

Future of the World

I: The three of us, that is Angela from the United States, correct.

A: Yes.

I: And Michael, from Australia.

M: Correct.

I: And my name's Tom and I'm from the United Kingdom. We're going to talk about the future. Now I think I'm right in saying that neither of you have children, but we have to think of the future. We have to think of the next generation, and a lot of people are very pessimistic about the future. They think of all the challenges facing the world. Let me put it to you. Are you an optimist or a pessimist? Angela, would you like to come in there?

A: I'd like to think I'm an optimist. Yeah.

I: That's good.

A: You have to be in this world.

I: Okay. What about you, Michael?

M: Well, sad to say, I've got to say that probably I'm a little bit more pessimistic about the future.

I: Can you put your finger on one challenge which you think is going the wrong way? One really big problem which the next generation is going to have to face?

M: Pollution. I'd start with that. Today, with the ozone layer, you know, some places are so difficult to breathe now. At least people feel they can't breathe. And with all the pollution coming from cars, from airplanes, everything. And it doesn't help paying, you know, climate quota or whatever you do to pay extra money for your ticket, because the plane is still going to let out the same amount of pollution, right?

I: Okay. Well, Angela, you obviously agree that pollution's a big problem, but do you think we're tackling it?

A: I think that pollution is one of the biggest problems, so we agree on that one. But my view, and maybe because I'm American, is that it will work itself out. I think that because more people are concerned about pollution as a... More people will direct their dollars, Euros, pounds toward companies who are actually doing things to protect the environment and to make change.

I: All right. Let's move on to another big problem and population growth. Michael, do you see this as one of the really big challenges?

M: It's all connected, you know, to the same things, and population does also cause, increase pollution, which we just talked about. There are some places right now in the world where there are far too many people, like China, Japan, I don't know. I'm from Australia where we still only have about 25 million people and it's like a huge country.

I: So we should all go down to Australia.

M: Well, you know, Tom, in the future, that may be one of the solutions because there are actually a few places in the world where there are far too many people.

I: What else can we do?

A: I think that there are many places where you have large population growth. But you also have countries like Germany and actually Japan. There they don't have much population growth. Norway's the same thing. You do have countries that are populations getting less, and you do have countries where the population is also increasing. So I don't know. I think somewhat it may balance out.

I: Maybe. What about other big problems? Angela, would you like to name another major challenge facing the world?

A: I think one of the big problems is food, and a lot of processed foods and so people are unhealthy. They're gaining lots of weight.

M: I think that's a problem that's a lot easier to solve. You eat less and you exercise more. It's very simple.

I: Australians. You're the directors.

M: Well, yes, you go for a swim, you know. You eat a few veggies.

I: Fair enough.

M: Easy enough. I don't see that as a global problem, really.

I: What about conflicts between nations. Is it... We like to think we're becoming more sensible and more peaceful, but are we?

M: Well, some places we are, maybe, but I mean in the Middle East, there still is always going to be conflicts, at least the way I see it, the way things are now.

I: These views are pessimistic (?). What about you, Angela, when we come to conflicts between nations?

A: I think again that people are, are becoming more active. They're taking part and they're taking responsibility for what's happening in their countries and they're rising up, so to speak. So I think that... I'm hopeful that through the different rebellions, that hopefully change will come.

I: Change towards democracy and this kind of thing, human rights. I said conflicts between nations, but are the really big conflicts going to be between ideologies, between religions or something else in the future, do you think?

A: I think it's going to be more economic because there's... Now we're having this huge financial crisis all over the world, and it's affecting everyone. So I think that more so than different religions and more so than all the other ethnic differences, I think that money is going to be... is going to be the big issue.

I: Michael, do you want to come in there before we round off?

M: Well, I think religion is a major factor because there are... at least it's being used sometimes as an excuse, you know, between why, why people go to war.

I: Thanks very much for talking with us.

A: Thank you.

M: Thank you.