Methane is 100 Times Worse than Carbon Dioxide

Leave “Natural Gas” in the Ground

In October 2018 the U. N.’s IPCC panel issued a report saying we have until the year 2030 to cut global warming gas emissions drastically. If not we’ll face the total loss of coral, many more devastating heat waves and other terrible effects. Yet in some ways it understates the crisis. It doesn’t mention the threat that the world is reaching tipping points that would bring irreversible climate changes.

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ready started). Instead we need a crash program for energy efficiency, and all renewable energy by 2030.

We don’t have time for the conventional proposals. We don’t have decades to wait while politicians make the usual slow, slow progress. We are balanced over a chasm, and the tipping points are almost upon us. Drastic changes are necessary, and hundreds of thousands of us have to get into the streets and start demanding them.

#BanFracking #KeepItInTheGround
On June 12, 2016 Dr. Robert Howarth told a meeting of 350CT, a Connecticut-based group promoting grass-roots environmental organization, about a briefing he had given last month to the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Howarth is professor of ecology and environmental biology at Cornell University and an associate of former top NASA climate scientist James Hansen. In 2011 he was in the running for Time magazine’s “Person of the Year.”

Natural gas is almost entirely methane, and Howarth has calculated that the global warming effects of methane over a 20-year period are 105 times that of carbon dioxide.

There’s another problem. In the U.S., we now get a majority of our natural gas by fracking shale rock. Howarth said that getting the gas this way leaks three times as much methane into the air as does traditional extraction methods. Obama had bragged about how carbon dioxide emissions had leveled off. Howarth agrees that CO2 emissions have not been rising for the last five years, but that misses the point. Because of fracking, total U.S. greenhouse gas emission since 2008 has risen at the most rapid rate ever, Howarth said. Our “meth” habit—our growing addiction to methane gas—is keeping us on the road to climate catastrophe.

Now, here’s the good news. Cutbacks in carbon dioxide output are absolutely necessary, but we won’t see the effects for a very long time. Cutbacks on methane (and “black carbon” soot from burning), however, can reduce the effects of global warming in the coming decades. The fight against fracking is thus THE fight against global warming.

The world needs to go fossil-free by 2050, and the U.S. must lead the way by going fossil-free by 2035. One means of achieving this, Howarth said, is by imposing a tax on methane emissions that would be 105 times the cost of a tax on CO2 emissions.

There’s also an ecosocialist solution: Declare a state of emergency, nationalize the energy industry and go on a crash “Manhattan project” program to completely change energy/heating/transportation. Howarth didn’t call for that, but he did point out that there have been massive changes in energy use in this country in a matter of decades, pointing to a transformation from transportation by horse to automobiles in just 40 years.

A complete ban on fracking would get the ball rolling. On July 24, 2016 perhaps as many as 10,000 people marched on the streets of Philadelphia to demand an end to fracking. There has been some response. In March 2017 Maryland became the third state to ban fracking. Laws in state legislatures to ban storage of massive fracking wastes are being considered in several states. Direct actions against pipelines are taking place. On the other hand Trump is determined to go the other way. He has erased the rule that required companies keep track of how much methane they were spewing into the air.

We need to oppose the construction of new fracked methane power plants (even one’s al-