

Running out of Time

For some of you, 2100 is within sight. My generation will be regarded as criminally culpable for the destruction of our little Earth; the generation of my grandchildren and their children almost certainly will pay the price.

Those still alive and suffering then will surely regard today's leaders — and those who helped to create the slide into doom or did nothing about it — as war criminals, that is, as having made war on our environment and on most of humanity, animals and insects upon whom our lives depend, and on the plants that feed us and sustain our climate. In comparison to what we have done, the crimes of the Nazis pale into insignificance. Or nearly so.

So what are we doing to avert this awful crime?

We talk and talk but really mostly just sleepwalk like lemmings toward catastrophe.

It may already be too late, even if we could stop now, and no one seems to know how we can stop. To stop, we would have to change many things. One that seems to me evident is that nations must stop trying to grow richer every year: the increase in GNP (our "Gross National Product") has to be stopped. In the end, an increase in our yearly output and consumption means getting rich by cashing in our worldly assets, cutting down forests, digging up minerals, burning fuel, etc.

But to stop or at least drastically cut down on the increase of worldly goods that we think brings us happiness or at least well-being would require abstinence on a scale that few of us would accept. Even if we, the "now lucky," were prepared to say we have enough, the world's poor can hardly be expected to agree. To control their push toward some portion of what we now have would either require a major reallocation of the world's wealth so as not to keep them in perpetual poverty and so endanger the peace and security we aim for and/or the adoption of totalitarian regimes that could keep them suppressed.

I find that few "thinkers" — or more accurately "worriers" — now even consider the stark choices we are rapidly moving toward. Most, like our current leadership, would

rather not add up the facts. The leaders have let us down. But to be honest, we have let ourselves down. Most of us take comfort in the belief that the abyss into which we can fall is either far away or does not exist.

How is this possible? Are we truly *homo sapiens* or a least sensate creatures? Or are we lemmings? Unlike lemmings, we do have a few informed guides, even a few leaders, but as usual the real fault lies with us, the followers. We mostly follow blindly like lemmings. We see only the things we want to see, those that give us immediate satisfactions, and scorn those who try to look further down the road we have taken.

My generation either failed or caused most of the problem; the next generation or perhaps even the next two generations may have a chance to correct our mistakes, but they don't have much time

May 19, 2019