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Guest Viewpoint: Fracking would hurt underground biosphere

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Written by Paul V. Sheridan

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On July 8, the Ithaca Journal printed the Associated Press article "Fervent foes devote lives to fracking fight." Reporter Mary Esch interjected her opinion that fervent foe Sue Rapp was "bird like." I phoned Esch and asked, "What does a person's appearance have to do with the merits of their deeds?" Esch was unresponsive, but then blurted "Nothing!"

Slanders deployed by the corporate news media are indicative of an agenda that cannot withstand relevant debate. The news media routinely fail at being the Fourth Estate. But how did we arrive at this juncture in our discussions of energy?

The fracking fracas that confronts our beloved Finger Lakes has three main proponents. Big Gas has a transparent agenda: Make money while providing energy. Lewd outbursts from Big News are anticipated. But most insidious, and at several levels, is Big Academia. A key motivator to pursue natural gas was the desire to minimize the use of coal as an energy source. I do not take issue with a mindful plan to eliminate coal, especially regarding devastation to the landscape and seascape wrought by huge mining operations. Characteristically, that devastation was not the mainstay of Big Academia. Their motivation is characterized by the propaganda that carbon dioxide drives climate. So we must not forget that this false carbon dioxide agenda reinforced academia's motivation to eliminate coal as an energy source.

Criticizing fracking by revisiting ClimateGate is a viable issue. But I am concerned that

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Cornell University has ignored a life sciences issue: The microbiology of the crustal surface regime of the biosphere that has evolved and is dependent upon that very same methane energy stores that fracking will poison. Contrary to the rhetoric, the fracking process is not deep, and the totality of its adverse affect on crucial near surface ecologies is not even mentioned by the so-called experts.

Cornell professor Tommy Gold wrote the 1999 book "The Deep Hot Biosphere." Its subtitle explains, "A renowned scientist's revolutionary theory of a vast subterranean habitat and its significance for life's origins on our planet." Can we debate fracking based on a concern for our environment, but never mention the true crux: Protecting life itself? With a well-established record of destroying drinking water and soil chemistry, why have the alleged experts never mentioned the devastation that fracking will wreak on the microbial ecologies of the crustal biosphere? This criticism is directed at my alma mater since they wrote the proverbial book on these subjects!

Rather than promoting frauds like "fossil fuels" or money-making schemes such as "carbon footprints," Cornell should be contributing real science and true environmentalism. Regarding "The Deep Hot Biosphere," I project that a competent investigation of fracking will establish a methane-premised symbiosis between subsurface microorganisms and green plant life. Theoretically, this symbiosis contributes to the overall ecology that sustains "bird-like" humans. Given that much of Gold's theory has already been confirmed, until the symbiosis of the biosphere is understood, our knowledge of the true dangers of fracking is incomplete.

Sheridan, a safety engineering specialist, is a Dearborne, Mich., resident and Cornell alumnus.



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