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The Opinion Pages

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LETTERS

Dire Predictions About Climate Change

To the Editor:

In "Game Over for the Climate" (Op-Ed,¹ May 9), James Hansen repeats his urgent warnings that burning Canada's tar sands oil would cause irreversible climate catastrophe. When he says of the risks we face, "if this sounds apocalyptic, it is," he underscores the challenge of awakening those who don't comprehend the sheer magnitude of what is at stake.

The sky may not literally be falling, but unless we find the will to stop extracting oil from dirty tar sands and shift to a clean energy economy instead, the atmosphere will keep changing in ways that will radically disrupt life on this planet.

DAVID A. SCOTT
Vice President, Board of Directors
Sierra Club
Columbus, Ohio, May 10, 2012

To the Editor:

James Hansen is at it again, flogging the dead horse of man-made climate change as a reason to keep Canada's tar sands petroleum locked up forever. For the past 30 years, Dr Hansen has issued ever more dire predictions of catastrophic climate change, while actual conditions have not borne out his doomsday forecasts. If anything, as the climate stubbornly fails to conform to Dr Hansen's predictions, he becomes even more extreme in his outlook.

Dr Hansen made a name for himself in the 1980s by warning that computer models predicted that increasing carbon dioxide levels would result in major global warming. In fact, since 1998, after a decade of temperature rise, average global temperatures have been stable or actually declined, according to several analyses. This unpredicted trend underscores the shortcomings of computer models.

Scientists with political agendas like Dr Hansen use apocalyptic predictions to justify increased government regulation, higher taxes and redistribution of wealth. His latest polemic is no different and would result in major economic impacts on Canadian and American citizens, more government bureaucrats to restrict and regulate fossil fuel production, and reduced living standards.

ERIK AXELSON
Bellingham, Wash.,
May 10, 2012

To the Editor:

Here's hoping that James Hansen's impassioned and well-informed plea to turn back from our destructive use of fossil fuels will not continue to fall on deaf ears in Washington. Skeptics might call him an alarmist, but if anyone is in a position to know the severity of the climate crisis, it is Dr Hansen. All of his findings and predictions, dating to the early 1980s,

have turned out to be disturbingly accurate.

Dr Hansen's proposed solution — a rising fee on carbon, with revenue returned to the public — is one that ought to be embraceable. But coal and oil interests have helped finance the activities of climate change denialists, making it difficult for politicians to support solutions without risking ouster² from office.

It is up to us as citizens to create a more hospitable climate

for our public officials to take action, or else our children will be left with a climate that is inhospitable.

MARK REYNOLDS
Executive Director
Citizens Climate Lobby
Coronado, Calif., May 10, 2012

To the Editor:

I have no idea whether humans are contributing substantially to global warming, and I agree with those who say we should plan "as if" because not to take

steps could be catastrophic if writers like James Hansen prove to be correct. But consider one of his claims: "Every major national science academy in the world has reported that global warming is real."

Here's a news flash: European scientists in the 15th century agreed that the earth was the center of the universe. That didn't make it true.

GEORGE THOMAS
Warren, N.J., May 10, 2012

New York Times, 'Dire Predictions About Climate Change'
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¹ Op-Ed: term coined from "opposite the editorial page," a place in a newspaper dedicated to commentary and opinion articles, such as James Hansen's article, "Game Over for the Climate"

² ouster: dismissal
