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The Climate Endgame is Coming

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Since the industrial revolution, the rich nations have exploited the Earth's resources and its people. But the end-game is coming. For the past 25 years, as the climate crisis has deepened, we have opted to sacrifice our children's lives and the future of the Earth for short-term profit, rather than implement obvious solutions. The argument is that the free market has enriched us all, and especially the rich and powerful. Any restraints or regulations or fossil carbon taxes might limit profits and our material growth. This doctrine has brought a climate catastrophe to our children's doorstep, and much of life on Earth will be affected. The most recent IPCC report is very blunt and very thorough, saying we have just 12 years to drastically reduce fossil fuel emissions. Many things are coming into focus that are not being discussed.

The global market needs guidelines: so that it is not allowed to exploit the future of the earth and humanity. We have to place value on the future, and assess the real costs of burning all the fossil fuels. Science needs guidelines and management. We invent things and if someone can market them profitably, we simply accept the consequences, even if they prove disastrous for society. The rationalization again is that freedom to profit and exploit is a right.

One hidden challenge for the US is that the concept of community responsibility got lost in the fear of communism. The communist political model collapsed as it led to centralized corruption; and now the capitalist free market model has also led to centralized corruption. New political models are needed that respect the future of the Earth. Damage to the future must be priced in as a cost, and this means real community discussion now. This will be difficult as the costs are rapidly growing. Nonetheless, every trillion we invest now in the transformation to an efficient society powered by renewable energy, will save our children about sixty trillion dollars later this century. If we stand by and watch, the present corrupt system will continue, in which the powerful can buy politicians to protect their profits with no thought for the future.

Scientists know that complex systems can go unstable if there are no restraining feedbacks. Now the climate system is moving towards instability. As the Arctic melts, methane is released from the permafrost. The jet stream patterns and mid-latitude weather are changing, as the Arctic warms faster than the tropics. As more and more heat is stored in the oceans, tropical storms become more powerful and dangerous. You will have heard about hurricanes Florence and Michael that struck N. Carolina, Florida and Georgia. You may have heard about the tropical storms that hit Hawaii this year; but you may not have heard about the most powerful storm of the year: super-typhoon Yutu that devastated the US Northern Mariana Islands in the western Pacific.

In Washington, the central government is simply ignoring reality, and even suggesting at times that climate change is a hoax. Recently, the president blamed California's tragic fires on forest management,

unaware that in the western US, July to September were very dry with a new high temperature record. This set the stage for devastating fires.

Back in 2012, North Carolina legislators passed an astonishing bill that barred policymakers and developers from using up-to-date climate science to plan for rising sea levels on the state's coast, because updated flood zones would restrict development and reduce property values. The climate system paid no attention. The storm surge and 25 inches of rain from hurricane Florence simply drowned the stupidity of the North Carolina legislators, causing immense damage. But will rebuilding in flood zones still be permitted?

I suggest we step away into the Indigenous people's world view. All of humanity and life on Earth and the climate system have deep interconnections, which must be understood and respected. Anything else is human folly.