

Headline: Time to read the handwriting on the wall

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National Geographic Channel's "Years of Living Dangerously" is a must-see TV documentary, especially in this dark period of pollution, carbon and global warming.

The danger has in fact escalated, even as some people, scientists included, remain in denial and prefer to look the other way in the futile hope that the problem will go away.

The documentary begins with the hopeful observation that a majority of Americans support moves to develop "the renewables" (wind and solar energy). On the other hand, opponents cynically point out that they are still more expensive to produce.

They advocate using the "fracking" technique to produce natural gas, which produces only half the pollution attributed to coal.

Looking more closely into the issue, however, the documentary reveals severely increased methane levels around natural gas wells.

Also worrisome are efforts to repeal already existing antipollution laws, with the covert campaign being funded by companies that produce oil and gas-derived energy. They have occasionally succeeded in rolling back standard limits for emissions.

Conveniently forgotten is the fact that methane leaked into the atmosphere can be even more dangerous than pollution from gasoline- and coal-generated power.

Also being downplayed is the fact that the cost of producing solar, wind and other kinds of renewables is not just going down, but plummeting. For instance, in the US Midwest, the cost of solar and wind energy, only in four years (2008-2012), has fallen by 50 percent!

To counter this development, the naysayers claim that it isn't true that 95 percent of the world's scientists believe that global warming is a serious problem.

In fact, they point out, as many as 30,000 scientists signed a statement upholding that "less hysterical" position! Is that true?

The documentary dug deeper and found out that quite a number of the signatures of the so-called opposing scientists were faked. So, there the debate hangs, with claims and counterclaims on both sides being hurled and contradicted. What is the poor nonscientist to believe?

Another observer mordantly feels that the time is long past for such "debates." Just act on your own observations, he urges:

Here in our part of the world, typhoons have regularly increased in intensity and ability to kill and demolish. Pollution levels keep going up and so do temperature readings. Elsewhere, icebergs are melting. People and animals are getting sick and dying from all sorts of new challenges. Fatal lung

diseases are drastically on the rise.

These continuing outcomes have been established by scientific data to be the results of man-created and -instigated factors.

The scientists can argue as long and as loudly as they want, but do we and our leaders have to wait until they're blue in the face and expire from lack of oxygen and old age before we individually and collectively act?

Aside from individual action, we should also try to convince our relatives and friends to reduce their own carbon footprints. To start with, now that the cost of solar panels has drastically gone down, it's become more affordable for families or small neighborhoods to generate at least part of the energy they consume.

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The last time we traveled through Turkey, some towns' rooftops were individually "crowned" with solar panels. Why can't we do the same?