

Watt's Happening? #163

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Climate inaction: Why?

“The first rule of holes is stop digging.”

*Bill McKibben, climate leader, author of
“The End of Nature”*

OK, so we just saw the largest environmental event in history, the global climate strike, with millions of people, young and old, taking to the streets demanding real action on climate change.

So where is the action? It's not like we all have to stop driving, stop flying and stop eating red meat tomorrow. The changes required have to happen fast, sure, but they are really not that draconian and come with many, many benefits.

Put a price on pollution, invest that money in clean energy infrastructure, transition to distributed renewables like solar, wind and geothermal, move to electric transportation, sequester carbon in agricultural soils, plant billions of trees, bla, bla, bla.

We can do this. It will make a great number of good jobs. It will encourage creativity and create amazing business opportunities. It will be a cleaner, healthier world to live in. It will give our youth hope, purpose and a bright future. So what's the hold up?

INFORMATION BIAS

By reading this article, you may well be indulging in information bias. You are convinced that climate change is real; you are worried about it and want



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more information about the problem and how to solve it. You dislike climate deniers and avoid their toxic arguments.

That's information bias: picking and choosing what you want to hear, selecting information that supports your personal world view and the ideas shared by your peer group while

ignoring the rest.

I do it. You do it. We all do it. Blame the Internet.

Ah, the good old days of newspapers, radios and real conversation. Back then we were often exposed to ideas and information that were foreign to us, unexpected and perhaps unsettling and controversial, but there and hard to avoid.

Now, with infinite control over infinite information thanks to the Internet link we carry in our pockets, we can pick and choose exactly what we want to hear exactly when we want to hear it, and avoid all the rest. That's information bias.

The net result is acute polarization of opinion, hyper entrenched viewpoints, an us-against-them mentality, miss information, fake news and general confusion.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

With unlimited information at our fingertips, it's easy to begin to think we are really smart when actually we are not. Watching a few U-tube videos on "why climate change is a big hoax" does not make you smarter and more informed than the thousands of climatologists who are raising the climate alarm.

With infinite information, you also have direct access to infinite misinformation, and limitless material to support any idea, no matter how silly. I know reasonably intelligent people who are quite convinced that NASA never went to the moon, that the climate issue is a scientific conspiracy to take over the world, and that wind

and solar energy are just silly because actually the government is suppressing public access to infinite "zero point energy."

Conspiracy theories provide the perfect opportunity for complete inaction. If everything and everybody is controlled by secret, hidden powers, then I am and everyone around me are powerless. We are helpless victims at the mercy of immense secret influences beyond our control, and therefore we are completely off the hook for taking action or personal responsibility.

It's hopeless, so what's the point? Handy.

A WORLD WITHOUT LIMITS

There is a fundamental myth running deep within the identities of most nations today, the myth that nature's bounty is without limits and abusing it comes with no consequence.

With the "discovery" of the seemingly limitless "new world" of North America, for instance, the forests, the lands, the wildlife were seen as infinite

and inexhaustible, especially when compared to the dwindling resources of Europe.

When the settled portion of this new world became crowded or depleted, no problem. Just move west, treating the humans who had lived there for thousands of years just like we treated the land, the forests, rivers and animals: unlimited assets to be used, abused, pushed aside and destroyed without consequence and without end.

Limitless, perpetual growth. Nice idea, but deadly wrong. We HAVE found the end, and it is here. It is now.

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