

It's the End of the World as We Know It

by Doug Craig

Chances are, Michael Stipe was not thinking of global warming when he wrote *It's the End of the World as We Know It* for REM's 1987 Document album. But one could not find a more apt or succinct description of what climate change is going to mean to every living thing on the planet in the years to come. Days and nights are hotter than ever, glaciers are melting across the planet and most are expected to disappear within the next two decades. Arctic ice is shrinking, sea levels are rising, island and coastal communities are at increasing risk and animal and plant extinctions are accelerating faster than ever seen before.

Everyday provides more evidence of a future earth dramatically different from the comfortable, constant climate our species has known for 10,000 years. It is the end of the world as we know it, but do we care?

Eight years before Stipe wrote his song with the scary title, Dr. James Lovelock rocked the scientific community with the publication in 1979 of the environmental classic *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*. Lovelock's *Gaia Theory* transformed the way we see ourselves and our home, as it argued that the earth and her inhabitants are essentially a single super-organism whose evolution is a "tightly-coupled process from which the self-regulation of the environment emerges." Considered by many to be a genius and visionary, Lovelock invented the

electron capture detector used to measure CFC's in the atmosphere, is the author of more than 200 scientific papers and nine books, and continues to play a critical role in warning us about the danger of ignoring our essential unity with our environment.

While many of Lovelock's predictions have come true and his theory remains a subject of debate, study and revelation, he has at the age of 87 just published his most startling and sobering book yet, *The Revenge of Gaia: Earth's Climate Crisis and the Fate of Humanity*. Lovelock explains that with the advent of the industrial revolution our production of greenhouse gas emissions inadvertently allowed mankind to become a force of nature, profoundly crippling Gaia's ability to maintain her ecological balance necessary for the continuance of life as it has existed for millions of years. Gaia is deathly ill. She is running a severe fever and it will get much worse in the decades to come if we do not immediately behave like physicians intent on healing instead of the negligent, psychopathic parasites we have become in the last century.

Lovelock writes, "We have grown in number to the point where our presence is perceptibly disabling the planet like a disease." He explains that just like human diseases, there are only four possible outcomes. We can continue to keep the earth in a state of "chronic infection" in which all of life continues to suffer. A second possibility is that the host's defense mechanisms will destroy the invading organisms leading to the extinction of the human race. The third and most horrific possibility is that the disease of global warming could be-

come so severe that it kills the host and leaves our precious earth in the same status as her solar system neighbors, a lifeless desert planet, too hot and toxic to sustain life ever again. The fourth and best possibility (though unlikely) would be symbiosis where we, the invaders, learn to live in harmony with our host in "a lasting relationship of mutual benefit."

Why is this not likely? Ross Gelbspan, the author of *The Heat Is On* and *The Boiling Point* points to the fossil fuel industry as the chief culprit due to its ability to direct the U.S. government's energy and climate policies. While virtually every climate scientist in the world who publishes in peer-reviewed scientific journals agrees that our burning of fossil fuels is the primary cause of climate change, the Bush Administration has been extremely effective at ensuring that this truth is ignored as the oil companies' profit requirements supersede the earth's life requirements.

Gelbspan writes, "With its persistent denial of the climate crisis, the Bush administration has isolated the United States from its closest allies and staked out a position that conflicts directly with the findings of more than 2000 scientists from 100 countries in what is the largest and most rigorously peer-reviewed scientific collaboration in history." Gelbspan continues, "Today the White House has become the East Coast branch office of Exxon Mobil and Peabody Coal and climate change has become the preeminent case study of the contamination of our political system by money."

cont. on page 14



Helio Electric, Inc.

is proud to announce that President Baran Galocy is now an NABCEP Certified Solar PV Installer™, and member of CAL-SEIA. Certification is your guarantee of knowledge, experience, and professionalism. With over 50 installations throughout Shasta County, Helio Electric, Inc. can design and install grid-tied and off-grid systems

of any capacity. Renewable Energy is the most gentle means of assuring Homeland Security.

(530) 243-3852 helioelectric@charter.net

License #617019 Class: C-10
General Journeyman Electrician