

My second reason for hope lies in the amazing resilience of nature if we give her a chance—and, if necessary, a helping hand. There are many success stories. The lower reaches of the River Thames in London were once so poisoned that almost all life was dead; today, after a massive cleanup operation, fish are swimming, and many birds have returned to breed. A few years ago I visited Nagasaki, the site of the second atomic bomb that ended World War II. Scientists predicted that nothing would grow for at least thirty years. In fact, green things (though undoubtedly radioactive at first) appeared very quickly. And one little sapling didn't even die. It is a big tree today with a thick gnarled trunk that has great cracks and fissures, all black inside. But each spring that tree puts out new leaves. I carry one as a symbol of hope.

Two years ago I gave a lecture in Sudbury, in Canada. For a hundred years the toxic emissions from a nickel mine had polluted the environment for miles around. I saw photos of a countryside that looked as barren as a lunar landscape. Yet all around me it was lush and green. The citizens, finally realizing that their health as well as their environment were at risk, had decided to do something about it. The mine had reduced its emissions by 98 percent in about fifteen years. As a symbol of hope, they gave me a feather from one of the peregrine falcons that once again nested there—after being locally extinct for more than forty years.

Recently I had the privilege of spending a day with a most remarkable forester, Merv Wilkonson, and his wife, Ann. Since 1939 Merv has logged his 136-acre forest in British Columbia nine times: walk into it today and it is like walking into one of nature's cathedrals. The forest is beautiful, the old giant trees still standing, more animal species there than when he began—and no pesticides have been used. The surrounding people are happy—they have sustainable jobs. You see, it *can* be done.

When I first went to Gombe in 1960 the forest stretched for mile upon mile along the shores of Lake Tanganyika with just a few small villages, a few places cleared for growing crops. By 1995, as I have described, the only forest left was within the thirty square miles of the Gombe national park. How to preserve this precious oasis of trees when the people all around were struggling to survive? The Jane Goodall Institute, with funding from the European Union, began a program of reforestation, agroforestry, erosion control, and the introduction of contour farming, or terracing along with other forms of erosion control. Today, thanks to our extraordinary and inspired project manager, George Strunden, and his team of Tanzanians under Emmanuel Mtiti, there are tree nurseries in twenty-seven villages: fruit trees, shade trees, and fast-growing species for building poles mixed with indigenous varieties. Many woodlots have been established, much loved by the women who must otherwise travel farther and farther for firewood. There are conservation-education programs in the villages and in all

the schools. There are micro-credit schemes for groups of women to start sustainable development projects that will improve the quality of their lives without destroying the environment. In cooperation with the regional medical authority, primary health care, family planning, and AIDS education programs are delivered to the villages. In cooperation with UNICEF and the International Rescue Committee, fresh water and new-style latrines will be introduced in thirty-three villages. Thousands of people now have hope for a new future—and they understand the need to protect the last small population of chimpanzees in their midst. They have bought into the program, taken ownership. It will live on after we pull out—and so will the chimpanzees.

There are animal species that have been brought back from the brink of extinction and reintroduced into the wild. I met Don Merten, who saved the black robin in New Zealand. When he began his breeding program there were only five of these little birds in existence—and of these it transpired that only one female and one male were fertile. Now there are 250 black robins. Of course, they are all genetically identical, but they have been placed on different islands so that the outbreak of some disease will not destroy them all. In Taiwan I met a herd of the beautiful spotted Formosan deer that were part of a release program. Gone from the wild for the past thirty years, but gradually bred up from the seventeen individuals remaining in various zoos, many of them are now free in the Ken Tung National Park. An antler shed by one of the first to be released is another of my symbols of hope.

There are, in fact, success stories everywhere. The trouble is, most of us don't get involved. Most of us don't realize the difference we could make. We love to shrug off our own responsibilities, to point fingers at others. "Surely," we say, "the pollution, waste, and other ills are not our fault. They are the fault of the industry, business, science. They are the fault of the politicians." This leads to a destructive and potentially deadly apathy. Let us remember, always, that we are the consumers. By exercising free choice, by choosing what to buy, what *not* to buy, we have the power, collectively, to change the ethics of business, of industry. We have the potential to exert immense power for good—we each carry it with us, in our purses, checkbooks, and credit cards. No one will force us to buy genetically engineered food, or meat from factory farms, or furniture made from clear-cut forests. We can search for and buy organically grown food, free-range eggs, and so on. But, you say, it costs a little more. Yes, it does. But as more and more people buy these products the prices will drop. And anyway, are we, or are we not, prepared to pay a few extra pennies to buy the future for our children?

It's no good blaming politicians—at least those elected by democratic process. For where is the politician who will push for a tough environmental law, one that will require some degree of sacrifice, unless he or she knows that at least 50 percent of the electorate will be supportive. And we are the electorate. Our votes count. Your vote counts; so does mine.

The trouble is that we suffer—all of us—from *just meism*. “I am just one person. What I do, or don’t do, can’t possibly make any difference. So why should I bother?” Imagine: as more and more people around the world become aware of what is good and what is bad for the environment, and for society, this means there are thousands, then millions, then billions all thinking the same: “It can’t make any difference what I do—it’s just me.” Think how it would be if we could turn that around—thousands and millions and millions of people all knowing that what they do *does* make a difference. What would that area in town—the one that is such a disgrace—look like if every passing person picked up one piece of litter? Better still, if no one threw it in the first place. Think how much water would be saved if *everyone* turned off the tap while brushing their teeth and how much energy would be saved if we *all* switched off the lights when we left a room—any room. And if everyone biked or walked when it was practical, shared a car, or took public transportation—the reduction in air pollution would be dramatic. Imagine if *no one* bought cosmetics or household products that had been tested on animals? That would bring about change far more effectively than the attempts by animal rights advocates to influence government regulations. If *everyone* demanded eggs from freely roaming chickens, how quickly poultry farming would change! There are more vegetarians than ever—imagine the difference if *everyone* stopped eating meat—even for a couple of days a week. Because, if the demand were less, animals could be humanely farmed.

It can be argued that changes of this sort will lead to major social injustices. Meat farmers, for example, would need alternative livelihoods. The same is true for trappers and miners and those in the animal laboratory industry, and so forth. I am not, for a single moment, denying the complexity, the interrelatedness, the social and political implications of these issues. But we cannot condone forever the pursuit of unethical, cruel, and destructive behaviors simply because to end them will create problems: would anyone advocate the continuation of concentration camps in order to ensure the jobs in charge?