

Brown, R. Lester. 2003. Plan B: Rescuing a Planet under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble W.W. Norton & Company. New York. Paper. Price: US \$16.00 xvii + 272 pages + index

As the population of the world continues to escalate exponentially and the demands made on the natural resources continue to increase geometrically, and the need to provide the non-renewable resources for industries in the developed as well as the developing nations increase, the world is becoming more and more deteriorated environmentally. The waste from human consumption and from industries are polluting the environment and the carrying capacities of the world's ecological systems are being exceeded on many parts of the world.

Lester Brown's book raises many ethical, moral and equity issues which citizens of the world and governments of the countries of the world must address urgently and adequately. But it is interesting to see how Brown has attempted to provide strategic plans which might help. The book is divided into three parts: (1) Civilization in Trouble (2) The Response and (3) Rising to the Challenge.

In the first part, he confronts the plight of the global ecosystems and examines the issues of the quantity and quality of the world's natural resources. The world is beginning to feel the impacts of shortages such as water and food. These shortages are bound to increase with the conversion of natural resources for other purposes. For example, the wetlands are being converted (by filling) for housing purposes. These are places that serve as natural filters for waste and as food sources for humans. They are being polluted by human action. Destruction of their natural functions end up hurting humans and other living things. Soil erosion is being exacerbated in many parts of the world. Unplanned, unregulated, and haphazard development are detrimental to the environment. They result in smaller amount of natural resource available for human consumption and they lead to the lowering of the regenerative and assimilative capacities of the natural systems. Land available for agricultural production are becoming less and less. Clearly the rising in global temperatures has a direct link to the industrialization and to make things worse, the world is becoming socially divided. The civil strife and war which emanate as a result, social and political problems, lead to human suffrage and the human displacements due to wars cause environmental degradation and climate changes are caused deforestation. The rapid industrialization and the demands for wood and clearance for other types of use contribute to environmental degradation.

Brown, in the second part, attempts to provide a response to the troubles discussed in part 1. Topics covered include: raising water productivity, cutting carbon emission, raising land productivity and responding to the social changes. To do all these things require that there be a

change in life styles of the majority of the people in the Northern countries. For example in energy consumption, willingness to pay for environmental protection and conservation in or other parts of the worlds and the challenges of government to cooperation more in abiding by agreements such as the key to protocol and living more sustainable.

All and all, Brown has written a book for the general population. It is non-technical but very informative and forward looking. The omissions of the book have been clearly highlighted by the author. The lack of the discussion of biodiversity and the spread of the deserts is quite obvious. He has definitely informed the readers of what the threat to the world really is. The book is recommended for the libraries. It is a book that should be read by everyone.

Valentine James  
Southern University  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana