

Sunday 25 August 2019

**“Climate change is a man-made problem that requires a feminist solution,”**

**says Mary Robinson**

“A feminist solution definitely includes men and I’m glad to say, increasingly includes men, because the feminist solution is based on equality.” Former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson appeared at the Edinburgh International Book Festival today, to discuss her book, *Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience, and the Fight for a Sustainable Future*, in an event chaired by Scottish Journalist Ruth Wishart.

Robinson has been a cornerstone of Irish politics for decades. Following the end of her Presidency, she threw herself into global humanitarian work and becoming an Elder, a group founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007, that works together to seek peace and to maintain human rights. Robinson is the first to admit that she didn’t discuss, or think much about, climate change when in her Presidency, and that becoming a grandmother nearly sixteen years ago opened her eyes to the need for change.

“When I held him in my arms, I was so conscious of the dates of 2050, you know, being a significant date for climate... all kinds of predictions that we need to be carbon neutral by 2050 and I thought to myself, ‘what age will he be?’. He’ll be fortyseven in 2050... I kind of had this physical reaction to thinking a hundred years ahead because I was his granny.

“That’s why I’m so grateful to Greta Thunberg and Holly (Gillibrand) here in Scotland and all of those children who have done much more for climate justice than I was doing at the time, because they’ve shown that it’s not a matter of small island states and indigenous peoples, which is what I was talking about mainly, it’s everybody. It’s the human race and our children and grandchildren.”

The discussion turned to the ongoing fires burning through the Amazon, to which Robinson stated that it’s devastating especially as “these are the lungs of the world,” before going on to say that it might actually highlight how consumer culture is impacting the natural world.

“I’m glad in a way that the terrible fires, that are taking place in the Amazon, are taking place when the G7 is meeting in Biarritz. It can’t be avoided, and I think President Macron is aware that this helps him to put climate change very much on the agenda.”

She went on to commend Scotland for its active approach to climate change, acknowledging that her home country of Ireland was lagging behind on its recognition and attempts to counteract their contribution to climate change. “I came here to launch the first climate justice fund in the world, here in Edinburgh a few years ago, and I’ve been aware that Scotland’s climate policy is much much better and you’re very conscious. It’s partly because it wasn’t one of the things that Britain could rule for you.”

Robinson added that she was relieved as a former president to hear the Taoiseach of Ireland, Leo Varadkar admit that “Ireland was somewhat of a laggard on climate change, and we have to change.”

As well as the fear of the repercussions of climate change hanging overhead, Robinson says that it’s important that the world also remains aware of the ongoing tension around nuclear power, saying “the nuclear threat has become much worse than it was at any time since the cold war.

“I am asked to be with Ban-Ki Moon next January for the timing of the doomsday clock...they’ve asked us as Elders to be there to highlight the importance of it. We’re going to be closer than we’ve ever been to midnight.

“That is really serious because, Russia and the United States have pulled out of a recent treaty. They’re arming again, in a very dangerous way. North Korea is far from resolved. The United States has pulled out of the Iran treaty, that was holding Iran in place on nuclear issues and most worrying of all, you’ve got Kashmir with two nuclear powers. India said the other day that they’re moving away from what they said in the beginning when they went nuclear ‘no first strike’. They’re now saying, ‘well, maybe, maybe we won’t hold to that.

“I don’t want to scare people unduly, but that is another existential threat.”

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Despite this, Robinson says that she is hopeful about the future, given the strength of leadership and the example that young people are providing around the topic of climate change. When asked what we should do to make active battling of climate change accessible by all, regardless of political leaning, she answered succinctly, “One short answer would be, listen to the children. Listen to our children.”