

Friends:

During my thirty-some years of working in organizational change and more specifically after I became acquainted with Dr. Deming's work and learned about his System of Profound Knowledge, I had the opportunity to experience our global community in a different way. Nudged by my international colleagues, my sense of Systems Thinking began to include global thinking, albeit from an American point of view. I built relationships that transcended national allegiances. Stereotypes were shattered as my relationships grew. I learned a lot.

People translating my books asked me to explain... my examples were American with little relevance to many of my international readers. Being an American was sometimes an embarrassment. I became keenly aware of how insular Americans are- unaware of the world, other than from a tourist point of view. I met some wonderful people. I was always impressed by the commonality that we shared.

I am profoundly troubled by the American war on Iraq. I am appalled by the lack of Systems Thinking on the part of our leaders. As I see it, we are not viewing the world in its many larger contexts. To mention a few:

#### Religious vs. Spiritual

We regard each other within a framework of competing religions: One scenario, right wing Christianity vs. right wing Muslim, declares "our way is the right way" - both rigid, intolerant and narrow minded. There is no room for cooperation or negotiation. Neither side regards the other with loving spirituality.

#### East vs. West

We in the Western world don't understand the depth of the hostility and distrust that those in Eastern cultures often have toward us. We view ourselves with such superiority that we cannot comprehend any reason for centuries of resentment that will never be healed over with "humanitarian aid."

#### Materialism vs. Realism

Because of our wealth, I fear that we see ourselves as having unlimited resources. We drop bombs worth millions of dollars apiece, putting ourselves, other nations and future generations into debt. Can the world afford the economic chaos I fear will result from this?

Interacting and interdependent factors are missing from our thinking. Our context is missing purpose.

The war on Iraq has had horrible and tragic human, economic and ecological effects worldwide. The costs of this war will go on and on. I fear that our perceived victory will move us further away from creating global systems - will take us further from a time when there will be world peace.

No matter what your political persuasion or beliefs, I hope your thinking will be systemic and that your work brings you closer to others. I hope your skills of inquiry will lead you and your groups to ask good questions and really listen. I hope that as you try to think and work in a larger context - are engaged in Systems Thinking - you will bring balance to important discussions and decisions.

Peter Scholtes  
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