

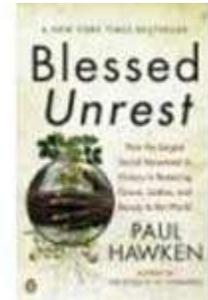
Review of Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being and Why No One Saw It Coming

Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being and Why No One Saw It Coming

by Paul Hawken

Reviewed by Mary Allen, Director, Graham County Library

Hawken didn't intend to write an optimistic book. "Optimism found me," he says. After decades of involvement in the environmental movement, and thousands of speeches, he discovered a social movement like no other in the history of the planet.



According to Hawken, conventional movements have leaders and followers and ideologies. This one is different. It is huge, consisting of over a million groups around the world, and is working from the bottom up. It is groups of citizens acting locally to save a river or air or their jobs or whatever needs to be done for ecological sustainability and economic justice. In spite of the science that describes bleak times for our planet, Hawken sees "...ordinary individuals willing to confront despair, power, and incalculable odds in an attempt to restore some semblance of grace, justice, and beauty to this world."

The first chapters are a history of the environmental movement and the influence of people like Emerson and Thoreau. He describes the early alliance of environmentalists with the white upper-class, when hiking trails and sport hunting were the major concerns. At the turning point in the movement, the support of business and politicians was lost when Rachel Carson exposed industrial poisoning and its impact on public health.

The following chapters explore globalization, how corporations are destroying indigenous cultures with encroaching, unchecked development and how workers around the world are organizing against a form of free market fundamentalism that isn't living up to its promises.

One of the most interesting chapters is "Immunity." He compares the way the body's immune system responds to threats with the way the world's peoples seem to be almost instinctively and collectively responding to the collapse of the planet's natural and social systems.

It is impossible in a short review to even hint at the profound insights in this book. But the quote by Martha Graham at the beginning is alone worth the price of the book: "...You have to keep open and aware directly to the urges that motivate you...There is no satisfaction whatever at any time. There is only a queer, divine dissatisfaction, a blessed unrest that keeps us marching and makes us more alive than the other."