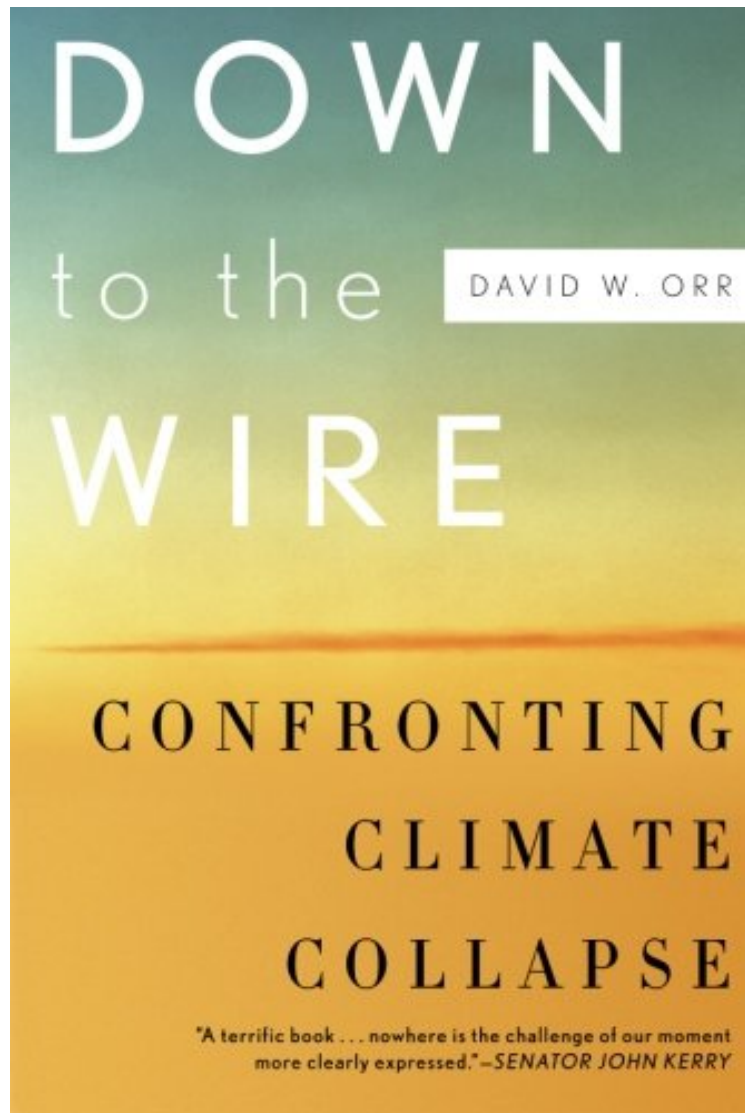


(Read ebook) Down to the Wire: Confronting Climate Collapse

Down to the Wire: Confronting Climate Collapse

David W. Orr

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#1142812 in Books David W Orr 2012-02-16 2012-02-16Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 5.40 x .70 x 8.101, .70 #File Name: 0199829365304 pagesDown to the Wire Confronting Climate Collapse | File size: 32.Mb

David W. Orr : Down to the Wire: Confronting Climate Collapse before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Down to the Wire: Confronting Climate Collapse:

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. After the RaceBy CustomerDavid Orr is one of my gurus, but the first time I read this book I was disappointed by its repetitiousness, vagueness, lack of sequential structure or sustained, fully supported and defended claims, and its preaching to the choir, who have already heard most of this many times. The central points were hardly controversial or new for us, but still unacceptable to the great majority of

citizens who are looking more than ever at short term rescues or pleasures. For that reason the urgency and insistence of the tone seemed irritating and disrespectful of the audience. Compared to his last book, *Design on the Edge*, which contained a fascinating autobiographical narrative and a detailed account of the remarkable history of the building he was responsible for planning, designing and financing at Oberlin College, this book felt vague, uninspired, and sentimental. What does it mean after all to insist that what we should do is "deepen our humanity." (202) I also found it sadly dated. Though filled with topical references to the impending Obama administration, the events of the fifteen months since his inauguration made many of the proposals about transforming governance and launching a revolution in Washington seem painfully overoptimistic. Nevertheless I decided to give it another try, either to be able to articulate specifically what I found wrong with the book or to give it a more sympathetic and engaged reading. First, I confirmed what I suspected about the book's process of composition. Most of the material here was previously published in the form of essays that Orr writes for the journal *Conservation Biology* and others. Many of these can be found at the website, [...]. That accounted for and in a way justified the sense that each chapter recovered much of the same territory and started from scratch rather than building on what preceded. Viewed from this perspective, each chapter had the coherence and scope of his remarkable speeches, such as the one I heard at the organizing conference for Focus the Nation in Las Vegas. And even when general points were repeated, Orr seemed in each essay to summon up different examples and sources. A second reading also revealed an overall structure of chapters that moved forward from beginning to middle and end despite the backtracking. Preface and Introduction both state the predicament and his solutions. We are facing what has been called a long emergency or a bottleneck, a worldwide period of crisis brought on by the environmental degradation and climate change that misguided human impacts have produced over the last 200 years. The way out will be long and arduous, and only possible with strong, transformative leadership, primarily in the presidency but also at all levels of government and society. Leaders have three leading tasks: move the citizenry out of a state of denial to a recognition of the dangers, develop energy policies that reverse our dependence on carbon and promote renewables, and foster a deepening of public morality emphasizing fairness, compassion, nonviolence and a sense of purpose and reverence for nature grounded in appreciation and gratitude. These three mandates are reaffirmed throughout the book. The three chapters of section I, *Politics and Governance*, assert that Government is the only agency strong enough to effectively address the emergency but that government needs to be transformed. Chapter 1, *Governance*, asserts that the challenges of mitigating and adapting to climate change and its associated catastrophes can be faced by reversing the trend toward unregulated corporate power, trivialized and ineffective journalism, excessive consumerism and rule by lobbyists. This can be done by redistribution of wealth and privilege, publicly funded elections, smartening land use and agricultural policy, promoting universal access to communication media and promotion of small community autonomy. But first government itself must be transformed from its present corrupt and dysfunctional state to a just, effective and elevating one. This will have to be accomplished through a mechanism like a new Constitutional Convention and the establishment of a new consensus. Chapter 2 is a meditation on democracy, the form of government most likely to succeed despite its faults, the failures of its alternatives, like natural capitalism, and unregulated free-market capitalism, and the proposal of a legal, constitutional framework for instituting the kinds of social transformation needed to address climate change based on the new idea of the legal standing of future generations. Chapter 3, *Leadership in the Long Emergency*, compares today's crisis with those faced by Lincoln and Roosevelt, and concludes that Obama can learn leadership lessons from both his great predecessors, which include the necessity of understanding and framing those crises both as legal-constitutional issues requiring preservation of law and tradition and as moral issues requiring deep personal insight and unshaken commitment. Orr repeats the laundry list of reforms mentioned earlier that Obama needs to accomplish. Chapter 4, *Leadership*, defines true leadership, like that of those predecessors, as the capacity to energize and give direction to the populace. Part II, *Connections*, is transitional in the overall structure of the book, but provides a sample of some of Orr's strongest qualities as a writer, manifested when he lets a more imaginative, associative principle guide his design. Chapter 5, *The Carbon Connection*, juxtaposes two powerful narrative descriptions: nature's devastation of humans in New Orleans by Katrina, presumably caused by climate change, and humans' devastation of nature in Coal Companies' mountaintop removal, causing climate change. This is connected to Chapter 6, *The Spirit of Connection*, which explores spiritual and religious perspectives on Climate Change, differentiating the apocalyptic fundamentalism that both affirms and brings it on with the subjective experiences of wonder, reverence and gratitude for the gift of life that provide meaning and hope for those struggling to protect it. Part III, *Farther Horizons*, contains three chapters overlapping earlier chapters and one another in content. Chapter 7, *Milennial Hope*, lists factors blocking us from taking the steps necessary to confront and deal with the coming crisis and solutions, psychological, political, and spiritual, concluding with a story of Gandhian non-violence displayed by Amish toward a mass murderer who shot a number of their children. Chapter 8, *Hope at the End of our Tether*, expands the emphasis on anti-militarism, Gandhian Satyagraha and other Gandhian principles like anti-materialism--shift from wealth to happiness--social justice, and localism. The final chapter, *The Upshot: What is to be Done?* echoes both Aldo Leopold and Lenin, verbally in the titles of two of their well known works, and thematically in calling for the creation of a community that includes natural beings and systems and in calling for a total revolution to be initiated by a vanguard of leaders, giving

direction and energy to an awakened populace. The first section covering the same ground as the preceding chapters, this chapter and section ends with a powerful vision of a desirable outcome from the long emergency only ten years in the future, located in his home town of Oberlin Ohio, where the very specific programs he has set in motion as an activist and educator have run their course. The vision is startlingly similar to the kinds of programs and visions activists at Cal Poly and in San Luis Obispo County have dedicated themselves. More than anything in this book, these few pages (212-215) provide some of the grounds for hope that present conditions don't encourage in regard to most of the books larger recommendations."Postscript: A Disclosure" is vintage Orr. It's a recollection of the extraordinarily hot summer of 1980 when he and his brother worked like slaves on a farm in Arkansas, as the temperature reached 111 degrees and stayed there. It was then that he became interested in climate change. He says he felt it viscerally, the memory recorded in his body. That's why it's presented as a disclosure. But the impact of that memory, I'm afraid is unlikely to be felt until the rest of us consistently experience such nasty conditions, and by then it's likely to be too late. Taking issue: "leadership"--is Obama like Lincoln and Roosevelt, sticking to the moral vision, keeping legal and constitutional integrity at the fore, reaching the people? Seemed so at inauguration, but less so now, largely because of loss of confidence resultant from bailouts and compromises, failure to seize the opportunity with courage--e.g. Copenhagen The long emergency--less perceivable now than in 2006, when much of this was written and when Katrina and An Inconvenient Truth and IPCC and oil spike converged to shake people up. Non-violence, Satyagraha--true, and a manifestation of deeper humanity, but desperation is less likely to bring it to the fore, especially when the rulers and perpetrators are becoming more brazen. Coupling peace, justice and sustainability has advantages but also makes any progress seem hopeless, because it will leave so much undone. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. One of the best in the field. By Jamey Hecht, PhD Very well written, Down to the Wire manages to explain our predicament without understating it, yet without entirely giving over to despair. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Essential perspective By Doris Conway Includes all aspects that need to be considered in dealing with this global issue. A bit overwhelming. But Chapters 7 and 8 get to Hope.

"The real fault line in American politics is not between liberals and conservatives.... It is, rather, in how we orient ourselves to the generations to come who will bear the consequences, for better and for worse, of our actions." So writes David Orr in Down to the Wire, a sober and eloquent assessment of climate destabilization and an urgent call to action. Orr describes how political negligence, an economy based on the insatiable consumption of trivial goods, and a disdain for the well-being of future generations have brought us to the tipping point that biologist Edward O. Wilson calls "the bottleneck." Due to our refusal to live within natural limits, we now face a long emergency of rising temperatures, rising sea-levels, and a host of other related problems that will increasingly undermine human civilization. Climate destabilization to which we are already committed will change everything, and to those betting on quick technological fixes or minor adjustments to the way we live now, Down to the Wire is a major wake-up call. But this is not a doomsday book. Orr offers a wide range of pragmatic, far-reaching proposals--some of which have already been adopted by the Obama administration--for how we might reconnect public policy with rigorous science, bring our economy into alignment with ecological realities, and begin to regard ourselves as planetary trustees for future generations. He offers inspiring real-life examples of people already responding to the major threat to our future. An exacting analysis of where we are in terms of climate change, how we got here, and what we must now do, Down to the Wire is essential reading for those wanting to join in the Great Work of our generation.

From Publishers Weekly Author and environmental studies professor Orr (The Nature of Design) presents an alarming look at climate change, predicting a best-case scenario (a sharp reduction in our carbon footprint) that belies the hopes of the green movement at large: "Climate change... is not so much a problem to be fixed, but rather a steadily worsening condition with which we must contend for a long time." Even this, however, depends on a political realignment sufficient to meet the severe challenges of the coming decades and centuries, including famine, drought and population displacement. Rather than a matter of reprioritizing, Orr contends that we must reshape our deepest held values; citing the case against abortion, he suggests that "the same kind of arguments apply to the right to life of future generations... as our present use of coal, oil, and natural gas will kill into the far future." Finding hope in "the connections that bind us to each other, to all life and to all life to come," Orr maintains a guarded optimism that never forgoes the possibility that "we are irreversibly en route to extinction"; for his expertise and crystal clear vision, Orr's disturbing message is hard to ignore. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "A terrific book . . . nowhere is the challenge of our moment more clearly expressed." --Senator John Kerry "Orr acknowledges [the] dire circumstances, but does not wallow in despair or defeatism. His book is a clear-sighted view of what we need to change now...Orr's book will do much to help achieve the required cultural transformation, hopefully just in time." --Nature "If you want to read the latest, and one of the most streamlined yet comprehensive accounts of our predicament, I'd recommend Down to the Wire by David Orr, an Oberlin College professor who has long been one of the country's leading environmental thinkers. He lays out the dangers, and he lays out the plans that would be needed to counteract those dangers; it's all there in simple and unavoidable prose." --Bill McKibben, New

York of Books "If climate change were not an issue, what you would have to say would be undiminished in its urgency....I thank you for not giving up, for staking out the ground of 'authentic hope,' and for reinvigorating that indispensable term, 'maybe.'"--Wendell Berry, from a letter to the author "Although his research findings are well referenced, Orr's integration and interpretation take the book beyond the typical academic treatise...Refreshingly candid regarding heroes, villains, and difficult decisions, Orr writes with exceptional elegance and passion...Highly recommended."--CHOICE "Powerful and prophetic."--Thomas Berry "A dazzling intellectual sweep across the causes and solutions to our mounting 'long emergency.' Orr shows convincingly that leadership and good governance, not just technological solutions, will all have to be part of the mix if we are to save the planet in time."--Stephen H. Schneider, Professor for Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies, Stanford University "A sweeping synthesis of science, politics, history, and public policy--shaped by extraordinary wisdom, reason, and conviction--this very important book envisions a roadmap to a livable future."--Ray Anderson, Founder and Chair, Interface Inc., and author of Confessions of a Radical Industrialist "David couples realism with optimism to create an honest look at how we consider the environment, poverty, and equality. If he believes that humans can rise to the occasion of our global climate crisis, so can you. Thanks, David!"--Majore Carter, Economic Development Consultant, MacArthur "Genius" Fellow "Lucid, richly documented, and powerful."--George M. Woodwell, Director Emeritus, The Woods Hole Research Center "It is rare to find so many fresh insights between the covers of one book. We are all indebted to David Orr for his incisive thinking."--Lester R. Brown, President, Earth Policy Institute, and author of Plan B 3.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization "Down to the Wire takes the reader beyond the viewpoints which are standard fare in the climate literature: technological optimism and sustainability on the one hand, or techno-criticism, lament and despair on the other. Orr foresees a pathway to solving our dilemma, one marked by political leadership and respect for human dignity."--Michael Oppenheimer, Professor of Geosciences and International Affairs, Princeton University "Deeply informed by wide reading, practical experience, and many years of passionate teaching and activism, David Orr's cogent arguments provide leadership both to meet the climate disruption that our foresight has been insufficient to avoid, and to help avoid worse. Highly recommended!"--Herman Daly, Professor of Public Policy, University of Maryland "One of the great scholars in the climate change and clean energy debate, Orr's new book sets out a challenging and hopeful agenda for real change in how we reshape our nation, our energy policies, and ultimately our personal lives, for the long haul battle against climate destabilization." --Jeff Biggers, Huffington Post "Orr adroitly weaves environmental science and policy together with perspectives from history, philosophy, political science, legal studies, and communications to contextualize climate change as a symptom of other problems that, if confronted, can be addressed. The result is a touchstone for anyone interested in engaging constructively in social change." --ClimateEdu Newsletter, National Wildlife Federation "Orr's book is gracefully written, with a lucid and comprehensive vision it is important that everyone reads it, because it is about our future, which is likely to be very different from the present." --North Coast Journal

About the Author David W. Orr is the Paul Sears Distinguished Professor of Environmental Studies and Politics and Special Advisor to the President of Oberlin College. He is the author of numerous books, including *The Nature of Design and Ecological Literacy*.