

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE REINDER OF St. MATTHEW ISLAND: A FABLE

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Greetings Michele and members of the Board,

My name is John Drew and I'm a Forester and PhD biologist and scientist living on Cortes Island. I have a couple of things to say about Director Anderson's recent presentation to the SRD Board, January 15, 2020. (<https://srd.ca/about/agendas-minutes/>)

While the Minutes of this presentation are scarce on narrative and large on provocative headlines and colourful graphics, it is difficult to miss the message: a Greta Thunberg (the Swedish 17 year old student activist who looks and sounds 13) like call that the Earth is in trouble. As a scientist who has reviewed the subject, I can say unequivocally that the Earth is not in trouble; likely to survive another 13 million years if the late Stephen Jay Gould is correct. Yes, there are issues and that World climate is changing is nothing new; just a reflection of a reality that it has always changed: *sometimes fast* with the quakes from tectonic plates, volcanic eruptions; hurricane winds, huge waves and solar collisions; and, *always slowly* changing in response to solar eruptions and Earth's eccentricity, obliquity, inclination & axis tilt and most of all water vapour.

Sea levels are rising. Judith Curry, a World authority on the subject, says its rising 3 millimeters a year; 3 centimeters every decade or 30 centimeters every century. Judith suggests this is well within our tolerance to adapt. Carbon dioxide levels are going up. William Happer of Princeton, and a World authority, says basically "Hurrah!"; the current level of 420 parts per million(ppm) is not that much higher than the 150 ppm required to sustain life on Earth; way lower than the 4,200 ppm that existed in the Carboniferous, when the Earth was a greenhouse, into which we humans evolved. I worry that if we make issues of these non-issues ("non" because man doesn't have the levers to effect change), we run the risk of not paying attention to the things we can do. For example, when the Juan de Fuca plate lets go, which is expected any time now

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=belQwGNolY&t=29s>) and coastal Washington moves 25 feet West; Seattle 6 feet; Ellensburg 3 feet and Campbell River as well (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJ7Qc3bsxjl&t=2608s>), will we have a plan and be ready to mobilize and minimize the dangers and deaths? Will we protect ourselves from fire in our neighbouring forests with fire management plans and programs? These are our "biggies" as I see it. The bottom line is that while man can pollute his environment (by not taking care of his waste), she doesn't affect climate for the physics are much bigger than us. Never-the-less it's not helpful to inflate the problem or lie about the numbers for any reason.

The conclusions in Director Anderson's presentation are wrong because her facts are inflated and her interpretations, ideologically based. Director Anderson is not a scientist. The graphics given her, modelling sea level change in our area and suggestions of a decimated forest on Vancouver Island are just plain wrong. I'm Australian Canadian and can attest that the recent bushfires in Oz are not about abnormal climate but are a product primarily of two things: forest fuel management programs curtailed by the political pressure of non-thinking "greenies" who don't like scheduled smoke; and, population increases shoving more people out into the forest with many ignoring the simple "safeties" of fuel management. Also, the St. Matthew Island's reindeer herd's spectacular decline is identified as primarily a "drastic overshoot of carrying capacity" and only retrospectively got into the climate debate.

<https://www.resilience.org/stories/2003-11-22/st-matthew-island-overshoot-collapse/>.

We have a serious seismic problem that overshadows anything Director Anderson talks about, even if what she said were true.

The North American North-West is not the most seismically active part of the globe; but, it may be the most seismically fragile for we sit on a bomb; frozen tectonic plates that go-off every 300 years or so with Richter Scale 9 quakes (9 is defined' "as at or near total destruction". The day-to-day fragility of Japan and New Zealand may actually help them because social coping strategies become much more necessary. Japan has ancient guidance to help citizens deal with their intransigence and fragility. **Karma**

(surrender, and don't stupidly worry about 'what is'); **and "patience"** (to hold back the inclination to fold under to the seven emotions of hate, adoration, joy, anxiety, anger, grief and fear) **leads to Wa** (harmony and tranquility). New Zealand has spawned its own unique view, as reflected in the work of noted Kiwi author, Anthony McCarten, seen here talking about laughter (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2qM1I-JCEQ&t=13s>). McCarten's view is that if you "...loose the power to laugh, (you) loose the power to think" and "... seriousness is not the correct response to the absurdities of life." "Existential tension is relieved by laughter not seriousness." In the North-West, we spend centuries enjoying the great visuals of our many active, generally dormant, close-in volcanoes and then every fourth or fifth generations there's this Force 9 quake to be survived by the generation on-deck. Good odds you say; yes, except that it seems like it's our turn to weather the event. This is much more than the silly stuff of gamers out to create economic advantage from carbon credits and the like. **Could we have a wisdom story** to help us subvert the rush to fear? I think our intelligence, resilience and honour is about to be tested.

The Danish economist Bjorn Lomborg has spent the last decade speaking effectively on the topic of public policy priorities (PPPs). Dr. Lomborg suggests it is more helpful to prioritize solutions and not problems and to do that effectively we need to know costs and effectiveness. When Bjorn and his colleagues included climate change (really the act of working hard to keep the climate that we have), it ranked last as a PPP; because in reality little is achieved at a very high cost. In a similar vein, the top four PPPs were about public health --- malaria, malnutrition and HIV Aids --- each having an enormous impact from the money spent; the third priority had to do with Free Trade. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dtbn9zBfJSs>)

I was still a bit worried about the reindeers until I heard my old dad call (water lapping at the back gate and the side fence on fire), "*Is that reindeer on the BBQ? Good he said; my Christmas gifts are wrapped and in the car.*" Don't worry, reindeer wasn't on the BBQ and nor was water lapping at the back gate or was the side fence on fire. It was all just part of a fantasy narrative.