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'Commuter fatigue' solution lies in the roots, not the branches

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'When you are in a hole stop digging.' Bill McKibben, environmental activist, during the February climate rally in Washington D.C.

People complain a lot about long commutes, from home to work. These commutes have a powerful impact on our spirits, on our children, on our backs and knees ? and on the environment.

The source of these multiplying interactive consequences is gentrification, the way housing costs decrease the farther ?out? you can go.

Why not get to the route of the problem?

People commute because they can?t afford to live close to their place of employment. Commuting is not just a ?thing? or a ?just the way the things are.? Commuting has causes in gentrification, especially and powerfully in my home city of New York, which appears to have moved back into the Gilded Age.

Radical, routing, rerouting, rooting ideas strike me as smart. We need to talk about the roots of things, as opposed to their branches. Smart and deep ecologists could do well to imitate such rooting.

We could also just ditch the radical/liberal conundrum on behalf of smoothing it out and fluffing it up into something like acknowledging initial consequences only to observe deeper ones.

Think about a dead pillow, which is a lot like a dead idea. A dead idea is complaining about commuting without at least nodding to its source.

Gentrification, the stealing of the good land for the rich people, has a long history. I think of the Onondaga nation.

Or aboriginals in Australia.

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While in the nation-continent last year, I heard the story of the aboriginals coming for drinks at the liberal's house. On the front of their tastefully redone apartment was a plaque, bragging that the building was the original site of a certain tribe.

After a couple of wine spritzers and cubed cheeses, the current owners of the apartment and the aboriginal tribespeople were having a good time. It was then that the latter popped the question to the former: "Can we have our house back now?"

Liberals look at the consequences of land and identity theft. They/we call it "the long commute." Radicals are rooters who want to figure out how to get the land back. Liberals are people who take one step at a time, towards a radical vision.

One step toward a commute solution would be to make the cost of fossil fuel so high that we couldn't commute. Another would be to tax the heaven out of the gentrifiers so it wouldn't be so easy for some to have what others cannot. A third would be to focus on renewable energy sources that would make an economy out of the current great stagnation.

The only thing we shouldn't do is continue to dig the hole that causes long commutes and land to remain stolen.

Repentance is a word both liberals and radicals can enjoy. Repenting the way we think and the way we complain is a good place to start fluffing up our ideas and smoothing out our way.

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