

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Cold slap in the face

As I write this, my iPhone tells me the temperature in Cupertino, California, the home of Apple Inc., is 110 degrees. The normal high in Cupertino rarely exceeds 80 degrees in the summer.

But we're in a different world now, although most of us refuse to recognize that. Even people who agree that the climate is changing are in denial about how bad it is, and how soon it will get worse.

On Tuesday, I wrote about specific instances of unprecedented droughts, floods, and heat waves around the globe. This is not a phase that will pass. This is a harbinger of things to come.

Here are some sobering thoughts from Bill McGuire, an emeritus professor of geophysical hazards at University College London, as recently reported in the Guardian newspaper:

"There is now no chance of us avoiding a perilous, all-pervasive climate breakdown. We have passed the point of no return and can expect a future in which lethal heatwaves and temperatures in excess of 150 degrees are common in the tropics; where summers in temperature latitudes will be baking hot; and where our oceans will become warm and acidic."

McGuire says a lot of people in climate science say one thing in pub-

lic but a very different thing in private. "In confidence, they are all much more scared about the future we face, but they won't admit that in public.

"The world needs to know how bad things are going to get before we can hope to start to tackle the crisis."

For years, the holy grail has been keeping temperatures to no more than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

But, McGuire says, "just look at what is happening already to a world which has only heated up by just over one degree.

"It turns out the climate is changing for the worse far quicker than predicted by early climate models. That's something that was never expected."

The 2015 Paris climate accord signed by nearly 200 countries pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 45 percent by 2030.

"In the real world," McGuire said, "that is not going to happen. Instead, we are on course for close to a 14 percent rise in emissions by that date."

As bad as things are, McGuire said, there's still time to save civilization as we know it.

But first, McGuire says, we have to stop denying the obvious and take climate change seriously.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

