant our living standards must go down for theirs to go up, Chris did not argue the point. Another issue is the rapid growth of the BRICs nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China) – around 10% a year – not sustainable. In fact they will slow down as they approach the sheer limits of their productive capacity, just as we did. Chris pointed out that their GDP pp was still way below ours.

As for very poor countries such as Ethiopia and Zambia – they have hardly grown at all.

UK Economy

Western economies are used to GDP annual growth rates of 2 to 3 percent. When this does not happen unemployment rises. Between 1948 and 2009 GDP went from £300 billion to £1.3 trillion (more than a million billion!), and employment flourished.

The Coalition’s fiscal strategy is the opposite of that needed in a recession. When domestic and business spending declines the only engine of growth is either government spending or exports. But as all rich countries are cutting back, that

leaves only government spending. This is the traditional Keynesian solution adopted by the USA in the 30s. Dr Chris mentioned the approach suggested by Tim Jackson. We need to use the banks we actually own to fund sustainable growth, a kind of “Green Keynesianism”. But then he raised a new dilemma – would our sustainable self-reliant economy cause a collapse in the world markets on which BRICs depend?

Growth in Developing Country Economies

Their growth relies on trade and foreign direct investment, which alone gives access to foreign exchange. Their own currencies are worthless abroad. They need internationally accepted currency to buy what they cannot produce, and to finance human development. We may assume that globalisation has increased trade which builds up poor countries, but their share of the trade has in fact fallen. This is because globalisation has been shaped on a Free Trade model.

For example: Zambia relies heavily on copper exports (70% of total). But unstable prices lead to poor terms of trade, defeating the object. Poor terms of trade happen when inflation in the buyer’s currency outgrows the value of the exporter’s currency, so that the exporter still cannot afford foreign goods. Ethiopia is in a similar position with coffee: 60% of exports, 10% government income and 25% of the population’s income.

What can be done to remedy this?

The Fair Trade model could be applied, but on a larger scale, at the international level of governments. Rich countries could contribute to a scheme whereby surplus output would be bought and stocked, released in times of shortage. This would stabilise prices, reduce crises, and enable poor country producers to plan, confident in receiving a fair price. Was this too ambitious? Well, said Dr Chris, the EU does it now.

Create an exchange rate mechanism to give poor economies more flexibility in the price of their export and import prices (thanks to Des Appleton for this point).

Stop nagging the developing world about market efficiency. We supported our own economies when we were growing. Now it is they who need protection, from dumping by rich countries for example.

Provide income transfers to help them invest in greener, sustainable growth.

Can we afford to do all this? Yes. Our GDP is 1,300 bn a year. Trident costs £34m. Iraq and Afghanistan have cost

From Des Appleton

Dr Mulhearn inspired his workshop with a crystal clear analysis of the issues relating to economic growth.

Growth is measured by changes in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is the supply of goods and services produced in an economy. It is a pure number, it makes no moral judgement on the economic and social impact of the goods produced.

The UN has created indices which also measure life expectancy, the average number of years spent in education and the average income per head of the world’s nations. The gap between rich and poor is frightening.

Consistent economic growth does raise living standards for most people but is likely to destroy the earth’s resources. However periods of negative growth destroys employment and produces much social instability. The determination of acceptable growth is a complex problem with no instant policy solutions.

Growth statistics show that Western economies have, with some blips, grown at roughly 2-3 % per annum for a long period of time. Of late India and China have grown at 10% pa., an unsustainable figure, whilst the very poor eg Zambia and Ethiopia have scarcely grown at all. The poor countries may have some basic resources but their price is so volatile, the flow of foreign income is totally unpredictable. Those nations without resources simply attract no inward foreign investment, their plight seems hopeless. Additionally the austerity cutbacks in the West are slashing their purchases of goods from the emerging economies. The picture is black.

Chris did offer some tentative suggestions of help for the world’s poor.

1. Copy the Fair Trade model by stabilising resource prices through governments coordinating the bulk buying and selling of raw materials.
2. Create an exchange rate mechanism which will give poor economies more flexibility in the price of their export and import prices.
3. Use foreign aid to subsidise green energy thus lessening the poor’s dependency on expensive energy.

Let’s remember the growth of the western economies in the 19th-20th centuries did not occur in a totally free market environment.

Chris’s ideas so energised debate, we nearly missed lunch.

£20bn. So pushing the support target to 0.7% (one created in 1970) is nothing to be proud of. We should give far more!

Sustainable Blacon: A Good Example

a workshop led by **Ged Edwards**

Chief Executive of Sustainable Blacon Ltd.

Bryan Halson writes

There can be no doubts about the existence and seriousness of global warming. To take just one example the summer heatwave of 2003, in which people died, will be the norm by 2020. Hence the significance of projects such as Sustainable Blacon.

Blacon, on the north-west border of Chester, has a population of 16,000 in 5,200 households. It has many disadvantaged inhabitants and in 1994 figured in an Independent on Sunday article about disadvantaged areas in England. This article gave rise to much disquiet and as a result 'Blacon Vision & Action Plan' (1994) was drawn up. This established "Sustainable Blacon Ltd." And a plan which covered four

areas - green spaces, transport, energy, and social enterprises.

These areas all contribute to quality of life for the whole community. A key question asked was (and is) how do you measure a sustainable life? What makes life worth living?

To take one example: energy saving. A 'demonstration house' was organised – people invited to visit and see ways in which energy can be saved and bills lowered. The aim here is to encourage changed behaviour in everyday living. In addition a research programme has been established. There is an emphasis on sharing person to person information on sustainability.

livesimplyaward

a workshop led by **Kevin McCullough** CAFOD Head of Campaigns

Kevin introduced the **Live Simply Award** which provides parishes with clear guidelines to help them to celebrate what they already doing and plan what they might do further to

**live in solidarity with the poor,
live sustainably,
and live simply**

through **reflection and worship
practical action
and reaching out**

Those present were particularly impressed with **100 livesimply ideas** (pages 14-15 of the Live Simply Award Registration pack) available on www.livesimplyaward.org.uk

There was great enthusiasm for the initiative with many folk committing themselves to making it happen in their parish. If you would like some support with it, CAFOD Diocesan Sue Bownas (01244 677594) sbownas@cafod.org.uk and J&P Coordinator Joan Sharples (01270 620584) joansharples620@btinternet.com would both be happy to hear from you.

Do let us know how you get on!

SUMMARY OF THE DAY

by Bryan Halson

Our concern has been to share ideas and commitments on living simply, sustainably, and in solidarity with the poor. We have seen how this works out in CAFOD's Live Simply Award.

We can usefully apply what we have shared on three levels. The first is the personal. Things I can do, however small they might seem in themselves. We've listed many of these. Then there is the communal. This works out within our parishes,

but many of us belong to other community groups for example Women's Institute, Rotary, Ladies Circle) where we can draw attention to live simply principles and actions.

Thirdly there is the global level. Here support for agencies like CAFOD, or for United Nations agencies, raising issues in correspondence with MP's and MEP's can be hugely effective. Dominic Crossan has a wonderful description that fits our situation – we belong to "a Kingdom of nuisances and nobodies". We are never too small to count, so let's keep on being nuisances!

Individual Next Steps...



- Share surplus goods via freecycle
- Prepare food at home instead of ready meals.
- Use the car less - walk to local shops
- Use less water.
- Reduce meat consumption
- Repair and clean my bike then use it!
- Reduce home heating
- Marvel in the wonder of creation
- Walk at least part of the way to church.
- Grow vegetables
- Share transport

In the Community...

- Establish Live Simply group
- Talk to Ladies Group about showing 'Your Kingdom Come' DVD
- Include Live Simply intercessions at Mass
- Join the St Vincent de Paul Society
- Use fairtrade products in parish kitchen
- Educate my pupils about sustainability - encourage them to be stewards of our planet.
- Work ecumenically
- Join the credit union
- Support furniture recycling initiatives
- Befriend asylum seekers
- Share your concerns with others
- Energy saving in church ie excluding draughts, long-life light bulbs
- Rethink the use of the church grounds for communal use

In the wider world...

- Support the Economic Foundation which are trying to rethink Economics
- Campaign through the internet
- Campaign for the Robin Hood Tax (Tobin Tax)
- Promote fair trade to provide stable prices