Economy vs. Environment

Human development during the past century began to grow exponentially, but it is beginning to strain the environment as our growth infused immeasurable amount of pollutants and gasses that are affecting our planet’s climate. One of the many factors of this problem is the lack of cooperation amongst the international community to address this problem, such as the Kyoto protocol which proves to be a failure as the world’s largest energy consuming giant did not ratify this protocol. Secondly, the amount of automobile in the world is also playing a major role in climate change because it is releasing large amounts of Carbon dioxide gas into the atmosphere and government officials are not addressing this issue effectively. However, the recession that we are currently in are actually benefiting the environment because factories are reducing their production rate thus reducing carbon dioxide, employees drive less and turn down their furnaces to save gas and struggling corporation cut down on travel. As a result of that we can conclude that the principal source of manmade green house gasses are prosperity.

The tragedy of Easter Island is similar to what we are experiencing now. Easter Island used to be a rich tropical island filled with an exotic ecosystem and fertile soil. Unfortunately its inhabitants were exploiting the island’s wealth by cutting down trees and consuming its resources at a rate that exceeds its natural recycle rate. This in turn, created a domino effect that decimated the island’s natural resources and population until there weren’t enough resources in the island to feed its population and later forced its inhabitants to resort to cannibalism. What we are doing to our world is exactly similar to what people were doing in Easter Island; the only difference is that we are doing it at a much larger and faster scale.

The root of the problem resides with humans acting independently for their own self interest. This is also known as “The Tragedy of the Commons” in which individuals argue that someone else would have exploited the resources even if it had not been taken advantage of. We are very likely to repeat Easter Island’s tragedy if we do not take action immediately and one of the best solutions to the problem is by educating the children about living sustainably and the importance in protecting the environment.

Cohort Readings 2

Americans are imbedded with the idea of obsolescence in their mind in which we have the tendency to buy, discard and buy again with no thoughts of frugality. This wasteful ideology was not simply adopted recently but it was passed down upon from the 1800s and slowly evolved to its current stage over time. In recent year, our embrace of technology made us one of the most voracious consumers in the world, as American’s acquisition for electronics began to increase; the amount of e- waste varies directly with the acquisition resulting in hazardous waste being dumped into landfills. The American manufacturers will have to take action to tackle this problem before it get out of hand.

The problem we are currently facing in our wasteful society is accurately portrayed in The Lorax which is a children’s book written by Dr. Seuss. In the book the “Once-Ler” who portrays the manufacturers. Once-Ler is doing everything he can to expedite and increase his profit, neglecting any concerns for the environment. Eventually his factory had to be shut down because he can no longer produce any more products as he had completely decimated the environment and the trees that are required to produce his products cannot be grown any more as they had all been cut down by his machines.

To solve this problem, we have to learn how to live sustainably without being wasteful. If we continue to disrupt the natural cycle of the environment, we will eventually reach tipping point and it will be too late to revert our actions.