

Introduction Written by Frances Palmer

THE CROSS OF THE MOMENT www.crossofthemoment.com/ 80 minutes

This deeply thought-provoking online documentary on climate change interviews top American scientists, intellectuals and others to discuss the dilemmas of climate change, and whether we can change to meet the challenge.

“Rare Earth factors enabled our planet to develop complex forms of life after 3.5 billion years... Complexity has a narrow environmental window of opportunity that allows it to survive. It requires a stable environment to continue.”

“If the earth is rare, why are we trashing it?”

“The atmosphere can no longer be used like an open sewer.”

“More people can imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.”

“With carbon dioxide we had our hand on the thermometer. With methane we don’t.”

“The impact of our individual actions is negligible. What counts is our actions as citizens to change how structures operate.”

Participants –

- Robin Hansen – associate professor of economics
- Don Brownless – astronomer
- Peter Ward – professor - geology , Australia
- Josh Willis – researcher on global warming and oceanic change due to climate change
- Bill Patzert – climatologist at NASA for four decades
- Guy McPherson - climatologist
- David Klein - director of climate science project
- Derrick Jensen
- Mark Jacobsen
- Jill Stein – Green candidate for US President

[FP - notes Betsan only]. The moon and tides help stabilise earth’s orbit. Planet tectonics are important. Concentric layers give earth a magnetic field. A billion years ago, multicellular organisms like kelp formed. Microbes resist extinction. Mass extinctions are followed by 5 million dead years.

If the earth is rare, why are we trashing it? Civilisation as we know it is unsustainable. The earth cannot even afford *America* to live like America, let alone other countries follow suit. At 3 degrees the Amazon forest turns to desert. Europe becomes like the Sahara. Cities are obliterated.

Oceans are now 30% more acidic than 40 years ago. California’s economy is larger than Russia’s, but is under threat from drought. The Californian population quadrupled since the 1950s. Economic damage from climate change equals WW1, WW2 plus great depression combined. Twenty million people from America’s south can’t all be moved north, as the south dries out.

Runaway climate change (as in the Arctic) means humans are no longer driving it – we’ve lost control. With CO2 we had our hand on the thermometer. With methane we don’t. Temperature will rise too

rapidly and too high. Population x affluence is the problem. Fossil fuels were 'nature's gift' to enable rapid development, progress away from hardship but it's dangerous to become so tech dependent on them that they won't be given up when they threaten to destroy us. To stay under 2 D requires leaving 80% in the ground – trillions worth. Locally generated alternatives – solar, wind and water – are adequate, but not as lucrative for energy companies. Price of a solar panel has dropped 95%.

The impact of our individual actions is negligible. What counts, is our actions as citizens to change how structures operate – to mandate government to initiate a carbon tax leading to a fossil freeze. Capital investment required to build devices - \$15 trillion in US over time. McKibben reminds us that a North to South transfer of finance and RE technology is necessary.

Market fundamentalism: human dependence was once on rivers and land, but now rests on man-made market forces manipulated by the rich, whose lobbyists run government. They create policies which require governments to buy their deregulated services. More people can imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. Bribery is involved when large donations buy Congress, whose decisions clearly reflect who paid for them to be there. Disinformation on climate is rife in US.

When we switch off FFs, we upset the balance of power. Electoral policies are not a way out as both parties serve the same masters. CC pits physics against humans who refuse to accept environmental limits. Boldly go where no one went before is US version of Freedom, entitlement – the psyche of accumulation. There is five times as much carbon underground than can be used without huge risk. It's worth \$20 trillion, but the atmosphere can no longer be used like an open sewer. Voracious appetites love stuff (150 million tons of junk mail daily); 20% of global warming is due to deforestation.

Green capitalism failed. Global ems are rising. In the last 30 years, environmentalism shifted from protecting species to modern concept of 'sustainability', and to a culture that is killing the planet.

Achieving zero emissions requires more than renewable energy. Only 25% of emissions come from electricity. The rest is mainly from industry and farming. We should shut down unnecessary manufacturing such as paper packaging - one of the world's largest industries. Survival is a moral imperative. [but no mention of reducing military industry].

Socialism produces for need. Capitalism rewards the worst aspects of human nature – greed, aggressive destructive wars to obtain what belongs to others for our own profit. '*I can only win if you lose*' viewpoint is not inevitable. The best scenario for *non-humans* is a complete collapse of industry as soon as possible. The best scenario for *humans* is reduction of population by 90% over two centuries by falling birth rates. But current culture is likely to continue until nothing is left.

The cross of the moment – key social/environmental problems - are not severe yet for most of us, which allows us to ignore them. At a subsistence level of living, most people are too busy surviving in sinking economies to think about it. Climate change is hard to oppose due to vested interests in fossil fuels. But all issues are intensified by climate issues. Things could change fast.

We need ideas on the table for the aftermath. And we need to use vestiges of democracy to implement them. Greens, libertarians and the left put people, planet, and peace before profit. But big money influences political discourse. Large donations dictate how congress votes.

Confrontation is required. Revolutions instigated change in the past. Post global humanism could present a variety of options for the good life.