

Spirit in the Village *Finding balance within the maze of our busy lives*

Talks Reviewed by Kevin Boon Originally Published: February 2007

If you were Prime Minister Tour
by David Suzuki held at the University of Waterloo

Dr. David Suzuki lives in Vancouver and is a critically acclaimed environmentalist who has been sharing a message of environmental awareness since the 1960s. He hosts a show called the [Nature of Things](#) which talks to a variety of topics, has authored many books and the [David Suzuki Foundation](#) today brings awareness and a wealth of information on environmental initiatives and steps we can take.

Dr. Suzuki was on a cross Canada tour in 2007 when I had a chance to hear him speak at the University of Waterloo. Here is a summary of some of the topics he discussed along with my interpretation and updates based on some of our realities in 2009. ([Creative Commons License – Attribution 3.0](#))



2007 Lecture Highlights

Environment is a Top Priority

Governments and corporations have said the environment is top priority.

According to Suzuki we've been down that road before.

Suzuki reminded us of his "bittersweet" memories from 1988 to 1992 when then, as now the environment was a top priority globally. The Conservatives were in power in Canada led by Brian Mulroney. Suzuki asked the then Minister of the Environment, [Lucien Bouchard](#) what was the most important issue? Mr. Bouchard responded global warming "threatens the survival of our species". If you know the history it is unfortunate that after 1989 and into the 90's Mr. Bouchard decided to put his focus on other priorities - [Quebec Separation](#).

Dr. Suzuki also mentioned that back in 1988 George Bush Senior was elected with a strong environmental mandate, however as history also tells us he chose to do nothing after being elected.

Suzuki's question: Will we forget again?

Footnote - 2009 Update: So much has changed since the original 2007 discussion with the election of Barack Obama, the Global Financial Meltdown and the demise of the Auto Sector. Words are cheap, and the environment is always good for an election platform, however today there may be a greater political incentive and leadership to begin process of solving our environmental related problems.

Costs of Fighting Global Warming

What are the costs associated with taking action on global warming? Suzuki estimates

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that if we take real action, it will cost about 1% of our GDP. He said if we do nothing the costs on our economy and our planet will be higher than the combined costs of World War I & II.

Suzuki referenced [Diane Francis](#), [Rex Murphy](#) (Canadian journalists) and other commentators who frequently complain about the cost of environmental cleanup. He said we have a mentality unwilling to make sacrifices and referred to George Bush's statement after 9-11. "Go out and shop!"

Footnote – 2009 Update: Our economy has taken a huge hit since this original discussion and people are discovering that doing nothing also has it's economic costs. Over the past two years the rhetoric from journalists has lightened somewhat but many still make the debate political.

Analogy of Sputnik and the Space Race



Someone asked a question of Dr. Suzuki about effects dealing with global warming on jobs and the economy. Suzuki used the analogy of [Sputnik](#). When the Soviet Union launched Sputnik back in 1957 everyone was amazed. For Americans, who were embraced in the [Cold War](#) there was fear the Russians were getting ahead in the [Space Race](#). The Russians sent the first chimp into space, the first man, the first team of cosmonauts and the first woman. The Americans had failure after failure.

A commitment was made by America to win the Space Race. Billions of dollars were
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invested, tens of thousands of jobs created, resulting in amazing new technologies and inventions many of which we use today.

Most will agree that our economy is much better off because we chose to take the plunge, invest money and go into space.

Here is quote from John F. Kennedy (1961)

"First, I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth.

No single space project in this period will be more impressive to mankind, or more important for the long-range exploration of space; and none will be so difficult or expensive to accomplish." ([Video 1961](#))

Footnote: 2009 Update: [President Obama](#) has given us a taste of that vision and hope inspired by JFK. More are beginning to come on board and see the potential financial opportunities of creating a [sustainable environmental economy](#).

Car companies are realizing their mistakes (unfortunately the hard way) and whether they can recover is still unknown. Whatever happens, putting resources into the environment will be good for business, our planet and might just kick-start us out of this recession.

Here are some resources:

David Suzuki Foundation

<http://www.davidsuzuki.org/default.asp>

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Kevin Boon is a blogger, writer, song writer, social media enthusiast and IT Professional who writes about current events, technology, social media, song writing, personal growth & work-life balance.

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