Yes – we are environmentalists!

Inspiring! That is the best word I can think of to describe Stewart Brand's book "Whole Earth Discipline." My faith in people has been restored.

To be frank I have heard Stewart Brand speak twice when I went out and bought his most recent book. His conversion to an ardent supporter of nuclear power was interesting and indeed exciting. And while he is an excellent speaker, his book is even better.

As an experienced and life long environmentalist, he has the credentials to support his case; and what a case it is. He argues that being open minded to science and technology is the route to solving environmental issues. And of most importance, he is willing to listen and learn with time and to modify his beliefs based on this learning. He even openly criticizes some of the environmental movement as they are stuck in their beliefs and are not willing to take advantage of good information to support their ultimate cause.

He then goes on to blast three key areas of long term environmental criticism as just plain wrong. Or as he says quite eloquently ***"Cities are green. Nuclear energy is green. Genetic engineering is green."*** His book has a chapter on each and the case is quite compelling. He then uses part of his book to establish how not to repeat the mistakes we made on these three. Can you imagine??

With the greens (and he proudly says that it is cool to own a colour) seeming to win on their most recent and perhaps most difficult issue, climate change, Brand is critical.

"The long-evolved green agenda is suddenly outdated – too negative, too tradition-bound, too specialized, too

politically one-sided for the scale of the climate problem. Far from taking a dominant role, environmentalists risk being marginalized more than ever, with many of their deep goals and well-honed strategies irrelevant to the new tasks. Accustomed to saving natural systems from civilization, Greens how have the unfamiliar task of saving civilization from a natural system – climate dynamics."

There is too much of value in this book to repeat here. For our interest, those of us in the nuclear industry it is so nice to actually see someone hear what we have been saying for years. I accept that we have not necessarily been good at delivering the messages, but yes, a thoughtful and experienced environmentalist has listened and heard our arguments. Of importance are the comments on nuclear safety. Quoting from Bill McKibben, "***Nuclear power is a potential safety threat, if something goes wrong. Coal-fired power is guaranteed destruction, filling the atmosphere with planet-heating carbon when it operates as it is supposed to***."

And of more importance, he recognizes that nuclear power is actually the safest of all of our forms of energy, with radiation killing no one in the United States, when all the alternatives have; and yet it is the one form of energy we fear the most.

It is easy to go and on but the best recommendation is to read the book. It has given me faith in the environmental movement when we need it most, and has shown that new thinking is possible. The planet has hope after all.

So what are you waiting for? If you want to be inspired, go and read this book now!