

Remarks of Ross C. “Rocky” Anderson

Rally for Climate Protection

Utah State Capitol

March 10, 2010

We're here today because of our concern for our world and its inhabitants, including our children and grandchildren. We are here to lead, because those who should be providing leadership are, with a few remarkable exceptions, failing us and those who will come along in the future.

We're also giving notice that we won't let up. Far too much is at stake. We will not stand by while those responsible for public policy do not bother to inform themselves and permit the continued pollution of our atmosphere with billions of tons of earth-warming greenhouse gases. We take it very personally when the proponents of the old, failed ways essentially make war, knowingly or unknowingly, against our brothers, sisters, and children around the world.

This is a matter of fundamental morality. The question posed is very simple: Will we take sufficient action in the time required to avoid irreversible catastrophic climate disruption, with the tragic consequences that will befall billions of people as the oceans rise and displace those who live in coastal regions; as coral reefs are killed as a result of ocean acidification; as extreme weather events like hurricanes become even more extreme because of warming oceans; as arable lands become deserts; as glaciers disappear, destroying life-sustaining water resources; as more forests are killed by beetles that now survive warmer winters; and as economies, like those largely dependent on the ski industry, are destroyed?

We are here today to demand that our elected officials pay heed to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (the largest scientific collaboration in history), the US National Academy of Sciences, the academies of science of every industrialized nation, the American Association of the Advancement of Science, the American Geophysical Union, the American Meteorological Society, the American Physical Society, and dozens of top Utah scientists – all of whom are in agreement that the earth's climate is being rapidly and dangerously disrupted as a result of our reckless and rapacious burning of coal, oil, and gas.

Typical of these scientific organizations is the American Physical Society, which has stated as follows:

Emissions of greenhouse gases from human activities are changing the atmosphere in ways that affect the Earth's climate. . . . [Greenhouse gases] are

emitted from fossil fuel combustion and a range of industrial and agricultural processes.

The evidence is incontrovertible: Global warming is occurring. If no mitigating actions are taken, significant disruptions in the Earth's physical and ecological systems, social systems, security and human health are likely to occur. We must reduce emissions of greenhouse gases beginning now.¹

If these mainstream, prestigious international and national scientific organizations are too radical for some of our Utah legislators and other local climate disruption deniers, perhaps they will pay attention to George W. Bush, former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, and current UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who all have been in agreement that climate change is a "serious problem" (those were President Bush's words) and the US needs to help lead toward solutions by vastly reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases.

We urge our Governor and legislators – and the local news media – to read the report issued by several of Utah's top scientists – including the Chair of the Department of Meteorology at the University of Utah, the Director of the Utah Climate Center at Utah State University, and the Director of BYU Center for Remote Sensing – at the request of former Governor Huntsman, a leader who recognized not only the responsibility we have to contribute toward solutions to the challenges of climate disruption, but who also saw the grand opportunities of leading out by taking such measures as joining the Western States Climate Initiative. One must wonder whether our present governor and legislators have bothered to read the report issued by those Utah scientists in 2007, which made clear the scientific consensus. This is part of what they presented in their report to Governor Huntsman:

There is no longer any scientific doubt that the Earth's average surface temperature is increasing and that changes in ocean temperature, ice and snow cover, and sea level are consistent with this global warming.

[T]here is very high confidence [meaning at least 90% confidence] that human-generated increases in greenhouse gas concentrations are responsible for most of the global warming observed during the past 50 years.

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[O]ngoing greenhouse gas emissions at or above current levels will likely result in a decline in Utah's mountain snowpack and the threat of severe and prolonged episodic drought in Utah is real.

If that's not enough, our elected officials should take heed, not of the industry prostitutes that seem to call the shots far too often in our corrupt political system, but of the top Utah scientists who have signed onto a letter initially issued by eighteen BYU scientists, which stated unequivocally that "the climate is changing," "climate is significantly influenced by human activity," and "these changes pose risks to humanity and many other forms of life."

¹ American Physical Society policy approved in November 2007. See www.aps.org/policy/statements/07_1.cfm.

A stubborn refusal to acknowledge the obvious has led a majority of our Legislature and, I'm sorry to say, our Governor to an utter failure in responsible, moral leadership. They, and others like them, are betraying our solemn duties as stewards for the future – and it is our duty to demand leadership by those who are informed, knowledgeable, and willing to do what is required to meet the tremendous challenges facing us, and take advantage of the extraordinary opportunities embraced by other states and nations.

Let us all join together in moving forward into the new, innovative economy of clean, renewable energy and efficiency, rather than falling further and further behind because of the dismal lack of leadership by the majority of Utah's elected officials.