Climate Change: A Planetary Emergency

The stock markets are sliding, America is shaken by CIA torture practices, and extrajudicial killings by police, NATO continues to threaten Russia, world currencies are reeling under the blows of dropping oil prices and yet, and yet, there is something much worse threatening mankind than all these problems combined; the rapid warming of the planet due to fossil fuel emissions over the past century and a half that has scientists warning of mankind’s extinction, not in the distant future, but within decades or less.

The world’s response to this rapidly developing catastrophe is the 2014 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Lima, Peru, that is taking place, according to the UN’s World Meteorological Organisation, in the warmest year on record and, despite the cool weather in the centre of North America and Russia, with temperatures in the Arctic many degrees Celsius above normal for early December, and with oppressive heat waves hitting one region after another in the southern hemisphere from South America to New Zealand, in what should be cool spring weather.

The website of the conference states that this 20th yearly meeting of the Conference of Parties to the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the 10th session of the Meeting of Parties to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol “will continue the negotiations towards a global climate agreement.” The stated goal of the conference is to reduce greenhouse gases to limit the global temperature to 2 degrees above baseline.

There are two problems with the stated objective. The first is that the EU seeks legally binding 40 per cent cuts in emissions by 2030 while the USA, hamstrung by the right-wing Republicans in Congress, wants only politically binding agreements that are not legally enforceable. The US-China agreement of November 2014 on voluntary cuts in emissions while encouraging are, according to many scientists, far too little and far too late.

The second and more serious problem is that 2 degrees is already a danger to civilization and yet, even the conservative Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) itself is predicting a 4 degree rise in temperatures by the end of the century if not earlier. According to several climate scientists such temperatures will lead to the extinction of human beings in a very short time.

The US science magazine Scientific American stated that the IPCC has understated the rate and intensity of climate change for over two decades. The Arctic Methane Emergency Group (AMEG) composed of leading world climate and arctic ice experts, agrees and insists that the IPCC depends too much on climate models that are increasingly divorced from observable facts.

On December 4th, 2014, AMEG, led by Dr. John Nissen, called a press conference in Lima, and stated that the rapid Arctic ice meltdown is a catastrophic threat to our survival and urged action be taken to refreeze the Arctic failing which there will be a “blue ocean event” meaning that by September 2015 the Arctic Ocean will be open water for the first time and that quickly thereafter catastrophic climate changes will begin to accelerate, including the loss of the Greenland ice sheet resulting in fast rising sea levels and the severe disruption of the jet stream which will cause and is causing abrupt and disastrous climate change in the Northern Hemisphere.

The AMEG group is alarmed by the quickly escalating emissions of methane from the Arctic Ocean seabed, as well as
permafrost and tundra in a feedback loop that could raise temperatures very quickly to levels that make human life on the planet unsustainable. Indeed, they cite the work of Russian scientists Shakova and Semelitov to support their statement that a 50 gigaton burst of methane “is possible at any time” resulting in a temperature rise of 5 to 8 degrees or more in less than a decade which would lead to the extinction of life on earth. Doctors Peter Waddams, John Nissen and Paul Beckwith stated that such a methane release is a “time bomb” that puts us into a planetary emergency and called for immediate measures to be taken to cool the planet, remove CO2 from the atmosphere, and to stop the acidification of the oceans that, in the last ten years, has wiped out 40% of the phytoplankton, the base of the ocean food chain.

Dr. Guy McPherson, of the University of Arizona, another leading climatologist, believes that it is already too late to stop the exponential actions of the at least 40 feedback mechanisms that have already begun to operate causing a rapid rise in temperatures and extreme climate change, mechanisms which he states are now unstoppable no matter what we do. Based on all the data currently available, he and others think that the present trend will lead to conditions in which mankind’s very life resources, food, water and habitable zones will be so degraded in the next 15 years that the human species will be destroyed by 2030 in the northern hemisphere and by 2050 in the southern hemisphere, give or take a decade or so. The AMEG group while agreeing that this is the likely outcome if nothing is done, believes that geo-engineering can be used to cool the planet, one method proposed being the spraying of salt crystals into the atmosphere from 200 ships in the Atlantic Ocean which would have the effect of cooling the Atlantic and the Gulf Stream which is pushing heated water into the Arctic Ocean.

A frustrated Dr. Nissen said, “governments are doing nothing” as we see the effects of abrupt climate change causing crop failures, rising food prices and civil unrest in region after region. He stated that unless something is done to stop a blue ocean event from happening, “all hell will break loose.”

Yet what do we see being done by governments? Nothing. The participants at the UN conference in Peru discuss minor cuts to emissions by countries that may or may not act on their promises and talk of these minor cuts being achieved at a point in time at which scientists are telling us we won’t be here. It’s as bizarre as it can get. All the other world problems pale in comparison with what mankind is facing yet not one world leader has stood up and called for action. It is left to second and third tier officials to waste time in bargaining over carbon tariffs which Dr. Nissen compared to rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic.

AMEG called for the leaders of the major industrial powers, China, Russia, America and the EU to immediately form an international emergency task force, set up on a war footing, to put into effect the measures they propose to cool the planet and encouraged all citizens of the world and non governmental groups to heed the alarm and make the the public aware of the danger we all face and to demand that immediate and effective action be taken or we are all destroyed, not in some distant future, but within the lifetime of this generation.

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