

The Rise of Woman

By Julian Cribb

She's just turned 16 and is already a world leader with more statespersonlike qualities, clear-eyed goals, plain speaking and sheer guts than almost any national head of today or recent history.

Swedish climate campaigner and global school strike organiser Greta Thunberg is the personification of the emergent world order and its invigorating leadership. The one that aspires to rescue humanity from the consequences of colossal, mindless mistakes.

Daughter of a Swedish actor and an opera singer, Thunberg is very much a child of the 21st Century: she was born in 2003. She has lived all her short life under the shadow of a world progressively being rendered uninhabitable by a climate out-of-control, weapons of mass destruction, by extinction, resource depletion, global poisoning, overpopulation and the untrammelled destruction of soil, water, life, atmosphere and oceans. A world being trashed by that figment of the human imagination called money.

She has the rare gift, as we say in Australia, of 'calling a spade a bloody shovel'. Of speaking truth to power. There is something distinctly Churchillian about her utterances, in content and impact, if not in literary style. And, so far, the power has had to sit back, listen – and cop the criticism.

"You say you love your children above all else and yet you are stealing their future in front of their very eyes," she upbraided the world leaders, dignitaries and technocrats assembled at the COP 24 Climate Summit in Katowice, Poland.¹

The world's financial elite flew into Davos, Switzerland, for the World Economic Forum in 1700 private jets. Thunberg raised her own funds and made a 32-hour rail journey to skewer them: "Most emissions are caused by a few people, the very rich people, who are here in Davos," she said, to hesitant, embarrassed laughter.

Bluntly dismissing the almost universal cowardice that does not want to face up to the realities she speaks of, Thunberg states: "I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. I want you to act. I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if the house is on fire, because it is."

And, of course, critics have burst out of the woodwork, dismissing her campaign as a 'PR stunt', as irresponsible for encouraging school strikes, claiming her material is written by others, that she doesn't 'sound like an adult', she's 'just a child', that she earns millions. As

¹ Her full speech is here. All 3.5 minutes of it. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFkQSGyeCWg>

with mainstream climate science, the toxic disinformation of the coal and oil lobbies is not hard to discern. She takes it head-on: “Recently I’ve seen many rumors circulating about me and enormous amounts of hate. This is no surprise to me.”²

She answers her critics coolly, politely, clearly and firmly: “I am just a messenger, and yet I get all this hate. I am not saying anything new, I am just saying what scientists have repeatedly said for decades. And I agree with you, I’m too young to do this. We children shouldn’t have to do this. But since almost no one is doing anything, and our very future is at risk, we feel like we have to continue.”

Thunberg is a new stamp of world leader. She contrasts refreshingly with people like Trump, a dangerous nong-nong by any leaderly yardstick; with Putin who thinks he is Peter the Great reincarnated and wants to prove it by re-establishing an 18th Century Empire on the back of the oil, gas and coal that will be its ruin; with Xi Jinping who, though better than most at reading the wind still wants China to be a great nation in a world where nations are history; with Brazilian President Bolsonaro who wants to destroy his country’s chief asset, the Amazonian forest; with May, who seems to have lost sight of everything but the debilitating local gangrene of Brexit.

She has fired the youth of the world, crushed beneath the weight of their parents’ greed and smug self-assurance, with a soaring ambition to make a difference. She leads them on another major global climate strike on March 15.

But Greta Thunberg is also another kind of new world leader. She’s a woman.

In *Surviving the 21st Century*³ I argued that universal female leadership is the only way that humanity and the Earth can be saved. If men are left in charge, we’re doomed. Why?

Because:

- men start wars, women don’t. Women mostly eschew violence.
- men prefer simple solutions – machines, chemicals, weapons – that all cause unanticipated destruction.
- women tend to think of the needs of future generations, children and grandchildren, to a greater degree
- the vast bulk of carbon emissions, toxic chemical emissions, wildlife extinctions, deforestation, desertification, land degradation, overfishing and mindless development is by men, not women. Men run all the dirty industries which ravage the planet. They run the governments and churches which support the rape.
- women are already leading on overpopulation. Without consulting men, they have slashed birthrates from 4.4 to 2.4 since 1970. They are leaders in education, healthcare, sustainable food, regeneration of wilderness, social development...

² <https://www.facebook.com/CO2.Earth/posts/2405343712844297>

³ <https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9783319412696>

This argument for female leadership has little or nothing to do with feminism or equal opportunity. It is, quite simply, a fundamental rule for human survival in the existential emergency we now face. Put women in charge and humanity, or a part of it, may pull through. Leave men in charge, and it's doubtful.

Greta Thunberg is a small candle in a dark world. She symbolises new hope to young people, to women and to enlightened men alike. She continues to inspire school strikes on Fridays, around the world. However they turn out, they won't be the last in this growing revolution in human thought and leadership by the young, the female, the disempowered, the wise.