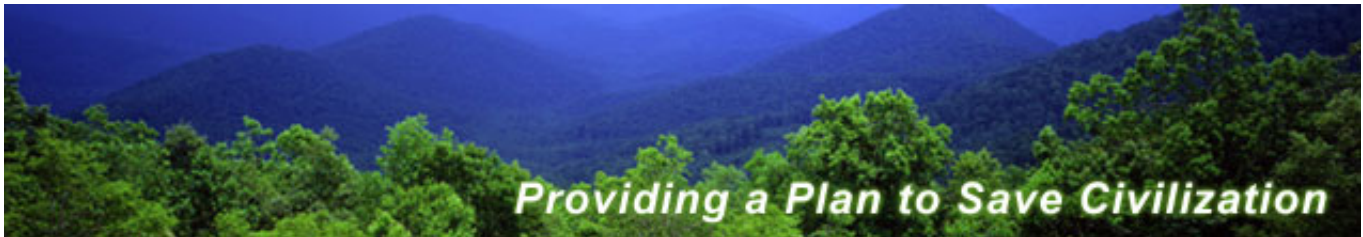


Climate Mobilization or Transformation?



There are a lot of ideas out there to save the world from our global environmental crisis. Lester Brown's [Plan B 4.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization](#), [Project Drawdown](#), and the [Green New Deal](#) among them. A friend of mine pointed out a new essay in the New York Times this morning, "[Climate Change Is Not World War](#)." The writer, a professor of English, purports that "We are underestimating both the deep national trauma of World War II and our present challenge." Here's my reaction.

It's a pretty interesting essay. I don't disagree in the least that there are big differences between WWII and the climate crisis. The idea of a "mobilization" is rhetorical. The great Lester Brown gives insights about [what motivates people and societies to act](#) and the [history of the WWII industrial mobilization](#). (I use these in my classes.) But it's really not so much a mobilization that we need, it's a transformation: of energy systems, of buildings and transportation, and agriculture. These are [well underway](#). The **urgency** lies the fact that we may not be moving fast enough, thus the idea of an emergency mobilization. I agree, somewhat, with the writer's statement: "Many major players in industry, tech, energy, and government have little incentive to go along with climate mobilization, since it would undermine their profit and power." But he's not specific enough. Yes, the fossil fuel industries have been doing everything possible to stop progress. (See my [posts on fossil fuels](#).) Big Ag is also a huge impediment to progress. But many industrial companies including the automakers, the Silicon Valley people, the utilities, the insurance industry, and even, increasingly, the financial industry – and all over the world – get the risks and see the opportunities.

I disagree with his blanket statement: "Democrats show a profound lack of unity on whether climate change should come before economic justice, racial justice, revitalizing American democracy, labor rights, immigration reform, health care and gun control." Elizabeth Warren, for one, sees how connected our national failures on climate, guns, and health care, for instance, are related to the extraordinarily corrupting influence of money – and this perception has been growing daily among Democrats for a while. There is, in fact, a growing unity of purpose. And not just among Democrats in the US, but people everywhere concerned about our democracies and a healthy planet. (See also my review of my friend Joel Berg's book: [America, We Need to Talk](#).)

Anyway - and parenthetically - Professor Scranton has some interesting historical notes about WWII. One thing I'd never considered before reading his essay is that the internment of the Japanese-Americans probably saved them from some very serious attacks by the same yahoos who attacked Blacks in the cities. (See also the Irish in New York City during the Civil War draft

riots here.) I don't know if FDR and his people had any thought to actually protecting the internees, but that must've been a good outcome nevertheless.

Scranton's final point is this: "What would total mobilization really mean? Judging from what happened in World War II, it would mean social upheaval, violence, censorship, curtailed freedoms, dubious compromises and radical changes in American culture and politics." I can characterize that statement with two words: total hogwash. The **ongoing** transformation toward a more sustainable way of being in the world - globally, locally, and everywhere in between - means more democratization, less pollution, better health, and significantly better economic outcomes. We are proving that every day.

Not incidentally, if you're not already in the game, or want to get more involved, and you're here in the Big Apple, come on out for one or more of the many exciting events during [Climate Week NYC](#).

There, once again, you have my two cents worth. (And, according to some, there's [value in those two cents](#).)