



“PLAN B: MOBILIZING TO SAVE CIVILIZATION”
A NEW EPISODE IN THE AWARD WINNING PBS SERIES
JOURNEY TO PLANET EARTH

HOSTED BY MATT DAMON — PREMIERES WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30

**ENVIRONMENTAL VISIONARY LESTER BROWN
TELLS US HOW WE CAN SAVE CIVILIZATION**

Hosted by Matt Damon and produced by Emmy-Award winning filmmakers Marilyn and Hal Weiner, ***PLAN B: MOBILIZING TO SAVE CIVILIZATION*** is a 90-minute primetime PBS documentary based on the book by environmental visionary Lester Brown premieres Wednesday, March 30 at 10 p.m. ET (check local listings). ***PLAN B*** is the 12th episode of the award-winning PBS series *Journey to Planet Earth*, and is a presentation of South Carolina ETV.

Featuring some of the world's most original and influential thinkers, Lester Brown's message is clear and unflinching — either confront the realities of climate change or suffer the consequences of lost civilizations and failed states. Ultimately ***PLAN B*** provides audiences with a glimpse into a new and emerging economy based upon renewable sources plus realistic strategies to avoid the growing threat of global warming.

Appearing with Lester Brown are Nobel Laureate Paul Krugman, Pulitzer Prize winner Thomas Friedman, former Governor and Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt, along with other scholars and scientists. Locations include: China, Japan, Korea, India, Italy, Turkey, Bangladesh, Zambia, Haiti, and the United States.

What makes ***PLAN B*** significant and timely is that it provides audiences with hopeful solutions — a road map that will help eradicate poverty, stabilize population, stabilize climate, and protect and restore the earth's forests, soils, and fisheries. It includes ways of protecting and restoring soils, forests, rangelands, and oceanic fisheries, plus conserving the earth's biological diversity. It also features case studies that clearly show signs of a new energy economy emerging.



In the end, **PLAN B** will make a strong case for choosing new economic and environmental priorities and developing new responses to the challenges associated with growing populations. It will talk directly to political leaders who need to understand the relationship between the economy and its environmental support systems. It will explain to economists why they must begin to think like ecologists. And it will motivate community leaders and the general public to become part of a solution that seeks to restructure the economy so that it can sustain economic progress.

Distress signals

PLAN B presents a convincing case that the planet is under enormous environmental stress. In recent years scientists have issued studies confirming that sea ice is melting — and at an astonishingly rapid pace. One of the areas where ice is melting fastest is in the Himalayas and the Tibetan plateau. This is where ice melt sustains the major rivers of Asia and where over 407 million people rely on this water for irrigation systems that produce wheat and rice.

PLAN B follows Brown to Beijing, where his ideas about the disappearance of the glaciers and the possible decline of China's food supply are received frostily. In one news appearance, a newscaster argues with Brown about who should reduce greenhouse gases first, the emerging world or the industrialized countries that are the greatest consumers. Brown's point — that everyone must be responsible and the atmosphere doesn't care who reduces emissions first — seems lost.

But if China's glaciers do dry up and that country's needs for imported grain rise, there are serious implications for the rest of the world. "If China wants grain, it has billions and billions of dollars in foreign reserves to buy it. And the question is who gets crowded out and what happens to them?" says Eugene Linden, author of *Winds of Change*.

Lessons From Ancient Civilizations

Lester Brown believes that there are parallels to be found by studying early civilizations, most of which collapsed because of declining food supplies. Why didn't the leaders of these ancient civilizations heed the early warning signals that could have helped them save their empires? From the Sumerians to the Mayans to sub-Saharan Africa, these ancient civilizations collapsed. Could this happen to us — could food shortages bring down our civilization?

While it may be hard in this time of plenty to imagine that food shortages could become a global reality, many factors are already heightening stress on the food supply. Paradoxically, the rising incomes of three to four billion people in the world have increased their desire to move up the food chain from grains and vegetables to meat, dairy products and eggs, all of which require more resources to produce.

"The big issue on the planet is not just the fact that we're going from 6.7 billion people today to 9.2 billion," says Thomas Friedman, author of *Hot, Flat and Crowded*. "It's the number of people living an American lifestyle, eating American-sized Big Macs, living in American-sized houses, driving American-sized cars, on American-sized highways."

Ironically, another stress on the food supply comes from an unexpected place — the search for alternative fuels. Ethanol, which requires the conversion of grain into fuel, is now consuming huge amounts of grain. The grain required to fill one 25-gallon SUV tank is enough to feed one person for a year. As the

grain supply dwindles, this places the richest peoples of the world, who want to use ethanol for fuel, in competition with the poorest nations, who need it for food.

“Have we reached those environmental thresholds that could lead to a food crisis? If we have,” says Brown, “then surely that will lead to a growing number of failed states.”

Failing States

Over the last decade the world has begun to recognize a growing number of failing states, where governments lose the capacity to provide basic services like education and health care, as well as personal security and food security. Included in this list are countries like Somalia, the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad, Haiti, Afghanistan, and now Pakistan.

One of the foremost examples is Haiti, already in trouble prior to the recent devastating earthquake. At one time 60% of Haiti was covered with trees, but uncontrolled logging caused soil erosion. Today only about 2% of forested land remains. With little arable land, food production could not keep up with demand, and Haiti became the poorest nation in the western hemisphere.

“You have to think of environmental stress as kind of an underlying pressure, an almost tectonic stress within the society that increases the likelihood of violence but doesn’t necessarily cause it by itself,” says Thomas Homer-Dixon, University of Waterloo. “It has to come with other things such as weak governments, availability of weapons, and also deep ethnic cleavages within a society that can make violence more likely. And then all of a sudden, you get a dramatic outbreak of riots in the streets.”

The Economic Truth

What we have now is a situation in which the most pressing problems of the world, which are environmental and ecological, are ones that the market has no incentive to deal with. Basically if I pump CO₂ or other more intense greenhouse gases into the world I pay no price for doing that.

— Paul Krugman, Nobel Laureate in Economics

Paul Krugman



Underlying all of the challenges the world faces is the cost of climate change. Scientists have shown that a two-and-a-half-degree increase in average global temperature would cause drastic changes in the Amazon rainforest. The forest would dry out and terrible fires would ensue. Ultimately 25 million people could be displaced. Yet most world leaders continue to argue that drastic cuts in CO₂ emissions to save the rainforest would be too expensive. But the cost of inaction may be even higher.

Krugman argues that businesses must take the costs of their environmental impact into their accounting and we can no longer afford to treat the atmosphere and the environment as free goods. Brown and others are sounding the alarm that at the point at

which we begin to see changes in the system, it may already be too late. A fossil fuel-based, automobile-centered, throwaway economy is no longer viable. Business as usual will not work to solve the problem. And the alternative to business as usual is **PLAN B**.

PLAN B

Lester Brown's ***PLAN B*** has four components:

- 1) Cut carbon emissions 80% by 2020
- 2) Stabilize population at no more than 8 billion
- 3) Eradicate poverty
- 4) Restore the Earth's natural systems — including forests, soils, grasslands, aquifers, and fisheries

All four components are tightly integrated and all four must move forward at the same time to be effective.

Poverty and Population

In Brown's ***PLAN B***, eradicating poverty by investing in people and stabilizing the population go hand in hand. For example, in Bangladesh, health has improved and family size, which was once around six or seven, is half that size today and trending downward. The government's investment in education — especially for girls — has caused family size to decline.

Lester Brown

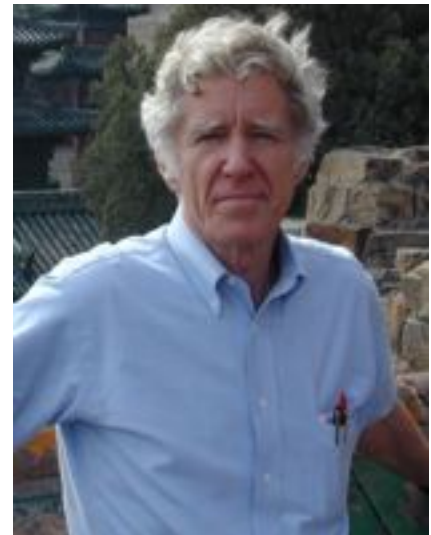
"If you educate a girl she is more likely to marry later, have fewer children, and her children are more likely to get an education," says Helen Gayle, Care USA. "And so you really create a virtuous cycle that starts by changing the life of a girl who becomes a woman and having an impact on whole communities."

In Istanbul, micro-credit business loans to poor and marginalized women are changing lives. "Micro-credit is one of these win-win strategies that actually makes me really hopeful about the future of population and the environment," adds Bob Engelman, Worldwatch Institute. "It tends to have multiple benefits that kind of ripple out — from a woman to her family, to her community, to a nation, and to the world as a whole."

Yet, despite these successes, there are other growing dangers. In sub-Saharan Africa, where populations are growing very fast, the bush meat trade is now a threat to virtually all the mammal species.

In Zambia's Luangwa Valley, an elephant sanctuary, drought and famine overwhelmed the local farmers, and the number of elephants declined from over 90,000 to fewer than 15,000.

"In the face of poverty people will tend to utilize whatever they can to survive," says Steve Osofsky, Wildlife Conservation Society. "Our job as conservationists is to try and create an environment where sustainable management is possible, where people can see things from a larger scale and learn how to manage things not just at the household level but work collaboratively to manage things at a landscape level."



The Wildlife Conservation Society taught villagers modern farming techniques and offered economic incentives. In return the villagers agreed to stop poaching and turned in their snares and guns. Today, the elephant population has increased and eco-tourism is now a growing source of income.

Reducing CO₂ Emissions

Unless you price gasoline at the cost of the troops protecting the oil company from the Persian Gulf, the cost of the pollution we are putting in the atmosphere that turns into childhood asthma — unless you truly price the cost of these dirty fuels you'll never get people to switch to the cleaner fuels.

— **Thomas Friedman, Pulitzer Prize Author**

Thomas Friedman

In the most recent conference in Copenhagen, world leaders failed to reach a binding agreement but acknowledged the need to cut carbon emissions 80% — by 2050.

Arguments raged over the economic and political feasibility of moving faster. But Brown's question for world leaders is this: How fast do we have to cut carbon emissions if we want to save, for example, the larger glaciers in the mountains of Asia? The answer you get is very different when the question is posed that way.



Brown understands that in a world currently dependent on fossil fuels, cutting carbon emissions is tough. Brown proposes a radical fix: lowering the personal income tax and adding a carbon tax.

“The main lesson of the economics is we can do this,” adds Krugman. “This is not beyond our means. It doesn't require a radical new version of economics. It doesn't require that we totally rethink how we run ourselves as a society. It just requires that we put prices on these emissions.”

The New Energy Economy

The new energy economy is already happening around the world. Texas, for years the leading oil-producing state in the country, is now the leading generator of wind power. Denmark gets 20% of its electricity from wind and is aiming for 50%. Off the coast of Scotland there is enough wind to supply the UK with all of its electricity needs. And in China, massive wind complexes are being built that will produce energy equal to that of 130 coal-fired power plants.

The amount of accessible geothermal energy dwarfs the energy in all of the world's oil, coal and natural gas reserves combined. The Philippines gets one-fifth of its electricity from geothermal power plants, while 90% of Iceland's homes are heated with geothermal energy.

China is leading the world in solar cell production on a large commercial scale. And even some of the nations of the Middle East — long a source of fossil fuels — are working with a consortium of energy companies to develop state-of-the art solar power plants designed to export electricity to Europe.

“The Algerians point out that in their desert they have enough harnessable solar energy to power the entire world economy,” says Lester Brown. “That almost sounds like a mathematical error, but it’s not. In fact, the solar energy striking the earth in one hour is sufficient to power the world economy for one year.”

Brown’s vision of the future is one that is powered by renewable, clean sources of energy. Cities, which will be linked by high-speed intra-city transportation, will be designed for people, not cars. Noise and air pollution will be reduced thanks to hybrid plug-in cars and state-of-the-art light rail. An economy based on energy sources that will never run out is not a fantasy — but it is a challenge, and one that must be faced with a sense of urgency.

Can We Change Fast Enough?

Let no man say it cannot be done. It must be done -- and we have undertaken to do it.

—**President Franklin Roosevelt** (on mobilizing the U.S. to enter World War II)

In the months after Pearl Harbor was attacked, President Roosevelt issued a directive to the departments and agencies of the U.S. government to build 45,000 tanks, 60,000 planes, 20,000 artillery and anti-aircraft guns and several thousand ships. Roosevelt realized that in order to do this he would have to call on the leaders of the automobile industry. The automobile industry complained that it couldn’t possibly meet these demands while producing cars and Roosevelt explained that they wouldn’t be producing cars during wartime. In effect, Roosevelt banned the production of private automobiles in the U.S. and from April 1942 to the end of 1944, nearly three years, there were essentially no cars produced in the U.S.

It didn’t take decades to restructure the U.S. industrial economy to fight a war — it took months. Brown wonders if we can act again with the same resolve that we used to mobilize for World War II to prevent climate change.

What Can Anyone and Everyone Do?

Brown believes that every citizen can help and, more importantly, he sees evidence of a growing awareness and desire to do something.

“I’m really encouraged by the fact that when I go to my hometown in Arizona — a small town of 50,000 people — candidates for local office are debating climate change,” says Bruce Babbitt, Former Secretary of the Interior. “They are asking and taking positions now as to what should be done in county government to move toward alternative energy. Those debates are happening everywhere clear down to the grassroots in a wonderfully positive way that will yield national change.”

Can we cut carbon emissions fast enough to save the glaciers in the Himalayas and on the Tibetan plateau or will we watch them melt and disappear? Can we phase out coal-fired power plants fast enough to save the Greenland ice sheet? Can we stop the deforestation of the Amazon basin before the forest becomes vulnerable to fire?

“These are the questions we’re facing as a civilization,” says Brown. “And my final point would be this — saving civilization is not a spectator sport. We all need to get involved.”

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About Journey to Planet Earth

The programs in the *Journey to Planet Earth* series explore the fragile relationship between people and the world they inhabit. The series is produced by Emmy Award-winning filmmakers Marilyn and Hal Weiner in association with South Carolina ETV.

A common thread runs throughout all the programs — the necessity to achieve a balance between the needs of people and the needs of the environment. Loss of farmland to urban development, the pollution of the Earth's rivers, inadequate housing and water resources for those living in the world's mega-cities — these are just some of the topics covered in *Journey to Planet Earth*. To learn more, visit pbs.org/journeytoplanetearth.

Narrated by MATT DAMON

Produced by MARILYN AND HAL WEINER

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