

THE PRINCETON PACKET



SOLUTIONS

By Huck Fairman

A 15-year-old implores us to act

Most in this area have heard about global warming, about the changing weather and environments and about their impacts. Many have taken steps to reduce emissions and use less energy. But will it be enough to avoid the worst repercussions?

Facing our changing world, a 15-year-old Swedish girl Greta Thunberg, has spoken out, rather directly and refreshingly. She pulls no punches about the inadequate, world-wide responses.

Although global warming has many complicated causes, impacts and solutions, it is, at bottom, strikingly simple. As Greta says in her YouTube, Ted Talk address, if climate change is truly the existential threat that the mounting evidence warns it is, "we wouldn't be talking about anything else." All public discussion and media content would focus on it, as if a world war had just broken out.

Given the changes we face, how, she asks, can so many continue on as before? Why do governments not explain and implement restrictions and requirements?

In a bewildering contrast, our current administration is going in the opposite direction, directing its EPA to allow coal power plants to emit more carbon.

Why is there no public outcry? Why are there not marches and strikes? After all, most of us have heard of or read of the predictions. Civilization, as we have known it, is threatened.

And as Greta says in her talk, now is the moment when it is absolutely necessary to speak up. The situation de-

mands that we flood our political representatives with calls to act, before it is too late. Tell them, as Greta says, "if emissions have to stop, then stop the emissions."

At least ... take steps, locally and nationally. Was the recent international meeting in Poland, with its touted agreements, enough? The world's record on follow-up is not encouraging. But, as she says, facing these new conditions, "we have to change."

Greta also reminds us that we are in the midst of the sixth mass extinction. While we can't predict the impacts of losing so much of the Earth's bio-diversity, and its creatures, it is certain to impact food supplies. What then?

She also raises the need for climate justice or equity. The rich nations need to take the lead and help the poorer ones. Otherwise efforts to reach essential targets will fail. We have the know-how and resources to change, as does China. But India and Nigeria may not. Yet it is an effort all need to join, to get down to zero emissions, to honor global climate agreements and goals.

But in light of this awareness, why are our emissions rising in 2018, she asks? The answer is, she tells us, "the vast majority doesn't have a clue about the actual consequences of our everyday life, and they don't know that rapid change is required."

Here, national polls report that 60 to 70 percent of our population recognizes the problem. But not enough are calling for change. The difficulty stems, Greta explains, from not enough people acting as if we are in a crisis.

Another part of the problem is that we are looking,

mostly, into the future, 30 years from now, to 2050, when Greta will have lived, in the best case, half of her life. But we don't know what the situation will be. Certainly much warmer, but how much? And what else? What other wrenching changes will have occurred? How extreme will the crises have become?

Greta recognizes that in 2078 she may have grandchildren, and those kids may ask her about us, in 2018. They may ask her why we didn't do enough, while there was still time to act?

"What we do and don't do right now will affect my entire life and the lives of my children and grandchildren."

And they will be unable to undo these changes in the future.

Given all of this, she asks, why should she continue in school, when the future is in doubt? And too many political leaders are doing nothing?

And yet, she imagines, that given the publicity she has received by not going to school, people could, if they join together in protest and support, could reduce the worst impacts. Greta encourages us to act; that out of action, will come hope.

But playing by traditional rules, repeating established responses, has not worked, she warns us. The rules themselves and approaches, have to be changed.

We are changing the Earth, and we ourselves and our ways of living must change. Starting today!

Will it take a 15-year-old girl to awaken us?