

Water, water...

Written by Alex Baer
Monday, 26 March 2012 21:22

World Water Day came and went recently, Thursday, the twenty-second. I saw it lap at my feet for a moment, then, it was gone again, vanished, submerged back into our busy world, three-quarters of it water.

It is difficult to remember, to **not** take clean water for granted: We grew up around it, seems like an automatic birthright, it's always been clean, always been here. Liquid water, a rarity among bodies in space, plenty of it right here: It nurtures and sustains us, grows our food, helps us exist and be.

Clean water's a no-brainer, or always used to be, as most basics of life and living once were. Of course, nations go through pendulum swings and phases, and, by all measures now, we are in an uber-right wing phase, worst ever seen or tracked, in which no aspect of life and living thing is certain, not in this climate of *winner-take-all*, *right-is-wrong*, and *screw-you-I-got-mine*.

So: Heads-up, be braced for impact. Be ready, be expecting that any sane or simple thing will take ten times as much work to accomplish as it used to take or should. Something that used to require no deep thought -- like mandating and ensuring clean water for all -- will now shake the foundations of country to acquire. It could at times look like civilization itself will be pulled down in the doing, crumbled and busted, collapsed and imploded, into a fine, gritty, dusty powder.

Thirsty yet? Today, there is still clean water for you, you're in luck. That clean water's a continuing payoff from hard work already accomplished, a lot of it from infrastructure work done in the 40s and 50s, when our country felt a surge of civic-improvement, investment-grade patriotism come over it. Those investments paid off, helped create a booming, world economy second to none, helped create the middle class. Now, the infrastructure is showing its age, starting to crumble; in a coincidence stunning no one, the middle class is crumbling, too.

In all our living, it is difficult to remember a simple thing like having clean water. Difficult to remember that a child dies every 20 seconds from a water-related disease somewhere in our world, awash in so much water. Difficult to imagine women spending 200 million hours collecting water, day in and day out. Difficult to grasp that 3 million children miss out on school every week, owing to a lack of clean water or sanitation.

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It's enough to make us -- *Oh, I dunno* -- do something really crazy, the next time we want to help some nation in the world: Instead of blasting the bejesus out of the people, why not parachute in an equivalent dollar amount of water engineers and people skilled in water-well drilling and sanitation? For a one trillion dollars or so, you can have an amazing show of kindness, not just force. You could probably send in wave after wave of teachers, medical teams, agricultural specialists -- practical, scientific, hands-on types who will actually be able to do what we always give lip service to our wanting to do: h
elping those poor people.

Meanwhile: In the *brute-strength-counts, might-makes-right, brawn-over-brain* world of the two-thousands, there is a small, splintered shard of sanity, called H.R. 3658 -- Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act of 2012.

You could look it up. Not difficult at all.

Meanwhile: By 2050, the climate is still warming, say yet more studies, maybe by 5 degrees. What will we do with the melts sloshing around in the seas? You've no doubt seen zillions of *1930-and-now*

pictures, showing remote glaciers in retreat -- not much of a treat for sore eyes. By 2050, it should be said, we're expecting another 2 billion people to be unceremoniously piped aboard this water-rich spaceship, still expecting it to be waterlogged with drinkable water by the time they get here, making us 9 billion in all.

Meanwhile: *Any shortages in good water mean more insane squabbles and wars over same. □ It will also mean, almost instantly, shortages of food, too. □ Of course, without both, life simply ceases.*

Meanwhile: *Individualists can dive down deep in it, canoe across whole oceans of the stuff, romp and play in it, kings of the world, like it was yesterday, millions of feats of money and muscle.*

Meanwhile: *Aside from our using water unwisely and wastingly, aside from not cleaning up its headwater sources and below, aside from polluting it with oil and chemicals and garbage, aside from muddying it up with and by fracking, or aside from endangering nation-sized aquifers by stringing oil pipelines atop it, what will you and I do with our water today -- what will we do with our water tomorrow, or any old day?*

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U.N. World Water Day: <http://www.unwater.org/worldwaterday/>

Water wars: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/06/2011622193147231653.html>

Canoeing the Atlantic: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17515200>

Deep dive: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-17503395>

Temps: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-17488450>

Water bill:

http://blumenauer.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2009:week-8-water-for-the-world&catid=49:40-weeks-40-ideas&Itemid=166