

In his 2011 book, "Life on a tough new planet," Bill McKibben shows that Planet Earth has become so different from what we humans are accustomed to love and live upon, it should be known by an altered name; he proposes "Eearth." If we continue with "business as usual" our civilization will not survive, Mr. McKibben warns. This is the consensus also of many climate scientists in the dozens of books currently displayed on the third floor of the library in honor of Earth Day and Climate Impacts Day. One of these, "Climate cover-up: The crusade to deny global warming," exposes climate deniers' campaigns and the companies underwriting their unholy mission.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, at the eve of Climate Impacts Day, Mr. McKibben and fellow academics and scientists were maligned by a right-wing group, Heartland Institute, that put up billboards in the Chicago area likening climate advocacy to mass murder. The ads featured big pictures of Ted Kaczynski (the Unabomber) and Charles Manson. The Heartland website said it planned to add pictures of Fidel Castro, Osama bin Laden, and James J. Lee "because what these murderers and madmen have said differs very little from what spokespersons for the United Nations, journalists for the 'mainstream' media and liberal politicians say about global warming."

Indications are, the Heartland strategy backfired. "The Heartland Institute's billboard campaign attacking the existence of climate change is driving a surge of corporate donors to abandon the group and prompting a mutiny among its Washington staff," reports the E & E Daily.

Wyomingites reacted less violently than Heartland to our day. Some sent emails, saying, "I don't believe in global warming." As if the crisis were an Easter bunny or a tooth fairy, something you can choose to believe or not!

Our state government seems similarly benighted. House Bill 79, which would have extended the sales tax exemption for residents and businesses that install small, renewable energy systems, failed the votes to move it forward in the 2012 legislative session.

Yet House Bill 121, which allocates moneys from the Abandoned Mine Land Funds, included a controversial \$10 million to fund construction of a minerals-to-liquids plant, either Nerd Gas or DKRW. Reps William Stewart, R-Encampment, and Michael Madden, R-Buffalo, sponsored an amendment (supported by Rep. Teeters) to remove the \$10 million authorization on grounds that the state would become a business partner in a risky project, but their amendment was defeated. Though the Joint Appropriations Committee reduced the amount to \$9 million to allow some giveaways to other energy industries, the governor signed the bill with the appropriations.

Little is known about Nerd Gas, but what we have of DKRW is worrisome. This Texas energy company wants to build a coal-to-liquids plant via its subsidiary, Medicine Bow Fuel and Power. After its unsuccessful petition for federal funds, it approached this year's legislature for a \$300 million loan. DKRW is partially owned by the second-largest coal company in the United States, Arch Coal.

Rather than act upon the request pro or con, the legislators ordered a generic study from Idaho Lab. When it comes in, the decision to fund will be up to Governor Mead.

Energy experts agree: Without carbon-dioxide controls, a coal-to-liquids plant will emit twice the greenhouse-gas pollution of gasoline: first, when the coal is turned to liquid and second, when the fuel is burned as gasoline.

Jeff Goddell's *Big Coal* shows that coal-based plants are huge polluters. "Even the cleanest new coal plant is significantly dirtier than a gas-fired plant." Legislation has ensured that the environmental and health-care costs of coal production and combustion have been borne primarily by consumers, particularly the people unlucky enough to work in the mines or live near the power plants, he writes, documenting not only coal-mining companies and coal-transporting railroads but also the utilities that burn it. Some of these megacorporations have become powerful enough to determine legislation. Energy brokers such as Peabody Energy as well as Enron were "particularly well represented in the Bush Administration," comments the author; he refers to Enron as a "den of thieves."

It should be noted that two DKRW CEOs are former Enron executives: Chief Executive Thomas E. White and Founder Jon C. Doyle. Their profiles are on Bloomberg Businessweek's website. As far as we know, the representatives proposing the state giveaway have not invested one penny of their own money in the venture. Will Wyoming's governor nonetheless shell out money for this latest Frankenstein monster?

Most climate scientists remain opposed to coal-to-liquids technology, and they decry the words "clean coal" as misleading euphemisms. Developing the technology "would allow liquid fuel CO₂ emissions to continue increasing indefinitely," Pushker Karecha of NASA's Goddard Institute commented in an e-mail to Wired.com. He pointed to the "fatal flaw in their proposed process from a climate protection standpoint."

Our small good thing drew a dozen people unafraid to gaze ahead as global warming makes it problematical for our children and grandchildren to soldier on. The pictures that have poured into the 350.org website in response to Climate Impacts Day put human faces to recent losses: a child holding up a sign in a dried-out lakebed; families in front of tornado-raided homes; children knee-deep in water. Leaving these issues unaddressed will make us, in the words of a Tim Flannery title, their "Future Eaters."