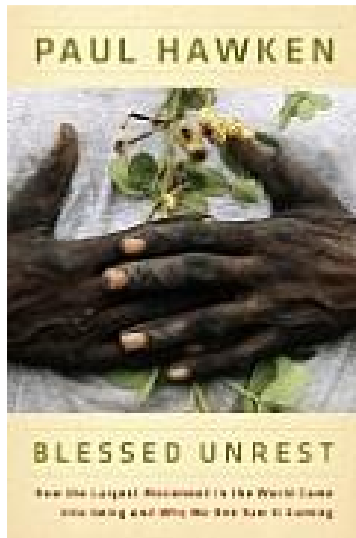


BOOK REVIEW

Hawken, Paul. *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being and Why No One Saw It Coming*. Viking, New York, 2007.



The long sub-title of Paul Hawken's latest book is almost an essay in itself. His book sets out to answer the questions implied in this sub-title. What struck Hawken was the number of organizations around the world dedicated to healing and restoring the earth. He believes that the environmental movement is the largest social movement in all human history. No one knows its scope, and how it functions is more than what meets the eye. It is under the collective radar, he says, because although it is a movement, there is no leader. 'It is a massive enterprise undertaken by ordinary citizens everywhere, not by self appointed governments or oligarchies.' (5) Thus it is not so much a movement seeking to accumulate power, as it is a movement permeating society from the ground up. This is the

story of the actions of ordinary people to change a society's long-held beliefs - an exciting story that needs to be told. Hawken tells this story in a beautifully written, well researched, and thoughtful way.

Hawken estimates that there are over a million environmental groups worldwide, ranging from local neighbourhood associations to well-funded international organizations. Unlike many other global movements, these groups have no ideological norms or single charismatic leader. They possess the subtlety of being able to coalesce into larger networks while retaining their own individuality.

Some critics believe Hawken downplays the role and responsibility of big business in affecting change. In championing the 'little people' and their 'think locally' ideals, he seems to decry those who are dedicated to accomplishing 'great things'. Maybe it is in the nature of the environmental idealist to believe he or she can change the world. It is perhaps a little disappointing that the book spends the last 100 pages listing the topics and issues that environmental and social justice groups are addressing when all this information can be accessed on the web.

Despite these criticisms, *Blessed Unrest* is inspiring reading, and gives heart to those at all levels of society who are struggling to make a difference. Why this unrest is 'Blessed' is perhaps made clear by Hawken's remark: 'Healing the wounds of the earth and its people does not require saintliness or a political party, only gumption and persistence. It is not a liberal, or conservative activity; it is a sacred act.' (5)