

and what that meant—war and a strong change to the status quo. Yet once they did, once denial ended, the response was swift and dramatic. Things changed almost overnight.

Without the benefit of a retrospective view, it would be much harder to predict when exactly the denial of Hitler's threat would end. So it's also hard to predict when the moment will come on climate, even though in hindsight, it will be "obvious."

It's the right comparison. We've had a rational and clear threat for a long time. We've had the Churchills arguing that case for twenty or more years and ignored them. We've had the false progress comparable to Neville Chamberlain's agreements for peace, such as the Kyoto and Copenhagen agreements. We have preferred to stay in denial. While this has been distressing for people in full acceptance, if we looked at history, it was predictable it would be this way. Looking at history, we can also conclude this, though: It will change. The dam will break, and then look out for the flood.

But a word of caution. Just as denial and pessimism can prevent action, ironically so can unstrategic optimism. If we sit back and passively wait for the dam to break, it will at the very least delay that day. Instead we have to choose active, engaged, and strategic hope.

I suspect that right about now you are looking forward to getting past this point in the book. You'd like to leave behind the endlessly detailed descriptions of the mess we are in and how much worse it's going to get. You don't want to read any more about the risk of collapse and the descent into chaos, and you'd like to take your mind off what all this means for you and your family.

•• Well, I have some very good news for you. You have just reached, right here in this sentence, the emotional low point of our story! From here on we shift into hope. Hope that is logical, uplifting, and a far superior place in which to live than that town called despair. ••

Hope is not a question of personal philosophy. In the face of uncertainty, operating from a stance of hope is a strategic and practical response. It is a way of approaching the world. As environmental writer Professor David Orr said of it, "Hope is a verb with its sleeves rolled up." ••

•• This could actually be one of the most important and strategic shifts the millions of advocates for action on sustainability now need to make. It could itself be the tipping point that brings on the Great Awakening. ••