

Change no longer an option

Sustainability is only salvation

BY KLAUS DOHRING, THE WINDSOR STAR SEPTEMBER 10, 2012 true

In the 2008 synthesis and assessment report Abrupt Climate Change, from the U.S. Climate Change Science Program to the President and Congress, is the following executive summary:

"There is no clear evidence to date of human-induced global climate change on North American precipitation amounts. However, since the IPCC AR4 report, further analysis of climate model scenarios of future hydroclimatic change over North America and the global subtropics indicates that subtropical aridity is likely to intensify and persist due to future greenhouse warming.

"This projected drying extends poleward into the United States Southwest, potentially increasing the likelihood of severe and persistent drought there in the future. If the model results are correct, then this drying may have already begun, but currently cannot be definitively identified amid the considerable natural variability of hydroclimate in Southwestern North America." The report is found at this link: climatescience.gov/Library/sap/sap3-4/final-report/default.htm#finalreport

Now, in the summer 2012, the present drought conditions in the United States are destroying most crops and affecting very large numbers of people. Within only four years from the date of this report, we are now experiencing some of the predicted effects of climate change. And this is only the beginning. What the scientists so carefully and cautiously worded is now becoming a painful reality for U.S. farmers.

The present amount of CO₂ in the global atmosphere is 394.5 parts per million - 200 years ago, it was 280 ppm.

Currently the CO₂ content in the atmosphere is increasing by about two ppm per year, so we will soon cross the 400 ppm level. Through our human activities, we have already increased the global CO₂ amount in the air by 40 per cent over the last 200 years, and continue to do so further at an accelerating pace. CO₂ is a very climate relevant gas, a greenhouse gas. (More information can be found at www.CO2now.org.)

The arctic summer ice shield is now at its lowest ever in recorded history, and there are still some more weeks of melting left. There are many signs of the beginning impact of climate change around us.

Yet a lot of us continue to be in denial. What, me and my two-tonne pickup truck, causing climate change? My oversized house, my over-air-conditioning, my birthright of a resource and energy intensive lifestyle? Our "rape the land and pillage" way of extracting resources should be bad?

How dare you try to stop me from dumping more garbage into the atmosphere, or the sea, or onto the land. The incumbent oil and gas and coal industry is spending many millions on smoke screens and defunctive semi-science telling people that we can just continue as is, protecting their own self interests first and foremost.

Energy is the biggest industry globally, most of the world's largest companies are oil and gas companies, so they have a very strong self-interest to make you believe we can just go on, everything is fine.

Denial and stubborn continuation of destructive practises is not a smart response when we are cutting away on the very branch on which we are sitting.

How many more signs do we need until we start to accept the reality that we cannot continue with non-sustainable practices? Human-caused cli-mate change is real; it is happening, and we cannot go on as we have been.

It is imperative that we transition as fast as possible away from non-sustainable and destructive resource extraction and consumption, and towards sustainable use of resources, which allow these resources and our ecosystem to renew themselves. We can attain sustainable lifestyles and enjoy a good quality of life with a fraction of the resources we presently consume.

And we can become much more friendly and peaceful societies if we do not need to take mountains of resources from others for our wasteful use. To "send the army if we have to" is not a substitute for a long-term energy and resource policy.

Water and land usage, fossil fuels, radioactive nuclear materials, air quality, energy efficiency, user patterns, all of these things need to be addressed. We are at the beginning of the Third Industrial Revolution, the "sustainability revolution." And we need to start now, and very seriously, as we are rapidly running out of time. The longer we are in denial and continue as is, the more severe the climate change impacts will become, and the more we and all creatures and biosphere around us will suffer.

Individually, as groups and as societies, we need to make this transition. But it starts with me and you. And it has to start now.

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