

OUR WORLD - WHY AND HOW TO CHANGE IT TO CREATE JUST GLOBAL FREEDOM

We can be free.

For those in the rich world it is possible to cut the cost of consumption and save and invest until they have the freedom to choose whether or not to work. For those in the poor world it is harder to be free, they can attempt to migrate and join those in the rich world, or they can wait for progress where they are. We can all demand change, to provide infrastructure where there is none, to promote growth, to help those that cannot help themselves.

How it was.

Until a few hundred years ago people everywhere lived short lives. They worked hard, did not have much time to play, did not learn much and could suffer illness, disease, accident, or disaster at any time. The rich did better but they could not protect themselves from chance. The world was a constant threat. Life and death were a lottery. Struggle between rich and poor, one nation and another, did not change this basic pattern. When people understood the world it was impossible to change it to change these facts of life and death.

The last couple of hundred years have seen, for some, great improvements in housing, education, health and entertainment. These are improvements that have allowed people to live longer, to learn more, to enjoy new forms of entertainment and leisure. But, they have also seen billions left behind, at the mercy of disease, famine, drought and disaster. The creation of companies and factories have made some billionaires and have given hundreds of millions health and happiness, but they have left billions in poverty.

How it is.

Today the world is divided between millions who eat too much, drink too much, drive too much and work too much and billions who have too little, who die too young and suffer too much. Today there are two issues that we can and must do something about, they are, the destruction of the environment and global poverty and one that we might want to do something about, and that is work.

Just think about the changes that have happened in the last fifty years and the fifty years before that and then consider whether we can end poverty and save the planet in the next fifty years. In the last fifty years electricity, television, computing, telephones, cheap travel, education and health-care have all become common in the rich world. In the next fifty they can become common across the globe.

How does the world need to be changed?

The answer is simple. We need to give everyone, everywhere, access to the things that people in the rich world expect. From birth to death, people in the rich world, get health-care, childcare and advice on parenting, education, transport, communications and money to spend. We must give the poor world what the rich world has without destroying the planet. What matters is what works, we must focus on our goal and change the world.

What about the planet?

There is no doubt that the way we live, particularly in the rich world, is causing problems. Climate change is probably inevitable, resources are being exhausted and new diseases

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are spreading rapidly in densely populated parts of the world. And rather than cutting down on waste, pollution and greenhouse gases we are pumping out more and more as we consume more and more.

We need to end poverty, give people in the poor world what those in the rich world have without destroying the planet. That means people in the rich world setting an example by consuming less and consuming more responsibly. This means changes in what people buy and use and how these things are produced, with more renewable energy and less waste.

What can we do to change the world?

The thing that we have to think about is what we can do to change the world. It might seem complex but it is very simple. The world we live in today is the same world we lived in yesterday, changed a bit. This is because what we do changes the world, just as what our parents do, and their parents did, and their parents did, changed the world. We change the world, the world changes, we change the world, the world changes.

Most of the time this means nothing very much. What we do just seems to happen because we get used to doing things without thinking about them. Every time we do something; go to school, go to work, buy something, we make our world what it is. And by doing it differently we can make the world different.

Some people do not have much power to change the world, what they do does not affect many other people, but everyone has some power, billions of people doing billions of things adds up to a huge amount of power. We can change what we do so that the world is changed. The more power we have the more we can change. So people living in rich countries can do a lot. Even a 1% donation can, over time, deliver real change.

We can also do a lot to persuade other people to change the world as well. This is because we can all understand our world because of all the work of people before us and all the information that is out there for us. We can understand where we fit in to the world and how we can help other people. We can think about and argue about what the world is like, persuade people to change what they do and change what we do and we can change the world. And we can keep on changing the world all the time. All that we need to do in the first place is commit to making the world a better place and then keep trying to understand it, change it and change ourselves.

So what does this mean for us?

If we live in the rich world we are lucky enough to be able to do a lot because everything we buy, everything we use has an impact. We can control our consumption, cutting cost and waste, borrowing instead of buying. We can make a plan based on what we want, on cutting cost and cutting waste. We can cut debt, then save and invest and even give some away. If we stick to a plan of spending, saving, giving and investing we will, at some point, be able to choose to do the things we enjoy not for money but for fun. Multiplied millions of times for each person and each decision we can make a big difference.

The big difference is made when governments do things because governments set the rules and have real power. We can, with the internet and new technology, influence what

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governments do. Take global poverty and disasters. Poor countries owe billions in debt to rich countries. Wiping out the debts would make a big difference. Poor countries are also affected by trade. Fair trade would make a big difference because poor farmers and poor workers could sell the things they produce. And of course they need hard cash, aid and charity make a difference. But rich governments give very little. If we e-mail, petition, txt and send postcards, as www.makepovertyhistory.com suggest politicians listen because they want our votes. Campaign and donate and tell others to campaign and donate.

The destruction of the environment is no different, governments need to pass laws and regulations, sign up to international agreements to stop the damage we are doing to the planet. We can do a lot ourselves as well, reduce how much we use, reuse the things we can and recycle the things we can't. It is about how we choose to spend what we have.

What does this mean for the economy, politics and society?

It means investment, innovation and choice. Investment to build new schools, hospitals, sewers, houses, factories, windfarms and the rest. Innovation to come up with better products and ways to produce them; new drugs, gadgets and other stuff, that don't need us to work as much to make them. In the end this should mean automated factories and the end of the need to work. Choice so we can choose the things we like best and the ones that use the fewest resources, whether as people buying things or as voters deciding on things.

This means that we need to put investment where it is most needed, in the poor world, that we need to spend money on science and make the results free to all and that we need to improve choice in politics and the economy.

What does investment mean?

Basically it means building the things that people need that last a long time. Things like houses, roads, train-lines, phone networks, sewers, schools, hospitals, power-plants and factories. These are things that we use, but they are also things that make it easier to make and do other things. Because these things are there it takes us less time and effort to produce what we want and need. In those countries where these things are few and far between the need for investment is obvious. Where it comes from matters less and remember building means jobs, which can mean local spending and local spending can mean growth that reduces poverty.

Even in countries which have a lot of investment already there is always room for better machines, better software. We could soon end up with factories and farms that need almost nobody to work in them, with robots that do most of the things we can do. When that happens we won't need to work. It is only investment that can make that happen, but to do it, it needs science to deliver solutions that can be turned into machines.

Investment also needs to take account of the environment, which science helps with. There are more and more solutions to pollution that can be used when new investment is being made.

The best thing though is that investment in poor countries can come from people in the rich world consuming less and investing the money saved. Which will give them the

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YOU AND YOUR MONEY

Of a family income in the rich world how much do we really need to spend? Most of us don't know how much we spend and on what from one day to the next. We need to think about what we are buying, even write it down, and then think whether we really use everything we buy or could buy other things or buy less. Pay less for music, television, games and get them from libraries. Buy only the clothes we need. Travel less. You could save money, reduce pollution and climate change and have more cash to pay off debts, like the mortgage, to give to charity, to save or to invest. If you invest it and it ends up paying workers to build things in poor countries, not only will they get money to spend and better local services, you will get an income without work. And if you keep your spending under control you will need less to live on when you retire. This means you can retire earlier and really be free. Or give, even 1% can make a huge difference.

WHAT YOU REALLY, REALLY WANT

Not very different from spending only on what you really want and really need is knowing what you really want. Do you want to work or spend time with family and friends. Do you really need to spend as much money as you do when you are with your family and friends. Do you really want to work 60 or 70 hours a week to earn those extra tens of thousands or would you be happier with a bit less money and a bit more time. There is nothing to stop you working all the hours of the day, but it would be a shame not to make the free choice to live the kind of life that you want to live.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT!

We often hear from music, television, film and sports stars telling us to give to one disaster or another. But the money that we give to them and the companies that own their rights is huge and now we are doing it time and time again, replacing records with CDs with MP3s, videos with DVDs. Paying to watch sport. These are not things that are expensive to make, most of the money does not go on production, it is paid out because of copyright. We should do our best to avoid paying these people the amounts of money we do. We should use libraries, share the stuff we own and demand a better system of rewarding performers without making them millionaires or billionaires.

WE CANNOT EAT MONEY (OR LIVE ON IT)

For those of us who consume lots of resources we can always consume less and everyone can campaign. The fact is that those in rich countries are consuming so many resources that the environment is being damaged and it is those in poor countries that most often lose out and can do the least to protect themselves. We can choose to waste less, decide what to buy and stick to it, repair things instead of throwing them away, share things instead of buying them - use libraries, recycle things or reuse them, use less energy, use cars less or change fuel, save water. Not only do these things save the planet they save money too and saving money can free us from work.

LIVE TO WORK OR WORK TO LIVE?

In the rich world people do not need to spend as much as they do and spending less not only helps the planet it lets them work less. In the richest countries the amount of people

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that work to produce food, to build things or make things, falls every year. In the UK the CIA factbook estimated that in 1999 agriculture employed 1% of workers, industry 25% and services 74%. There are more and more people serving other people in shops, restaurants and hotels. More and more servants. With poor countries desperate to use the same technology they will probably end up much the same. The thing is that as societies and individuals we do not need to consume as much, earn as much or work as much. Paying off debt, saving and investing to build up a non-work income and putting the money in poor countries creates growth that frees people from poverty and frees people from work.

POVERTY

We can do something about poverty even if the most we can do is campaign. The make poverty history campaign is inspirational. We can also help others at the same time as helping ourselves by investing in poor countries where investment is needed. Until such time as humanity creates a totally fair world this investment in business might just be the best bet in terms of ending poverty. It makes sense to try more than one thing to campaign, to change what we buy and to save to invest in the countries where there are many opportunities for growth because so little is there just now. And, of course, donate, to those charities that directly tackle poverty.

WHAT A WASTE!

Every year our government's, all over the world, spend billions on weapons and armies. The CIA publishes a factbook that tells us how much they think each country spends. Every year the USA spends \$370.7 billion, China \$60 billion, France \$45 billion, the UK \$42 billion, Japan \$42 billion, Germany \$35 billion, and India \$14 billion. On top of this the European Union and USA spend many billions more on subsidies for their farmers that mean farmers in poor countries cannot compete. Adding this money to the military spending to combat poverty would transform the world in no time at all. It must make more sense in the war on terror to spend this money on giving people the schools, hospitals and other things they need. The best way to prevent war is to stop young men thinking death is a better option than live.

EDUCATION, SCIENCE, HEALTH

When you begin to think about the wonders of technology it is amazing. There are stunning breakthroughs in health that are beating diseases that used to kill us. In education we can learn anywhere, anytime. There are new mobile phones, new computers, new software, cleaner forms of energy, new crops and better machines in agriculture and industry. Housing gets better and cheaper to construct. We can use technology to free us from work. We can enjoy new products and services. We can beat disease, poverty and despair.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Go to <http://members.lycos.co.uk/justfreedom/> to read justfreedom which explains all of this in more detail, short justfreedom which gives a summary of justfreedom, or just to see the justfreedom web-site that provides links to other sites, news, references and other stuff. These links include more facts and figures, campaigns and demonstrations.

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incomes to free themselves from work. Looking after number one could save the planet, save the poor and free workers in rich countries from the burden of work.

What does innovation mean?

Innovation means using science to create things that actually have a use away from the laboratory. It means making things that people actually want to use or building better and more useful factories and machines to make the things that people want to use. Innovation can mean better gadgets, better medicines, better machines, better computers and lots more. The problem is that sometimes science does not produce the breakthroughs we need and that sometimes new products are so expensive that they are out of the reach of billions because of intellectual property rights that reward innovators.

We need to keep spending money on science so that clever people solve the problems that we all face and produce things that make us happy. We also need to make sure that designers and manufacturers can use the science to make better drugs and better products and other things. This means allowing more people to use ideas created by scientists and cutting the costs they face. We should fund the basic science and make the knowledge free to all who can use it.

We also need to make sure that science and innovation match up with the things that cause us real problems as well as giving us new leisure activities. We need to solve pollution, disease and hunger as well as working on more amusing gadgets.

Finally we should not forget that consumption has a cost. Innovation is not just about new versions of products it is also about changing the patterns of our lives to do things we want to do. Too many innovations have damaged the planet. Innovation can be used to build transport systems and other things that work to free us and support our dreams.

What does choice mean?

Choice is not just about what we can buy, though this is important because, by choosing the things we like the best, that work the best or that harm the environment least we can send clear messages to the people that make them. Choice is also about coming together to decide where schools or hospitals should be built or how much should be spent on weapons and how much on overseas aid.

We need to keep the choice we have in terms of what we buy and we need to think more about the impact of our decisions but for the rich world at least we already have loads of choice here. We do need more information on the things we use to help us decide but even this is not a big issue because even now we have enough information to let us choose to consume less and choose the right products.

We should remember as well that choice is also about rights. We can take it for granted that we have the right to do lots of things that people in the past did not and that others still do not. The right to do things that do not harm others is central to choice.

The big issue, though, is more choice on the big decisions that affect us and the little decisions that affect us. The big decisions being on going to war, climate change, world-trade and pollution and the little decisions being about how our own communities are run.

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We need to use the advances in communication to really make democracy work for us by letting us vote on more and more things.

Can change happen?

Of course it can happen. The response from ordinary people to disasters and appeals is always massive. Ordinary people give billions. The problem is that politicians do not follow up their generosity with political action. Instead they spend billions on weapons that make the world less safe. Stopping poverty would do more to make the world safer.

We need to change the world behind the back of politicians by changing our behaviour but we also need to tell them clearly what we want. When they see us changing our lives and hear us telling them to change they will only be too happy to chase our votes.

We must be clear though that one-off campaigns around elections will not be enough to make a difference. We need to campaign continuously outside of elections and we need to campaign globally to make the most of our billions of voices that cannot be ignored.

What about rich and poor?

There is no doubt that most rich people are rich because their parents were rich and there is no doubt that this is wrong. It is true that some rich people worked hard for what they have, building riches from nothing, but they are few and far between.

The problem with the rich comes in two big areas. The first is that the land they own can make the lives of the poor more expensive because of high house prices and limited access to resources. Even when technology makes houses cheaper to build prices keep going up and we all pay to use the resources the rich own. The second is that they can buy themselves and their friends and families power through the best schools, the best parties and the people they know. The power of executives undermines democracy and their pay costs us all.

In some ways the rich in the rich world do have less freedom than the rest of us, spending more time on their careers than their families to the point where even leisure becomes part of the career of the celebrity, politician or executive. Being in the right place with the right people. Plus there are long hours to be put in to stay at the top. Once we have ended poverty and saved the planet we can give the rich the freedom to be rich and enjoy our freedom to work less and be happy on average incomes!

Are there any other solutions?

There is never only one way. As has been said our two main ways of changing things are our individual decisions on buying, saving, giving and investing and our campaigns to end debt, boost aid and change the trade rules. These things change the world but there are other possible solutions that might be more radical.

Cutting military spending and using it for investment would make a massive difference, even if it is very unlikely. At the moment the world spends hundreds of billions on the military every year. Cutting back on this and spending the money saved on poverty would probably do far more to make the world a safer place as well as making it a better one by

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reducing the numbers of people prepared to die for a cause. Cutting agricultural subsidy in the rich world would have similar benefits.

A more radical proposal is an income for all based on a right to a share of inherited global resources, whether natural, like oil and land, or produced, like factories and knowledge. We need this income because even in a world in which people do not need to work as much as they do now it is unthinkable that either money or jobs will disappear. Money allows exchange. Jobs are created to meet new demands that are constantly identified. So for automation and robots to free us we need a non-work income. Some of us can save enough money but most of us must work for decades to get the income we need. Neither do we need the income for all to be large. It could start small and increase slowly and it could make a big impact in directly tackling poverty by letting people make their own choices and cutting corruption and red-tape. Matching it to the cost of local goods would also mean that a little goes a long way. Done right the money would boost local production and growth as suppliers compete to supply the poor and employ local people.

Less controversial would be the use of technology to enhance democracy. Instead of, or as well as, choosing parties or politicians, there could be regular votes to approve policies or decisions and annual votes to set five priorities for local, national and global action.

Technology could also be used to improve access. Already people use the internet for lots of things, changing the charging structure and payments to those who produce work could improve this to give access to the things that have been produced over the years whether software, books, music, television, video, science and online education or other resources.

How can it come together?

Individuals in the rich world are the ones who have the most power to change. They are the lucky ones. Cutting waste, paying off debts, investing in poor countries, working less and playing more can save the environment and help to reduce poverty.

On top of this, political action to deliver the debt reduction, increased aid and fair trade that are within reach is essential. This political action could even build a momentum that uses military spending and agricultural subsidy to tackle poverty instead, a momentum that tackles intellectual property rights and creates access to online education, knowledge and entertainment. In the end it might even deliver a global citizens' income.

How do we know if the world is changing?

If the world changes dramatically we will know about it because of the media and the internet. It is not possible to miss starvation, conflict, poverty, environmental damage and the rest. It is not just on our televisions and in our papers, there are also a huge number of groups arguing and reporting about these issues. So the big changes are obvious.

What is less obvious are the less dramatic changes. This is where statistics and targets come in. Statistics show quickly and easily what the situation is in terms of income, health, education, access to services, the environment and loads of other things and we can set targets for house-prices and other things. The state of the world is not a secret we just need to put in the effort to educate ourselves. One place to start is <http://members.lycos.co.uk/justfreedom/>.