

Letters from Urs Signer to the editor of the Taranaki Daily News (Dec 2012-Jan 2013)

In your editorial in support of the oil and gas industry (23rd January 2013), you state that "as long as every safeguard is put in place [for the industry], regularly monitored, enforced and regulated as and when needed, the vast majority of us can all peacefully co-exist." It is quite astonishing that it is still possible to assume that most of us will be ok as long as the fossil-fuel industry tries hard not to make a big mess (a small mess, like the 23 tonnes oil spill in 2007, is considered a necessary evil). Maybe 20 years ago you could have been forgiven. But nowadays, it is crystal-clear that the increase in CO2 levels due to emissions from fossil fuel combustion is the major contributor to climate change. Unless we radically change things around and stop burning fossil-fuels it will not just be a question of whether we can co-exist but exist. Right now, climate change is impacting on the most vulnerable: on those living on islands with not much fresh-water storage where increased storms and erosion are making agriculture impossible. Kiribati's president said: "To plan for the day when you no longer have a country is indeed painful but I think we have to do that." Climate change is already a reality. But the vast majority of us are still living the fossil-fuel 'dream'. The solutions for a just future are all around us - we are just too busy to embrace them.

In response to:

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/taranaki-daily-news/opinion/8211134/Oil-and-gas-industry-helps-Taranaki-thrive>

An article in today's paper (20th December) stated that "SAS soldiers will be able to practice raiding multistorey buildings, ships, aircraft and oil rigs at a special operations battle training facility to be built in Auckland." Why on earth is the SAS learning how to raid oil rigs? I guess, either the government is planning on taking over oil rigs in the Middle East, or next time Greenpeace, Te Whanau-a-Apanui and co are taking action, the SAS will be sent in to sort things out. Both options are deplorable but also not unlikely scenarios. It is widely accepted that the most recent US-led interventions into Iraq was to secure access to fossil fuels. As 2008 Republican Vice Presidential Candidate Sarah Palin said: "We are a nation at war and in many [ways] the reasons for war are fights over energy sources." Is a 'Rig Key' on the outskirts of Basra on the horizon?

In terms of local opposition to the drilling, do we really want to see Lucy Lawless tackled by the SAS? But then again, the experience of the Ongoni people in the Niger Delta who opposed Shell's drilling demonstrates that governments are quite happy to displace, imprison and ultimately murder people who oppose environmental destruction. Ken Saro-Wiwa, a leader of the non-violent Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, was hanged by a special military tribunal in 1995 after leading marches of 300,000 people against the drilling.

Response to <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/8101620/New-site-for-SAS-to-train-for-battle>