

## An energy industry insider's view on climate change

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I have mixed reactions when I'm confronted by the daily headlines evoking images of global famine, flood and drought caused by man's emissions of greenhouse gases. As a geologist, I know that the planet has been through numerous cycles of climatic variations over the last several billion years and I know that change is part of the natural geological cycle. I also work in an industry that finds and delivers the hydrocarbons we all use as fuel for our cars, in making plastics, in electricity generation and I do (did) feel some pride in the utility of my chosen profession.

However I am increasingly aware - aside from the clear fact that ultimately we will run out of fossil fuels and will need to find an alternative - that we are having an impact on our climate at what looks like an unprecedented rate that will have global, humanitarian, conservation and probably security-related impacts. We simply cannot ignore, as many in my industry seem to want to, what the vast majority (>95%) of the most qualified scientists are telling us - that we are changing the planet more rapidly than it has changed for millennia and unless we do something about our voracious appetite for energy we will displace millions of people, render large areas of our continents desert, kill coral reefs, submerge island nations and probably lose, disrupt or displace countless species of creature and most tellingly of all for me as a father of 2 beautiful boys, leave a disgraceful legacy for future generations to deal with.

I believe there are solutions out there but they need strong leadership starting with developed nations (many here in the US seem to think that they should wait until China does something before they change just in case it's risky). Quick effective action is needed on controlling direct emissions, increasing energy efficiency

(e.g. here in Houston there is surprisingly little double glazing in a city that has huge air conditioning-related energy consumption and I've seen several huge new housing developments with nary a solar panel in sight), developing reliable alternatives to burning hydrocarbons, even if it turns out to be nuclear in large part, and ultimately moving away from the simplistic economic growth agenda to a more sustainable long-term future vision, valuing our natural environment and the creatures that share it more than the material world and the 'more stuff = success' based assessment of standard of living.

I'm dismayed to report that the oil and gas industry is not leading the way here (despite some claims to the contrary) - the investment some of the 'greener' oil and gas companies make in alternative energy is miniscule compared to their core businesses. It will require strict government regulation and strong economic incentives to change this - strictly enforced emissions caps and big money granted to develop alternatives would be a start accompanied by major cultural education programmes that will convince people that driving a 6 litre V8 and owning a 3 metre wide TV is not a god-given right. America has a long way to go on this but it can evolve quickly if pushed in the right direction (look at what the arms race did for technology - from bi-planes to the moon in barely 40 years) and it is down to the politicians and you and I to start the process - let's not leave a turbulent wasteland for our children's children to deal with ... I for one am seriously considering a move away from the industry I've spent 20 years working in so I can look my kids in the eye and tell them I did something more significant in the face of this global threat than turn a few lights off and recycle.