

## Devon and Cornwall Gathering - 13 June 2009 A Personal View

The first D. and C. Gathering, replacing D. and C. General Meeting, was about Sustainability and therefore linked to our last DAM and to Yearly Meeting, as well, obviously, being of prime importance.

We were presented with a professionally led professional American symposium "Changing the Dreams." Its purpose is to call for what is ***environmentally sustainable, socially just, and spiritually fulfilling.***

It arose from a response to South American indigenous tribes appealing to the U.S. resulting in the formation of the Pachamana Alliance. These tribes live in harmony with their land, as Chief Seattle pointed out to the American President about 150 years ago, so did North American Indians. Their life styles are sustainable, the western lifestyle is not.

We were given a lot of facts and figures in a video of beautiful (clichéd) images and quotations from American academic pundits, and we were then asked to record our emotions. Mine: anger, frustration, despondency. Give or take a few figures and terms I thought most of the video could have been made 40 years ago when I was working for a campaigning organisation dealing with most of these issues. I grant it was coming from a distinct valuable viewpoint. But what has been achieved since then?

Well there are international scientific reports pointing out how dire the situation is, some recycling takes place, and the ideas of sustainability and doing something about emissions have crept in, but in general the world is in much more of a mess, governments tinker, and most people are apathetic – or already suffering from pollution, floods, soil erosion etc. Awareness has grown but it hasn't translated far into changes in government policies nor personal behaviours.

So I do hope this video is being shown, along with Al Gore's film, and other doom warnings, all over the United States (which banned the development of economical cars in the '70s) and to younger generations everywhere. To give you just some of the facts it threw at us: for everyone in the world to live as Americans live would require five Earths, and to live as Europeans, two; if you have adequate water, food, and shelter you are better off than 75% of the world's population; African Americans suffer much worse from air pollution than the white community; and U.S. child welfare rates 20<sup>th</sup> out of 21 countries.

On the positive side it was pointed out that many unpopular beneficent campaigns won eventually, and there are now 1-2 million non-governmental campaigns world wide working towards Live Earth. So, if you don't belong to several already, join a few, because the "unexamined assumption" is that you can't make a difference, and the message is: ***We have to be the change.***

Penelope Putz