

# Why We Are Failing to Address Climate Change

2023

Thomas A. Burns PhD.

Klamath Falls, Oregon

Below I offer some of the major reasons why we humans are not addressing the potentially devastating consequences posed by human caused climate change:

- 1) Humans are presentistic.
  - a. Planning for the future is not the default mode of cognition for humans, and climate change requires recognizing the negative, long range, future impacts of emissions.
  - b. Most humans are busy with everyday concerns and do not take the time to really understand the seriousness of this evolving problem.
- 2) There are so many more immediate local, national and global challenges for modern humanity to deal with that climate change gets sidelined.
- 3) Global, economically based special interests strongly support the fossil fuel energy status quo.
  - a. Economy is the major driving force in modern complex societies, and its success requires that high energy availability not be interrupted.
  - b. Commitment to an ever expanding economy is a basic postulate of the global economy, and it requires ever greater energy availability, not energy reduction threatened in the elimination of fossil fuels.
  - c. The present global economy depends heavily on energy supplied by fossil fuels, and the WTO and the fossil fuel industry are powerful global scale entities supporting the continued use of current energy sources.
  - d. The global financial industry strongly supports the extant energy basis of the status quo economy.
  - e. The corporate focus on sustaining positive quarterly financial reports ignores the longer range, negative future consequences that result from climate change.
  - f. Multiple sources of money in politics from a variety of powerful national and global special interests support denial campaigns and suppress attention to, planning for, and implementation of programs to achieve the transition to non-problematic energy sources.
- 4) Internationally, many governments continue to offer new leases for gas and oil exploration and well drilling fearful that their future energy needs will not be met by green energy sources.

- 5) “Development” of underdeveloped societies and achieving an ever escalating standard of living through consumerism have become major expectations of humans in societies worldwide. This situation requires ever greater energy availability and dictates against accepting the loss of any significant energy source.
- 6) The huge volume of increased food production resulting from the green revolution in agriculture has hidden the ecological devastation caused by this production system at the same time it has promoted an unsustainable human population explosion.
  - a. Continuing human population growth requires ever greater energy availability and undermines achieving the goal of reducing the use of fossil fuels.
- 7) Climate change is a global scale challenge, but no strong global level government exists to design, administer and rapidly implement a comprehensive program to address it.
  - a. Cooperation among nations is totally inadequate to meet the task.
- 8) The developed nations whose economies have benefited most from fossil fuel use for the longest period, who have contributed most to the problematic emissions, and who are best positioned to take the lead in addressing climate change are understandably reluctant to take responsibility and bear the significant – but appropriate – costs.
- 9) There are a considerable number of “don’t worry about it” citizens who assume we will come up with technological fixes in sufficient time to resolve the climate change problem. Unfortunately, most of these citizens do not understand the enormous scale of the challenge.
- 10) Some of our religions invite a global catastrophe to fulfill their End of Times prognostications. Unattended climate change can offer fire, heat, and flood to accommodate these religious revelations.

### Conclusion

The grand irony in all of this obfuscation is the fact that fossil fuels are projected to run out anyway by the end of the century. So the continued use of these fuels does not provide an energy solution for humanity in anything but the relatively short term. Whether we do it now or do it later, in order to survive we have to develop an entirely new energy basis to support our complex societies. And here is the real “kicker:” the catastrophic consequences of delay now are very likely to foreclose on the option to address the challenge later.