
CREATING A BETTER WORLD SOME LESSONS FOR THE NEXT 25 YEARS

ABSTRACTS AND SPEAKERS' BIOGRAPHIES

HOW DID WE DO THAT? THE POSSIBILITY OF RAPID TRANSITION

Andrew Simms, New Weather Institute

In the face of environmental crises and global inequality, how can we make changes at the scale and speed necessary? What can we learn from great transitions and transformations of the past? Is rapid transition possible? Sometimes events or new knowledge throw up reasons why we must make change happen quickly. We can end up doing things differently, in ways which moments before seemed unimaginable. What pushes or pulls us often we don't see coming – a volcano erupts, banks collapse, a wall falls or a conflict breaks out. Today that challenge is a civilisation, us, on the edge of irrevocably depleting the ecosystems which sustain it. This threatens to happen also in ways that will hurt the most vulnerable first and worst, and bequeath our children and subsequent generations an irreversible legacy of increasing environmental chaos. Politicians and perhaps many of the rest of society cannot imagine that we can make the rapid transition necessary to prevent this happening. But history suggests we can, and that once we understand and accept the necessity of action, we're even quite good at it. The past shows we can adapt fast.

Andrew Simms is a political economist, environmentalist, campaigner and co-founder of the New Weather Institute. He is a research associate at the Centre for Global Political Economy, University of Sussex, and a fellow of the New Economics Foundation (nef), where he was policy director for over a decade. During that time, he founded the nef's work programme on climate change, energy and interdependence, instigated their 'Great Transition' project, and ran work on local economies. His books include *Ecological Debt* – on framing the transgression of planetary boundaries – and *Tescopoly*. He also co-authored *The New Economics* and *Green New Deal*. He writes for *The Guardian* and broadcasts with the *BBC World Service* and was described by *New Scientist* as 'a master at joined-up progressive thinking'. His latest book, *Cancel the Apocalypse: the New Path to Prosperity*, is a manifesto of new economic possibilities.

TRANSFORMING THE SECURITY AGENDA: LESSONS AND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Dr Philip Webber, Chair, Scientists for Global Responsibility

Currently the world appears to be stuck in several old security dead ends – continuing wars in the Middle East, nuclear modernisation programmes, aggressive US and Russian leaders, and most recently another US-Korean crisis. There are no obvious signs of acknowledging past mistakes, let alone learning from them. But despite this I will argue that things could change for the better soon. I will draw upon a range of evidence – and some personal experience as an emergency planner – of how apparently fixed positions within the established security order can prove vulnerable to change from unexpected quarters. I will consider cases drawn from the later stages of the Cold War – when peaceful transition at first seemed impossible, but nevertheless was achieved in many situations. Other examples will be taken from the recent past, including the agreement of the new UN nuclear weapons ban treaty and the re-emergence of peace and disarmament sympathies within the Labour Party. Despite the undeniable difficulties, a new equality, peace and environment agenda could be forged, leading to major social and economic dividends.

Dr Philip Webber began his career as a physicist at Imperial College, London. He has researched and written on nuclear weapons issues since the early 1980s and is author/ co-author of several books and in-depth reports including *London After the Bomb* (1982), *Crisis over Cruise* (1983), *New Defence Strategies for the 1990s* (1990), *Offensive Insecurity* (2013) and *UK Nuclear Weapons: A Catastrophe in the Making?* (2015). He has just completed a 'beginners guide' to the nuclear threat for the SGR website. Up to 2011 he headed an award-winning environment team in Kirklees Council, West Yorkshire, with a focus on sustainability and renewable energy generation. As a research associate at the University of Leeds, his recent publications analyse energy saving programmes.
