

The Adventure must continue...

There were many memorable high points during the last century. The whole world reverberated to the rhythm of the conquest of the poles and of Everest, of the exploration of abyssal zones, the stratosphere and space, the first steps on the moon. The first flight around the world in a balloon. These grand premieres all have one thing in common: they have profoundly changed our perception of the impossible.

The next Adventures

In the 21st century, adventure must continue, but how do we perpetuate the pioneering spirit and cultivate the audacity of our predecessors?

Major challenges await humanity. They will open new horizons for science, but their objectives will be less to conquer unknown territories than to preserve the planet from today's threats, in order to sustain and improve our quality of life. The next adventures should therefore be humanitarian and medical - combating extreme poverty and containing new epidemics, political - improving our governance of the planet, spiritual - rediscovering profound and soundly-based values, technological - providing durable answers to the threats menacing our environment.

The problem with our society is that, despite all the grand talk about sustainable development, we are a long way from automatically thinking in terms of sustainability. Each hour, our world consumes around a million tons of petrol, not to mention other fossil fuels, spits back out into the atmosphere enough polluting emissions to disrupt the climate, and leaves half of the population stagnating in totally unacceptable living conditions.

Nobody is willing to sacrifice their standard of living

It certainly seems that if sustainable development has difficulty in becoming a reality, it is because it is still more often than not associated with crippling costs and a restriction of comfort or mobility. It is this idea that has to be corrected. Indeed, even if our behaviour risks destroying the planet, nobody seems ready to sacrifice his standard of living. Our grandchildren will no doubt end their days without petrol and they will then call us the "plunderers of precious resources," but as human beings, we are generally more motivated by our personal, short-term interest than by a long-term compassion for our peers or our environment.

Encouraging a pioneering spirit

Since we cannot change the character of the human being, let us make an effort to adapt the way he functions. Let us try to give him a personal interest to get into the way of thinking in terms of sustainable development. Let us prove that here it is a question of a new and formidable market with all sorts of economic and political outlets for those who understand how to invest in it in time. Let us illustrate the scientific interests, favour the pioneering spirit, let us promote a new fashion, in the positive sense of the word, which will enable renewable energy users to be held in admiration. Let's promote those who invent or use new technologies that respect the environment. It could quickly become out of fashion, even frowned upon, to consume too much petrol, to heat or cool down private or public places for no good reason or to consume non-recyclable products.

Until now, renewable energies, often the prisoner of fringe political parties, have lacked really dynamic promotional and marketing impetus. The ecologists will only be able to make their voices heard, if they speak the same language as those, whom they wish to convince. It is now urgent to leave behind the division that has led nowhere for 40 years, in order to finally unite ecology with economy, environment and finance, general opinion and short-term political interest.

Around the world with no fuel – a powerful symbol

The public is excited about great adventures and relating to the dreams of pioneers and explorers. Solar Impulse wants to mobilise this enthusiasm in favour of the technologies, which will generate sustainable development and positive emotions about renewable energies. Public attention must be drawn towards the changes necessary to ensure our planet's energy and ecological future and to give a positive and stimulating image of environmental protection and show that the alternative energy sources, related to new technologies, can achieve what some consider impossible.

It is a question of a symbol, as we will probably never carry 300 passengers in a solar airplane, but it is a symbol that affects all of us. In fact, aren't we all on Earth in the same situation as the Solar Impulse pilot? If he does not have the right technologies or wastes his energy, he will have to land before the rising sun enables him to continue his flight. And we, if we do not invest in the scientific means to develop new energy sources, we shall find ourselves in a major crisis, which will prevent us from handing over the planet to the next generation.

Quelle: Bertrand Piccard S.A.