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Essay
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Damming of the Mekong River

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Characters: His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet.
David Baxter

Theories: Buddhism
Anarchism

Setting: The year is 1997, and the characters are in Bangkok, Thailand. A symposium is being held to address the Peoples Republic of China’s proposed scheme of constructing eight dams on the Upper Mekong. The first dam, the Manwan Dam was completed in 1996, with construction of the second Dam, Dachaoshan, starting the same year.¹

David Baxter hurried across the road in the dark, avoiding the oncoming lights. Rain rushing against his face. He was running late. Briefly he glanced up at the sign draped across the building’s arched doorway:

*“Symposium for the establishment and commencement of
sustainable development of the Mekong River Basin.”*

¹ International Rivers Network. 2002. *China’s Upper Mekong Dams Endanger Millions Downstream*. Briefing Paper 3. Available at www.irn.org/programs/lancang.

Baxter: Sustainable Development my arse! They're not going to throw me out as some extremist tonight.

Baxter slips silently into the auditorium just as a rather dignified, yet smug², young man approached the microphone.

Host: Ladies and Gentlemen, I welcome you to the Symposium for the establishment and commencement of sustainable development of the Mekong River Basin. I am pleased to announce that the room tonight is full of both noteworthy and admirable individuals whose work in the past has brought great progress to society.³ Unfortunately our desire to hear from such distinguished individuals shall have hold out for 10 more minutes as we finalise some details. Please feel free to mingle and try the delicious hors d'oeuvres.

The Dalai Lama sits silently to the side, clothed in the traditional monastic robes⁴. David Baxter is instantly in awe of the reverence of the man and initially overwhelmed by his presence, which dissuades him from approaching the man. However, Baxter's determination and ego draw him to move toward the Dalai Lama.

Baxter: May I sit beside you?

Dalai Lama: Of course, young man. What is your name?

² In the opinion of David Baxter.

³ Individuals mentioned include members of government from the People's Republic of China, Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand. Additionally there are representatives from the Asian Development Bank, The Chinese Development Bank, The World Bank, The Mekong River Commission, the International Development Research Centre, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the International Monetary Fund. Furthermore there are individuals of no connection to institutions such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and renowned political analyst and authority on Southeast Asia Professor Russell H. Fifield.

⁴ H.H. the Dalai Lama wears maroon and gold robes, traditional clothing for a Buddhist monk. An addition to the five moral precepts for Buddhists, or the Pancha Shila, monks and nuns also follow a principle to 'avoid self-adornment'. In Boeree C.G. 2003 *Buddhist Morality*. Available at <http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboree/buddhamorals.html>.

*The Dalai Lama smiles pleasantly. Baxter sits down beside the Dalai Lama and momentarily hesitates in answering the question.*⁵

Baxter: I'm David Baxter. I'm a ... an interested party at this conference. And you are the Dalai Lama, whom I know is going to address these people 'ere (*gestures widely with his arm*) about the Mekong Dam.

Dalai Lama: That's correct. I believe we all have a responsibility to share knowledge and conversation to facilitate a betterment of society. In particular, the integration of human rights and the environmental protection is imperative to this hope. What is your opinion of this situation at Mekong?

Baxter: With all due respect, I believe that this situation is more about the government taking power from the people. When does the government fully consider the implications of such a project upon the people of the land? The people who have lived on the floodplains of the Mekong all their lives, for generations past. The people whose livelihoods depend upon the Mekong for water, for agriculture, for fishing. The people who, in their thousands are literally being swept away in the torrent of rising waters.⁶ Who is there to consider the social impacts of dams, hey? The inequity of the whole situation?⁷

Dalai Lama: You have an emotional and passionate judgment upon the situation. I commend you for recognising the suffering of the people of the Mekong⁸. To understand

⁵ David Baxter was not issued with an invitation to the event and doesn't want to blow his cover too early. With research and cunning almost anyone can find their way inside such a venue.

⁶ Baxter refers to communities who have been displaced as their villages were flooded due to the construction of the dam.

⁷ Baxter refers to the numerous social impacts of dams that have been recognized numerous times throughout the development of dams throughout the world. Such impacts include resettlement of communities, loss of fishing and agriculture and unseasonal flood flows. See the World Commission on Dams' Executive Summary 2002. *The Social Impact of Large Dams: Equity and Distributional Issues*.

⁸ The teachings of Buddha give insight into the nature of suffering, its cause and the path to its cessation. The sharing of this insight by Buddha is regarded by the tradition as an act of universal compassion. Furthermore, the individual's mindfulness of the universality of suffering produces compassionate empathy for all forms of life. See Swearer D.K. 1998. *Buddhism and Ecology: Challenge and Promise*. Published in *Earth Ethics* 10, no.1. Available at <http://environment.harvard.edu/religion/religion/buddhism/index.html>

all aspects and to consider all consequences of such a development is imperative to its success. So, I am to understand that you believe that the government itself does not consider its people in making decisions for its country?

Baxter: That's right! The government is a form of state. A sovereign body which claims complete authority to define the rights of its subjects.⁹ These rights have extended to their daily lives, to where they are able to live, able to fish. The government is a distinct body which has exploited its power to construct a dam on a river which is the heart and soul (*emphasising these words*) of mainland Southeast Asia. The first dam in this scheme was completed last year, and did you know that China did not consult any of the downstream neighbours, not Burma or Thailand or Laos or Cambodia. There was no Environmental Impact Assessment carried out on downstream impacts.¹⁰ If the Chinese did not consult the government of neighbouring governments, there was no way that the people of the downstream countries were aware of the dam either¹¹. Also, China is able to more or less control the quantity of water released to downstream countries, and this concern has hardly heard any objections.¹² Apathetic and complacent!

Dalai Lama: You appear, Mr. Baxter, to be yielding the position of an anarchist. An anarchist, however, who has done his homework. The Mekong, offers many opportunities for a country to establish a dam for hydropower, in particular the upper regions of the main water basins. So much so, that the Mekong has been assessed for such projects

⁹ Miller D. 1984. *Anarchism*. Published by J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd. Great Britain. A feature of the theory of anarchism is their hostility towards the state. The state is not necessarily the government in general, but a specific form of government, which claims complete authority to define the right of its subjects. The state is seen to be monopolistic, punitive, exploitative, coercive and destructive.

¹⁰ International Rivers Network. 2002. *China's Upper Mekong Dams Endanger Millions Downstream*. Briefing Paper 3. Available at www.irn.org/programs/lancang. The scheme that Baxter speaks of is not only a referral to the scheming nature of the Chinese government (in Baxter's opinion), but also the scheme proposed by the government which consists of the construction of eight dams on the Upper Mekong River to supply power to southwest China and Thailand by means of hydroelectricity.

¹¹ Blake D. 2001. *Proposed Mekong Dam Scheme in China Threatens Millions in Downstream Countries*. Published in the World Rivers Review, June 2001. Blake writes: "It is certain that the overwhelming majority of the 55 million people inhabiting the Lower Mekong Basin have never heard of the Chinese scheme to dam the "Mother of Waters"."

¹² *Ibid.*

since the 1950's.¹³ It has been suggested that some countries, such as Thailand who has the largest demand for electricity in the area, has exhausted its hydroelectric and gas supply potential. However, that it can explore the energy potential of the Mekong as well as buy energy from other countries such as Laos who has a higher hydropower capacity.¹⁴ This is encouraged by the Laos government who was to increase foreign exchange.¹⁵ This has fuelled hydropower development in the Mekong basin involving these countries. However, the Chinese government's Manwan dam was initially constructed to service the growing industry developments in Yunnan Province.¹⁶

Baxter: How can you say that the dam was needed? Or even if it was needed, that its construction was justified?

Dalai Lama: Allow me to finish young man; my beliefs on this situation are not that different to yours. It is true that the People's Republic of China has been a substantial power and influence on the countries of the Lower Mekong.¹⁷ In fact, the country's proposal of a series of hydropower dams would supposedly permit regulation of the downstream water flow and eventual full development of the Mekong River for shipping.¹⁸ The Mekong Dam is seen by those people in power as a development...

Baxter: It's hardly a development!

Baxter is visibly disturbed at the Dalai Lama's suggestion.

¹³ Rothert S. 1995. *Lessons Unlearned, Damming the Mekong River*. International Rivers Network, Working Paper 6. Pg 7.

¹⁴ Asian Development Bank. 1993. *Economic Cooperation in the Greater Mekong Subregion: Proceedings of the Second Conference on Subregional Economic Cooperation Among Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam and Yunnan Province of the People's Republic of China*. Published by the Asian Development Bank, Philippines. Pg 63-64.

¹⁵ Rothert S. 1995. *Lessons Unlearned, Damming the Mekong River*. International Rivers Network, Working Paper 6. Pg 17.

¹⁶ Higuchi M.F. 2001. *Trouble for the Mekong: To Dam or Not to Dam?* Available at <http://www.hawaii.edu/hga/gaw01/workshop/Mekongdam.html>

¹⁷ Schaaf C.H. & Fifield R.H. 1963. *The Lower Mekong: Challenge to cooperation in Southeast Asia*. Published by D. Van Norstrand Company, Inc. in the United States of America. Pg 17.

¹⁸ Roberts T. 2001. *Downstream ecological implications of China's Lancang Hydropower and Mekong Navigation Project*. Released by the International Rivers Network. Available at <http://www.irn.org/programs/lancang/index.php?id=021112.ecoimplications.html>

Dalai Lama: Modern society perceives development in terms of physical results, such as increased income, more factories, schools, hospitals or food. I agree with your opinion that it is hardly a development in a particular sense of the word...

Baxter: Even less so, a sustainable development!

Dalai Lama: Yes...this conference is supposed to be about sustainable development isn't it?

Baxter: It may be sustainable in that it will generate power for future generations, but how can it be sustainable if it ruins the lives of so many ordinary citizens in the process.¹⁹ Plus, I'm sure it also degrades the environment somehow...

Dalai Lama: As I was about to say before, Buddhism tends to look at the quality of development as opposed to the quantity.²⁰ With a construction such as the dam the people's quality of life is decreased as they are unable to reach their full potential. They lose not only physical factors such as food, but a sense of freedom. But, also as you mentioned, the environment is also affected and is equally important as the humans living in it.

Baxter: In a sense, anarchism follows a similar ideal. I mean, the essence of anarchism is free cooperation between equal people to maximize liberty and individuality.²¹ We place a high priority on liberty. Liberty, as well as equality and solidarity are vital for the development of the individual. And a fully developed individual is a benefit to society.

¹⁹ Sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". As defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development in their report, *Our Common Future*. Cited in Beder S. 1996. *The Nature of Sustainable Development*. Published by Scribe Publications Pty Ltd. Australia.

²⁰ Sivaraska S. 1992. *Seeds of Peace: a Buddhist vision for renewing society*. Published by Parallax Press, California. Pg 35.

²¹ McKay I., Elkin G., Neal D. & Boraas E. (2005). An Anarchist FAQ. Available at <http://www.infoshop.org/faq/index.html>

But, is it not the belief of Buddhism to enlighten oneself, to focus on a personal spirituality? Not on the environment.

Dalai Lama: In a way, you are right. Buddhism does focus on a personal spiritual understanding and in overcoming one's material desires. But the repair of our relationship with ourselves is connected with a need to repair our relationship with our environment. Buddhism deeply believes in the connectedness of all in nature.²² We have reverence for all that is alive. Anything that happens to the environment will ultimately affect us, either directly or indirectly, so we must look after the environment.

Baxter: So, how do you believe that this dam is affecting the environment? What extra damage has the state inflicted upon us?

Baxter now appears curious about what the Dalai Lama is about to say. He is impressed by the man's knowledge and spirituality.

Dalai Lama: There are many environmental impacts of dams.²³ Although I'm not a biologist or an environmental scientist, I have read a bit about it. The effects are wide ranging from things such as affected water turbidity, erosion, changed timing of flood flows, forest clearing, increased abundance of insect disease vectors and affected reproduction of fish and other marine organisms.²⁴

Baxter: And it seems as if all of those things would affect the communities living beside the Mekong!

Dalai Lama: Of course! Everything is interconnected as I said before.

²² Walker A.L. 2004. *Buddhism and the Environment*. Available at <http://www.earthshanga.org/buddhism/>

²³ See Adams W. 2000. *Downstream Impacts of Dams*. Prepared for Thematic Review I.1. for the World Commission on Dams. Available at <http://www.dams.org/>

See also International Development Studies Network 1998. *Dams and Development*. Available at <http://www.idsnet.org/Resources/Dams/Development/DinD.html>

See also Rothert S. 1995. *Lessons Unlearned, Damming the Mekong River*. International Rivers Network, Working Paper 6. Pg 24-29.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Baxter: And how many of those communities will actually benefit at all from the dam being built? A few, one, none! The entire development seems irrational!

Baxter sighs, suddenly overwhelmed by the situation he faces. Although, he has come here tonight to attempt to make a difference and so he will not be discouraged.

Baxter: I am impressed by your knowledge of the situation. I also appreciate that you have not judged me upon my position. It is a common feature of society to judge those who acknowledge themselves as anarchists as that of a destructive individual out to disrupt social order!²⁵ Just because we support direct action.²⁶

Dalai Lama: I have always tried to have tolerance for all people and understanding of people. Right understanding promotes wisdom.²⁷ So, Mr. Baxter, you have come here tonight to put across your opinion, I can see that. But I also guess that you have come for more than that. Perhaps to stand up and make a difference?

Baxter is shocked. Is it so that the Dalai Lama has discovered his real reason for being here?

Baxter: My views are not always welcome at such places. I see modern society as if it is organised around immense urban belts, highly industrialized agriculture, and a swollen bureaucratized, anonymous state. It seems as if everything is out of balance. There is a man named Murray Bookchin, an anarchist, he says that man have produced imbalances

²⁵ Miller D. 1984. *Anarchism*. Published by J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd. Great Britain. The interpretation of the anarchist is one meaning to disrupt social order may originate from the word anarchy which is commonly used to mean chaos and social breakdown. However, in contrast to the belief that anarchists elevate the individual above social constraints, anarchists claim to strive to produce individuals who are more aware of their communal obligations.

²⁶ McKay I., Elkin G., Neal D. & Boraas E. (2005). An Anarchist FAQ. Available at <http://www.infoshop.org/faq/index.html>

²⁷ The Noble Eightfold Path (the Middle Way encourages a life of moderation) includes: Right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. The first three promote wisdom, to see directly into the nature of things. The next three are ethical and last three aim for concentration or meditative skill. See Walker A.L. 2004. *Buddhism and the Environment*. Available at <http://www.earthshanga.org/buddhism/>

in his relations with his fellow man and that this has produced imbalances in nature.²⁸ Perhaps you can see that through your views of Buddhism? The imbalances man has produced in the natural world are caused by those he has produced in the social world. I want to start to make a difference to fix this imbalance. But there is a difference in anarchism between seeking to establish a new global order and attempting to give priority to the local level.²⁹

Dalai Lama: Ah, so you have made a connection between the domination of man by man and the eagerness by man to dominate nature.

The Dalai Lama smiles, as if he has taught this young man some valuable lessons tonight.

Dalai Lama: Well let us hear your thoughts tonight. If you could provide these people here with some solutions to the problems arising from these dams that the Chinese propose, what would they be?

Baxter: To make them realize what they are doing to the people!

Dalai Lama: Perhaps they already realize this. Perhaps that's why they are here. What are your solutions to stop the problem, to alleviate it, to reverse it even?

Baxter: Well, I guess there are a few things I could suggest. Firstly, to halt any further construction of dams along the Mekong! And also to decommission the dam already built. I mean, disassemble it piece by piece, or blow it up, whatever it takes.

The Dalai Lama laughs quietly at the suggestions.

Baxter: Pick up the entire dam and lift it with 20 helicopters and transport it to another river such as the Jinsha Jiang so that parts of China will be downstream and will feel the

²⁸ Keulartz J. 1998. *The Struggle for Nature: A critique of radical ecology*. Published by Routledge, Great Britain. Pg 91-123.

²⁹ *Ibid.* Pg 4.

effects. Although, that doesn't really solve the problem does it... Perhaps we can just dump it literally in the backyards of the heads of the country. Spread it out between them, I'll sure there'll be enough to go around.

Dalai Lama: I guess you would be inflicting your own form of karma onto these people, even if it does occur within the same lifetime.³⁰ Although, your karma will come back to you also.

Baxter: Ok. Well, basically the whole dam idea comes down to power. Electrical power I mean. And anarchism comes down to the desire for a decentralized community.³¹ In a decentralized community, there would be no need for huge industries or large-scale transportation. Each community will be self-sufficient to a large extent and so there won't be such a need for energy.³² In today's society such things as solar-power devices, wind turbines or hydro-electric resources are insufficient to provide a solution to our energy problems anyway, and everyone knows that coal is a limited resource. So it would make sense to limit our energy consumption. For example, in a decentralized community we can take advantage of the invention of an electric car, which can be used for urban or regional transportation, with larger transportation by a monorail network. This would reduce gas consumption. This solution is not so beneficial, if at all beneficial, in today's society due to the numerous times that the battery would need to be recharged or replaced.

Dalai Lama: Well I certainly agree that it is a great suggestion for people to reduce their energy consumption. I would recommend that for all people. To reduce people's reliance

³⁰ The law of karma, or *kamma*, states that every intentional action bears an experiential fruit equal to the moral quality of the intention. This means that if one does good, they will get good in return, however if they do bad then they will receive bad in return. If an action is performed in ignorance then it is a cause of future suffering. This suffering will often occur after a rebirth as not every action has its reaction or *vipaka* effected within the scope of a single lifetime. Jackson P. 1988. *Buddhadasa: A Buddhist Thinker for the Modern World*. Published by the Siam Society, Bangkok. Pg 315-316.

³¹McKay I., Elkin G., Neal D. & Boraas E. (2005). An Anarchist FAQ. Available at <http://www.infoshop.org/faq/index.html>

³² See Bookchin M. 1974. *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*. Published by Wildwood House, London. Pg74 – 75.

on such resources, as well as materialistic items is certainly a positive step forward.³³ Not only that, but it is necessary to take care in the use of non-renewable items, to only use them only if necessary and even then to take the greatest care and most meticulous concern for the environment. Furthermore, priority should be given to maximizing the efficiency of existing energy systems before building any new projects.

Baxter: As it is a lot of the communities living alongside the lower Mekong are relatively self-sufficient. In fact, the total value of fish caught in the Lower Mekong Basin is worth more than US\$1 billion, most of which is caught and consumed directly by the farmers and the fishers, without ever passing through a market.³⁴ But despite this, they don't have control of their local resources. It is still the state that controls the river.

Dalai Lama: So, if the construction of a dam is inevitable, there needs to be some way to ensure the independence and presence of rights of the people.

Baxter: Exactly! But first, no dam should be built without the demonstratable acceptance of the affected people. If they don't consent it, then the dam can't be built. Also, the people have to be fully informed of the implications of the dam, and upon knowing all that, there is little chance they will consider it. If the dam is to be built near them or affect them then they should have a right to say what they want to happen, they should not be told by some authoritative state. There needs to be some form of equity!

Dalai Lama: I agree that it is the best interests of all countries concerned that China defers large-scale Mekong development at least until the projects are assessed in more detail. Although, it is unlikely that China will change any of its developmental policies because of negative impacts beyond its border.³⁵

³³ Buddhism focuses on personal spiritual understanding and overcoming one's material desires. Orton D. *Reflections on Buddhism and Deep Ecology*. 2002. <http://home.ca.inter.net/~greenweb/DE-Buddhism.html>

³⁴ Blake D. 2001. *Proposed Mekong Dam Scheme in China Threatens Millions in Downstream Countries*. Published in the World Rivers Review, June 2001

³⁵ Platt K. 2001. *Strangling the Mekong*. In Newsweek, March 19, 2001, Atlantic Edition. Available at <http://www.irn.org/programs/lancang/index.php?id=010319.strangling.html>

There is a pause in the conversation. A man on the stage silently curses and looks angrily at the surrounding technicians standing at his feet.

Dalai Lama: It also is obvious that a lot of the drive behind this project is based upon a monetary status. In modern society, every aspect of nature is converted into a commodity. The water in the Mekong is no longer just water, but a source of electricity.

Baxter: Ah... Economy. The monopolistic economy.³⁶ The state uses its economic powers to benefit big industrialists and financiers. The plundering of the earth by the capital.

Dalai Lama: Yes, the earth is certainly affected by the Mekong Dam...

Baxter: What would you suggest to these people to fix their problems?

A pause in the conversation as the Dalai Lama considers the question.

Dalai Lama: I believe that every individual must take responsibility for their actions. We must not put ourselves above nature and we must not place a monetary value upon the environment. In Buddhism there are five precepts that are followed.³⁷ The first precept is the abstention from harming living beings, which is obviously not being followed in this case. The second precept is the abstention from taking what is not given. This includes natural resources. We have a great responsibility to use the resources in as harm-free and useful way as possible. Buddhism has always been strongly connected with nature³⁸, and

³⁶ The opinion that the economic system is essentially one of monopoly control by the owners of big business is one commonly held by anarchists. See Bookchin M. 1974. *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*. Published by Wildwood House, London. Pg57– 82.

³⁷ Wallis N. (2002) *Buddhism and the Environment*. Available at <http://www.fwbo.org/articles/buddhism&environment.html>

³⁸ The connection between Buddhism and nature is shown in the story of Buddha's life, in which significant events occurred in the countryside and are associated with trees. His birth occurred under a sal tree, his early experience of states of meditative absorption was beneath a rose apple tree. His enlightenment occurred beneath the Bodhi-tree, and his *Parinirvana* (death) occurred between twin sal trees. See Wallis N. (2002) *Buddhism and the Environment*. Available at <http://www.fwbo.org/articles/buddhism&environment.html>

known that we must not oversimplify the environment and isolate each problem as it arises, but predict problems and address their cumulative effects. It is essential that in assessing all the benefits and costs of a project that there is no trading off of one group's loss with another's gain.

The Dalai Lama pauses again to reflect on his words.

Dalai Lama: A lot of problems occur due to the anthropocentric nature of humans. Although this must be reduced, it is essentially unavoidable to some extent.³⁹ Anthropocentrism as a movement is at odds with many concepts in Buddhism, including a reverence for life and an understanding of interdependence... But we must find a way to somehow compensate the people affected and reduce the environmental impacts occurring. These impacts can be reduced through careful planning, but once it has happened... I'm not an environmental scientist or any of the like, but the best I can suggest is to attempt to remediate the environment. However, how effective that will be can not be known. It will perhaps be necessary to construct National Biodiversity Conservation Areas⁴⁰ to ensure that such a process is undertaken.

A man approaches the two men. He is a little surprised to see the older honorable man speaking so openly to the younger, man who looks, yes he is soaking wet.

Waiter: Excuse me... Would your Holiness like anything before the conference begins?

Dalai Lama: No thank you. My friend here and I were just talking about potential solutions we have to this problem we are faced with.

Waiter: Problem sir? What problem are you talking about?

³⁹ Anthropocentrism is unavoidable due to the presence of some degree of prudence in humans. See Plumwood V. 2002. *Environmental Culture: The Ecological crisis of reason*. Published by Routledge, London. Pg 127-129.

⁴⁰ In 1993, the government of Laos proposed a system of 17 forest protected areas called National Biodiversity Conservation Areas. See Rothert S. 1995. *Lessons Unlearned, Damming the Mekong River*. International Rivers Network, Working Paper 6. Pg 14.

Dalai Lama: The dam, young man. The social and environmental implications of such a construction, and the further cumulative effects as the scheme is initiated and more and more dams are constructed along the Mekong.

The waiter is taken aback. Was the Dalai Lama here to reveal problems with the dam when all the other officials seemed to be more focused on expanding the project?

Waiter: I do not believe that the rest of the people in this room perceive the project to be a problem. In fact, the symposium is about sustainable development.

Baxter: Not another person to call it sustainable development...

Waiter: Of course its sustainable development. It is producing clean power that will continue providing power for generations to come. Dams have made an important and significant contribution to human development, with considerable benefits.⁴¹ And so all these people here just want to reach their greatest potential with hydropower...

A suited man from across the room waves his arm impatiently at the waiter.

Waiter: Ah, excuse me sir... Are you sure there's nothing I can get for you?

The Dalai Lama glances questioningly at Baxter, who responds with a slight shake of the head.

Dalai Lama: No thank you, we're fine.

Baxter: Well...

Dalai Lama: Don't worry, there is no means to give up. Victory comes in small steps.

⁴¹ International Rivers Network 2002. The World Commission on Dams: A new framework for decision-making. Briefing Paper 1. Available at www.irn.org.

The Dalai Lama smiles as a rather dignified, yet smug⁴², young man approaches the microphone.

Host: Ladies and gentlemen, I apologise for the delay and appreciate your patience. We are now ready to commence tonight's meeting. To introduce the subject matter of tonight, I welcome to the stage...

⁴² In the opinion of the Dalai Lama.

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