

Seething with anger

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The focus of the recent May 19 BLM discussion in Salt Lake City was Utah coal — should it be leased, mined, and used — or left in the ground. The discussion of climate change and planetary perspectives, my subject, was minimal.

The hundreds of yellow T-shirted coal miners, drivers, and supporters — and the others present — were civil, generally informed, often passionate, some articulate, serious, and respectful.

I was speaker #85 and used my three minutes to note that we are at the beginning of a chaotic, turbulent, traumatic economic transformation — driven by the planetary limits which make the continuation of an energy intensive, fossil fuel dependent, continuous growth economic system impossible.

On my way out of the room, a young, yellow T-shirted, coal miner expressed his concern that I had said that ‘coal — that all fossil fuels — need to stay in the ground.’ His fear, his anxiety, was clearly visible — it showed in his face, especially in his eyes.

Utah, Wyoming, Kentucky are among the coal states who have ignored their own future and doomed their constituents to economic pain, trauma, anxiety, and fear. It need not have happened — and it need not continue.

But, so long as the local culture breeds male arrogance and propagates political ignorance and denial, the families and communities so long dependent on fossil fuels will suffer continued abuse at the hands of their own leaders.

Those yellow-shirted miners and drivers are stuck. They continue to support and vote for the very leaders who are worse than useless — so-called leaders whose actions, excuses, finger-pointing make the problem worse — and the eventual, inevitable, economic transformation more chaotic and turbulent.

Without effective leadership the system will fully crumble and collapse before it can be reborn. It will be those miners and drivers — with the fear and dread in their eyes, and their communities — who are the victims and are again shouldering the pain.

We went our separate ways. He walked away, bearing his anxiety, worry, and pain. And, I went my way, seething with anger at a governor, congressmen, and legislators who are so ineffective, dangerous, and even evil — and don't even know it.

Joe Andrade

Salt Lake City