

Why Global warming gets all the attention, when there are much more serious and imminent worries?

I am wondering about the above question. If you have some ideas, or find loopholes in my thinking, I hope you will share them with me.

Global warming (GW) is of course a long term problem which is very serious. It is already having a serious effect on the lives of some other species, like penguins living around the north pole. But GW is perhaps not something that will have a direct effect on human lives in the next few hundred years, and we humans have never really paid serious attention to anything that does not affect us directly.

But our current way of life and our present civilization is based Very critically (at least to the extent of 90% or more) on energy and other products obtained by burning fossil fuels, or using fossil fuels as feed stock for all the chemicals (like fertilizer, etc.), metals, etc. that our current lifestyle needs.

We are exploring alternatives (like wind, solar, geothermal, biomass, Sea waves) for generating electricity; but each of these alternatively has its own severe limits, and all of them together are unlikely to generate more than a small percentage (at most 40%?) of the current electric-

ity demand. But of course we also have nuclear reactors as sources for generating electricity (they also come with very serious problems, which are likely to be ignored if we have no alternative).

However, we need to realize that “generating electricity” is not the only purpose for which we use fossil fuels. They form a vital feedstock in manufacturing processes for many goods that we produce.

Liquid fossil fuel (crude) has a life span of about 100 years at the current rate of use. Natural gas has about the same life span, may be slightly (but not significantly) more. Coal may be has a life span of about 300 years, again at the current rate of use.

300 years is a very short interval of time; after that (in fact well before that, as shortages develop), either we find non-fossil-fuel based alternatives (does not seem very likely at the moment), or our current way of life and our present civilization will come to an end. Given these facts, I do not see why global warming (a worry for the long term) is grabbing all the world’s attention as the most serious problem to talk about.

It seems to me that a much more important and serious problem to worry about is this: given the very short life span of our fossil fuel resources, how do we minimize the inevitable human suffering that will result as the end of this interval comes ever closer?

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