

# The Register-Guard

## New tactics needed to avert catastrophe

### Opinion

By Bob Doppelt

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The new report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change clarifies that the long-dominant approach of tweaking business-as-usual has failed to prevent dangerous climate change. A new strategy is needed, focused on altering the economic and political power structures that block change.

After decades of warnings, the IPCC says that to keep global average temperatures from rising more than 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit above pre-industrial levels, which will be devastating for society, carbon emissions must be slashed by 45 percent within just 12 years, and essentially be eliminated by 2050.

At present these deadlines seem unattainable. But with deep-seated changes, they can be met. For sure, the Trump administration is making things harder by gutting federal emission reduction policies — sins future generations will undoubtedly see as crimes against humanity. But Trump will eventually be gone, and it is important to begin now to determine what is needed to limit temperatures to manageable levels.

The most important action will be to alter today's corporate- and Wall Street-controlled economic and political systems. The elites that benefit from them cannot reform themselves. Fixated on the pursuit of profit and power at any cost, they continue to impede the growth of renewable energy, champion deregulation, exploit and degrade ecosystems globally and promote excessive consumption. The pervasive, worldwide ecological damage and profound socioeconomic distress left in their wake underscores the urgent need for change.

When the U.S. entered World War II a mass mobilization occurred. The federal government adopted policies that gave it unprecedented powers to direct the private sector to quickly convert from peacetime to military production. Financial speculation had already been curtailed by New Deal policies designed to contain the *laissez-faire* capitalism that triggered the Great Depression. The managed economy that resulted was key to winning the war, and it persisted for almost two decades. During that time, few people became extremely wealthy, but millions of Americans were able to make a decent living.

A similar war-like mobilization is needed now to prevent climate catastrophe. The centerpiece must be an updated version of a managed economy that curtails financial speculation and requires, among other changes, that every firm rapidly redesign their products, processes and services to eliminate fossil fuels, electrify almost everything using clean renewable energy, and protect and restore forests and other ecosystems that sequester carbon.

Mobilization will likely require the nationalization of many fossil fuel companies and financial institutions. We have done this before. During WWII, the government seized coal mines, railroads and other companies. It has taken over failed banks, including Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac in 2008, and other financial organizations. Seizure would last only until new executives and board members are installed who revamp the firm to invest in and produce emissions-free, ecologically-restorative goods and services.

Equally important, nationalization would eliminate the stranglehold these firms have on our politics.

This proposal might seem impossible now. But things can change rapidly, and we must be prepared when they do.

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