

Anthropogenic Climate Change

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Opening Remarks

The most fundamental goal of social justice is the ability to survive. We can succeed at this only if the Earth is in fact habitable. Ignoring Anthropogenic Climate Change will lead to dire consequences, so I start with a discussion about ACC in the form of a letter to the editor:

A coherent letter to the editor about Anthropogenic Climate Change would not fit into the Mail Tribune's 200 words or fewer constraint.

I decided to see what a series of letters would look like. I am somewhat disappointed that the editor did not agree to my suggestion that each letter should be preceded with a brief reference to the previous letter's date of publication.

For what it is worth, this was an interesting exercise. I will attempt to develop this into a fully functioning set of notes for an OLLI class.

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Stop Wasting Time

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Political and/or economic considerations and opinions, have no place in the discussion of what we **should do** concerning anthropogenic climate change. Those with **primarily** political and/or economic interest in the situation have no legitimate point of view and need to be ignored at this time.

Until we have developed a reasoned plan to deal honestly with the reality of the situation most of the Point / Counterpoint arguments are nothing but sound and fury signifying nothing. We need to stop wasting our time trying to be inclusive, and respectful of dissenting (irrelevant) opinions.

Time Will Tell

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I am, fundamentally, sanguine with respect to anthropogenic climate change. I know there is much we can do to ameliorate (but probably not eliminate) the effects of our excesses. History indicates that we are unlikely to take effective action. We are, after all, encumbered by a two party system wherein, “When I am weaker than you, I ask you for freedom because that is according to your principles; when I am stronger than you, I take away your freedom because that is according to my principles.” accurately capsulizes the republican party’s attitude toward the population as a whole. And, the democratic party seems incapable of developing a coherent progressive agenda.

From a cosmological point of view our inability to minimize our destructive behavior is of no real consequence. Mass die-offs **are a feature** of long-time-constant processes in the world. Our descendants may morph (via evolutionary processes) to become the inheritors of the world (think: descendants of the dinosaurs ... birds) or perhaps to become food for those better adapted to the changing environment. Only time, as they say, will tell.

A new recycling approach

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A Case Study: What might be the outcome of a community internalizing the **underlying reality** that “for profit” really means “the rich get richer and the poor get poorer”?

Perhaps the community would create a free (to local households) recycling program that enhances the city budget wherein “outside cheaters” would unwittingly enrich the system by providing additional desirable raw materials. During the past four years the city of Kearney, Nebraska, has gained about \$875,000 for its “waste”. When “landfill (city owned) avoidance savings” are included the four year benefit is more than \$1.5 million. This direct benefit to the local economy supports: Kearney’s park and recreation department that is second to none, its **Public** Library that has always been locally controlled for the benefit of all, including long haul truckers that stream through the region.

Economical (publicly owned) integrated waste management practices are integral to addressing anthropogenic climate change. While unable to articulate the aforementioned **underlying reality** the citizens of the Big Bend Reach of the Platte River have created an infrastructure more progressive than that of the Bear Creek Valley.

Understanding economics

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Most americans don't seem to understand the nature of our economic system as a social construct. The truth is: Government spending creates money *ex nihilo*, while collecting taxes annihilates money within the system. The details of these creation and annihilation events define the economic system's characteristics and elucidate its society's values. In concrete terms: Taxes levied do not generate revenue that in turn fund government spending. Never have, never will.

The toxic myth of the self-made billionaire combined with the Tax-Spend rhetorical lie have contaminated the discourse to the point that it has become impossible to deal honestly with real economic issues in our effort to create lasting solutions. The most telling symptom of this break with reality is that few seem to understand the true nature, and positive value of a high maximum marginal tax rate.

We must become mature enough to decouple the concept of money from its representation in the form of currency. Or as Piaget should have said: "When I was a child, I thought as a child. But now I have put away childish things. ... I must be scientific.", Philip K. Dick. I love the intrinsic irony of Philip K. Dick referencing Scripture.

We must stop burning carbon

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LNG, coal, and oil threaten to reset Earth's geological clock with a vengeance. Today's natural carbon cycle is not like the carbon sequestering process of the Carboniferous period that ended 300 million years ago.

Huge carbon-rich forests flourished, but microbes that could ingest lignin and cellulose – key wood-eaters – had yet to evolve. As a result, when the trees died nothing would eat them and the carbon remained in situ to form peat and ultimately coal. Anaerobically, under pressure and heat, geological processes transformed coal into oil and natural (more properly labeled methane) gas. In short, trees would die and not decompose, resulting in greenhouse gases being geologically sequestered.

Today trees die and bacteria breaks carbon bonds releasing carbon and oxygen into the air whether the trees rot on the ground or are burned in a stove. Burning fossil fuels accentuates this process threatening to trigger a Permian to Triassic like transition. The oceans absorb carbon compounds increasing acidification which threaten to exacerbate this climate change process.

We need to stop burning coal, oil, and methane that release geologically sequestered greenhouse gases. We will not do well in the resilient hot-house conditions we are hell-bent on creating.