

THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING

In “This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate” (2014), Naomi Klein says that, in the hot stormy future we’ve already guaranteed, we will need an unshakable belief in the equal rights of all people, and a capacity for deep compassion.

That’s because global warming is the most serious threat humanity has ever faced, and our leaders – corporate or green, liberal or conservative -- won’t save us.

Governments, with their militaries and trade laws, protect coal, oil and gas extractors against citizens and nature. So trying to avoid catastrophic global warming now conflicts with our economy’s fundamental imperative – grow or die.

To keep warming below the internationally agreed desired limit of 2 degrees Celsius, rich nations must cut emissions by 8-10% by the end of this decade. By 2017 there will be no room for any additional carbon producers, spelling the end for the world’s largest industry – gas and oil.

That’s the challenge, Klein says, the world’s people must somehow tackle on their own, if we’re to have a planet habitable by all.

Meanwhile the oil giants are blasting bedrock, pumping toxic water underground, lopping mountains, scraping off boreal forests, endangering the deep ocean and scrambling to exploit

the melting arctic, to get the last drops from the final rocks, with ever more risky technology. They're currently investing more than \$100 billion in new extractive efforts worldwide, amortized over 25-40 years, betting governments won't get serious about reducing global warming in that time.

So where should we turn?

Klein dismisses some false hopes.

Fracked natural gas won't work as a "bridge" fuel between petroleum and renewables because it leaks as much methane as coal.

Carbon credits and offsets allow companies to pollute more, lead to indigenous land grabs, and don't stop rising emissions.

Some billionaires have made large green gestures, but they're fundamentally committed to "grow or die."

Geoengineering, especially injecting sulfur dioxide into the atmosphere to reflect sunlight back into space, could itself be catastrophic.

Several of the largest environmental organizations either invest in or take money from gas and oil drillers.

What, then, are the world's people to do?

We need to adopt a worldview based on regeneration and renewal, not domination and depletion; to see climate change as a “catalyzing force for positive change.”

Specifically, we need to switch to renewables now – solar, wind, etc. The technology is already in place.

We need to discourage the frenetic and indiscriminate consumption of disposable goods, promote locally, sustainably grown food and durable, locally made goods created with green technology. We need to encourage radical and immediate de-growth strategies, and consume less.

We can gradually reduce the work week to 3-4 days, and guarantee everyone a basic income and access to power, water and food.

Create a low rate financial transaction tax, close tax havens, levee a 1% billionaire’s tax, slash the military budgets of the top 10 by 25%, tax CO2 emissions at \$50 a ton in developed countries, phase out fossil fuel subsidies – in total raise 2 trillion annually to pay for decreased emissions.

Become activists. Kick corporate money out of politics. Leave fossil fuels in the earth. Divest ourselves of stocks and bonds that finance extraction.

There have been successes – especially against coal extraction; France has banned fracking countrywide. Grassroots

organizations and indigenous peoples are increasingly struggling to protect their home turf.

Disposable peripheries (poor, weak, remote nations) have long been harnessed to feed glittering centers. Now, with the Alberta tar sands and fracking everywhere, we're all in the sacrifice zone.

There's no acceptable price for allowing whole countries to disappear, for leaving untold millions to die on parched land, for denying our children a healthy, natural world.

As the author says, "If change is to take place, it will be because leadership bubbled up from below."