

Editor, Times-Dispatch:

Recent letters by Karl Wenger and Sy London have inspired me to contribute. While impressive in an above average knowledge of the carbon cycle and photosynthesis, their ongoing debate over the effects of man-made excess carbon in our atmosphere ignores the more critical side of a complex set of problems currently confronting humanity.

At the heart of this near-term controversy over global climate change, we have long-term problem that is much more daunting. Compounded by the fact that world population growth continues on an exponential curve, Earth's finite energy resources (as well as other forms of natural capital) are dwindling while we debate whether or not the deleterious effects of our habitation are for real. As a result, the immutable fact is this: the current course of our hydrocarbon-based industrial path is completely linear, and therefore, not sustainable. Because any truly effective correction of this situation will likely take decades, our focus should be on more aggressively transitioning to renewable sources of energy such as sun, wind, hydro, etc. for our primary needs.

In modern society, the universal financial investment strategy is geared toward the ultimate goal of living well off of a continuous interest income stream, and thereby passing the principal to one's heirs; if fossil fuels were considered stored solar 'capital' (derived primarily from phototropic organisms), what system could be more elegant and sustainable (and economically viable), than a society that supports itself instead with the natural ebbs and flows of energy that surround us in perpetuity and don't require wasteful, costly, ex-

tractive and destructive processes? Put another way – how about human communities imitating natural systems (IE – photosynthesis)?

Mr. Wenger is correct in noting that the quantity of carbon in the biosphere is fixed; however, the notion that it's re-introduction to the atmosphere (mostly through combustion) over the last 250 years – a relatively sudden and compressed time frame – somehow safely balances with the natural absorption of it that occurred over many millennia is ludicrous. It is exactly this sort of pseudo-scientific reasoning that not only breeds a false sense of security, but also shifts attention from the big picture and misleads the public.

The causes and effects of environmental degradation have been thoroughly researched and documented and alternative technologies and solutions are available and continue to rapidly evolve in the marketplace. The question is, does our society have the awareness, and ultimately, the will to commit to the process of restoration and a more sustainable future?

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