## **ECONEWS**

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Promoting the Vision of a Vibrant Sustainable Vancouver Island

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## LIVING ON THE TITANIC

It is extremely disturbing to know that we are living on The Titanic, and that the iceberg lies somewhere ahead.

It seems there is no-one on the bridge, or if there is they are either drunk, or too busy worrying about their re-election prospects or their next bonus to see the signals, which are flashing emergency red in the Iceberg Ahead secion of the controls:

*WARNING*: Your temperature is rising steadily due to the fossil fuels you're burning, the forests you're destroying, the cattle you're raising and the methane you're producing. On current trends your planet will be 3-4°C warmer in 88 years. PS: The last time your temperature was 3°C warmer, your sea level was 25 metres higher.

**WARNING:** Your Arctic ice is melting rapidly, releasing methane, which is pouring into your atmosphere.

**WARNING**: Your Amazon rainforest is in danger from drought and fire, caused by the warming. On your current track it will be dead in 88 years. PS: It is 100 million years old.

**WARNING**: The topsoil that you depend on for your food is being steadily lost to soil erosion, due to your deforestation and bad farming practices. PS: Many civilizations collapsed because they didn't protect their topsoil.

**WARNING**: More than 70% of your fisheries are fully exploited, over-exploited or significantly depleted. 90% of your large fish such as tuna, swordfish, marlin and cod are gone.

**WARNING**: One of your largest nations has lost its ability to govern due to the systemic corruption of its governing class by big business.

**WARNING**: The top 1% of your people are accumulating far too much of your planet's wealth, and stashing it away in private tax havens.

**WARNING**: Observations reveal a rise in fear and pessimism instead of the hope and determination you will need to persuade people to change course and avoid the iceberg.

It is also disturbing to see how easily we can be distracted by the latest entertainment, scandal on the dance floor, or the simple goings on in our personal lives, while the ship we are sailing on heads for destruction.

The Occupy movement created a bit of a disturbance last fall, but they never got anywhere near the bridge, so life goes on, with bigger bonuses for the captains and officers.



How are we going to get the ship to change direction, before it is all too late? I'm ignoring those who say it's already too late; they are part of the problem, since they contribute nothing of any value and undermine the motivation to do anything.

The passengers need to change the captain and crew, and take control. That much is obvious. But how? That's the question, especially since many passengers don't accept that there's a problem and are still enjoying the sumptuous buffet. Look – swordfish and shark fin soup on the menu!

So, we have a three-fold task:

The first is to continue to raise the alarm bells, to warn everyone about the emergency of the looming iceberg.

The second is to be absolutely confident that we can chart a new course that will lead to a prosperous, green sustainable world, instead of to disaster. If our fellow passengers see no hope, we'll never be able to motivate them to help us change course.

This means we must be very well schooled in how we can feed ourselves,

and obtain the energy and resources we need for a sustainable civilization, while doing so in a way that is in harmony with Nature and in cooperation with all our other passengers, instead of doing so selfishly and aggressively at their expense, which is what got us here.

So now we know the problem, we know where we need to be going, and we are confident that we can get there. These are the preconditions for leadership.

Our third task must be to organize ourselves so that everyone has a task, and a team we are attached to which is working on part of the solution. Some are working to protect the rainforests; some to make all the world's farms organic; some to build a new economy and a new system of banking.

So far, I doubt that even a handful of passengers have found themselves such a place. In World War II, the last time we mobilized on this scale, almost everyone found a way to contribute.

So maybe our real challenge is still to instill the confidence that success is possible, that we can build a green, sustainable world in which we can raise children safely their and meaningful work, not just for some but for all. When people see that clearly, there'll be no shortage of volunteers. When people see only disaster and no solution it's natural to want a lifeboat, whether it's through a survivalist retreat or a self-sufficient transition community.

Helen Keller, the Alabama girl born in 1880 who lost her sight and speech before she was two and who went on to become such an incredible speaker, author and activist for change wrote that, "No pessimist ever discovered the secrets of the stars, or sailed to uncharted land, or opened a new doorway for the human spirit."

That's the kind of spirit we need – a resolute belief that we can take control of our ship and set a new course away from the iceberg, towards a far better future.

- Guy Dauncey