

SOLUTIONS -- Huck Fairman

THE CHANGES AROUND US

Change has arrived in our lives, partly by chance, partly by design. The virus and climate crisis have both spread through our communities of nations unrequested. And both have revealed to us that we must join together in new ways to overcome them.

But change, at an admittedly slower pace, has been in the natural world and our civilizations since their beginnings. Given this reality, is it possible, as a British history professor asked some time ago, “for a whole people to have the sustained wisdom and self-control to manage its own affairs wisely?”

This remains an open question regarding our president. Over the past several years, as the climate crisis has been pummeling the planet, our president has rolled back approximately one hundred regulations designed to reduce emissions and other causes of global warming. His latest one, lowering vehicle mileage requirements, may be the most destructive of them in its permitting more emissions, trapping in more solar radiation. On top of last year’s record heat, its draughts and fires, and looking at this January’s even higher temperatures and 2020’s predicted new records, the president’s continued undoing of

regulations is incomprehensible and deeply destructive. For this policy alone – ignorantly jeopardizing the nation’s well-being – there would seem to be compelling reason for removal from office. And this is not even factoring in all his other, narcissistic malfeasances.

So while many seasoned and sharp observers and students of our democracy have concluded that the president needs to be replaced, to preserve the natural world, and our democracy, not enough of our population sees this, yet, as an issue of survival. .

It is here that the coronavirus, while a very real and terrible plague on the peoples of the world, can also, secondarily, act as a warning against allowing scourges to spread insufficiently prepared for and opposed.

Among the widening changes that the climate crisis has set in motion, or heightened, are insufficiencies of food and water, the rising sea levels, and the increasing extreme weather events. The Increase of populations makes all of these changes more calamitous and the need for solutions more urgent.

But we must make sure that the apparent solutions, in terms of transportation and single-crop agriculture do not add to the problems. In New Jersey, to look locally, over the last decade, emissions from cars and light trucks has accounted for 30% of the state's emissions. Turning to electric vehicles large and small is a manageable way to reduce emissions. But our governor, unlike our president, understands that he must lead in making this change work, in part by investing in, and enabling, those changes.

Among the necessary steps are providing rebates of up to \$5,000. to those buying or leasing all electric, or plug-in hybrid cars costing below \$55,000. Other provisions are: funding fast-charging stations along highways and at multi-family homes and hotels, and setting aggressive levels of EV sales.

Additionally, requiring large percentages of light trucks (85% by 2040) to be electric, as well as requiring 10% of NJ Transit new buses to be zero emissions by 2024 are all part of the necessary changes.

In the Princeton area, largely affluent and educated, many EVs are now visible on the streets and roads. Outside this area, they are much less frequently seen. The state rebate program is essential to permit wider EV ownership or leasing, which in turn is essential to reducing emissions.

Looking at the energy part of this, New Jersey's Energy Master Plan offers several strategies to reduce energy consumption and emissions. But here again, it is the governor and other leaders who have set the paths for the changes we need.

Another beneficial change is the mixing of crops grown in fields. This interweaving reduces soil loss, nutrient loss, in part by reducing run off, and it also reduces the need for fertilizers and sprays, which get into our water bodies, and our bodies. A number of farmers have spoken up supporting these and other agricultural changes. But as with the virus and climate crisis, others are resisting. It remains to be seen if the nation will acknowledge the sciences around these issues, and implement what needs to be done, as we face the unhealthy, destructive one we have already set in motion.

And, as we have learned late, with the coronavirus, educated, perceptive, timely leadership is needed to counter its devastation and spread. It has been Dr. Fauci , other scientists, and a number of governors who have urged social cooperation, in distancing, consumption, and business practices.

Thus, as we can hardly avoid noticing, change, in its many forms, is all around us. Some we need to acknowledge, prepare for, and adopt responses to, soon. Other changes we need to resist, when we recognize the real ramifications. But in both cases, our future will depend, more than at most junctures in recent history, on how we deal with these changes. Can we manage our affairs knowledgeably, actively ... wisely?

