“Sustainability” is inherently unsustainable

M. Simon

I recently came across a site (no link will be provided for reasons that will be obvious shortly) that proposed that engineers design products for sustainability. (How long is that?) They also propose going one better for really advanced products. Those would be products that pose no risk to society. Well, that sounds marvelous. Let us take a look at what that might mean in terms of selling water.

If you drink about 8 gallons of water in a few hours, the electrolytes in your body can become unbalanced enough to kill you. So ... OK. Don't sell water in containers larger than 4 gallons. Excellent. But what about kids? Their body mass is smaller, so that needs to be reduced further. Say ... 2 gallons. But 2 gallons in a 5-gallon bucket can kill toddlers who get stuck in them. OK ... limit the water to quart containers and outlaw 5-gallon buckets. That is sustainable. But wait - if you get a quart of water in your lungs, it will be difficult to breathe ... a real killer. So water needs to be sold in eye droppers. But that will cause a problem with eyedropper liter.

The long and short of it is that nothing is sustainable but death. And once death is achieved, it can be sustained indefinitely at an exceedingly low environmental cost.

I wonder if that is what the sustainability folks [1] have in mind?

M. Simon's e-mail can be found on the sidebar at Space-Time Productions [2].

Engineering is the art of making what you want from what you can get at a profit.

Source URL (retrieved on *07/28/2014 - 9:21pm*):
http://www.ecnmag.com/blogs/2012/11/%E2%80%9Csustainability%E2%80%9D-inherently-unsustainable?qt-most_popular=0&qt-video_of_the_day=0

Links:
[1] http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/agenda21/

[2] http://spacetimepro.blogspot.com/