

The Global Rebellion is Underway



Extinction Rebellion: London, October 10, 2019

Alan Betts

At the end of September, seven million people, mostly youth around the world, joined with Greta Thunberg in a global climate strike to protest the fact that our industrial societies intend to sacrifice our children to protect the present economic system, and especially the profits of the fossil fuel industry.

Pause and listen to the clarity of her speech to the UN (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2019/09/23/greta-thunberg-vows-that-if-UN-doesnt-tackle-climate-change-we-will-never-forgive-you/>). If a 16-year-old can understand so clearly our destruction of the Earth's stable climate and living biosphere, one might wonder whether our leaders are just stupid. Of course, we know why. In the past 30 years as the climate crisis has accelerated and our understanding has deepened, many of our leaders have tried to hide from the truth in a web of lies to avoid acknowledging their greed, corruption or political self-dealing.

Entire websites have been created with phony climate science to feed their ideologies of denial and try to pacify their conscience. Even though at a deeper level, most of them know that destroying the Earth's ecosystem to make money is a crime against our children and the Earth itself.

The first step is to realize this is an existential crisis, a real planetary emergency for humanity and much of life on Earth. No amount of ideology and denial can protect us from warming oceans, more powerful storms and extreme weather, and the loss of so many species that we and all life depend on. We have idolized economic growth and the freedom to exploit the Earth and the poor, but the Earth is not listening to our self-righteous doctrines that maximize profit and protect the wealthy. Our planet is simply getting warmer as increasing greenhouse gasses slow the cooling to space; while at the same time, ice and snow melt so that less sunlight is reflected.

As I write in mid-October, the first global phase of the Extinction Rebellion to save the Earth (Rebellion.earth) has just finished. Their motto is **Compassion; awareness; courage**. This remarkable group formed in the UK over the past winter and has spread rapidly around the globe. They understand deeply that climate change, and the extinction of so many species in the living biosphere, is now a civil rights issue for our children and for the Earth itself: it is the crime of ecocide. Like previous civil rights issues, it will take non-violent civil disobedience to wake the conscience of reluctant societies and selfish people.

Time is running out as scientists have been shocked by how much climate change has accelerated in the past ten years. These Rebels are pushing for rapid reduction of our greenhouse gas emissions; asking for a serious attempt to zero our global carbon budget by 2025. Since our global carbon budget is still increasing despite 25 years of promises, this is unthinkable to our economic system. Actually a 50% reduction by 2025 would be a staggering achievement and set us on the right track.

For nine days in cities around the globe, this powerful, non-violent rebellion challenged the ecocidal reality of our global market economy that refuses to place value on the future of the Earth. This movement is peaceful and loving, creative and artistic, but relentless and disruptive, since without pressure, governments will refuse to make the radical policy changes needed.

In London, Paris, Berlin, Brussels and Dublin; Rome, Amsterdam, Madrid, Prague and Istanbul; Cape Town, Buenos Aires, Rio and Santiago; Mexico City, New York, Montreal and Vancouver; Melbourne, Perth, Mumbai, Colombo and Jakarta, the Rebels are putting down roots for the long struggle ahead to save the Earth. Some countries treated them with compassion and understanding, while others reacted with anger and violence. Many have been arrested, but their dance and music will continue across the Earth as they regroup and regenerate for the next phase. They understand clearly what most refuse to understand: that business as usual is driving accelerating climate change with catastrophic consequences for all life on Earth within the lifetime of our children and grandchildren.

Because they see this clearly, they have resolved to resist for the sake of life on Earth. Generations to come will be grateful to them. I hope readers will stop and reflect deeply on their values and act to support this courageous movement.

Dr. Alan Betts of Atmospheric Research in Pittsford, VT is a climate scientist. Browse alanbetts.com.