



Geo-Strata

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P582's Climate Problems Need More Than Just Defense

Aliens report geoprofessionals are needed to solve problems... but are they up to it?

Good morning, Commander. We have completed our survey of P582, third planet from Star 81144. As our probes indicated, the planet supports life forms – “humans” – similar to ourselves, but far less developed; more or less what we were 100 millennia ago.

The planet's environment is a growing human concern. The oceans are becoming warmer, spawning ever more violent weather events (torrential rains, unprecedented snowfalls, hurricanes, tornadoes) and accelerating glacier and permafrost melt. The melt is causing sea levels to rise, threatening port cities worldwide.

All intelligent beings on P582 now agree that climate change is real, but – instead of taking aggressive, united action as our own forefathers did – P582's inhabitants bicker about the cause of the change. Some say it is being greatly accelerated by the injection of greenhouse gases into the planet's atmosphere; others, who used to deny climate change altogether, now deny that greenhouse gases are a cause, evidently to justify continued reliance on fossil fuels. (The planet's records reveal similar divisions in thought when it was suggested a half-century before that cigarette smoking was a cause of cancer and heart disease or that dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane endangered avian life.) Are greenhouse gases contributing to climate change? According to a vast majority of the planet's reputable scientists, yes; there can be no doubt. And undeniably, greenhouse gases are causing the growing acidity of the planet's oceans. (Our sampling indicates that, by 2050, P582's coral reefs will all be dead.)

No matter what's causing the planet's climate problems, geoprofessionals are those most capable of developing the systems humans need to defend themselves against them, like rising sea levels, flooding, desertification, and diminishing potable water supplies.

The planet needs more than just defense, of course, and – as it so happens – geoprofessionals also are the individuals who apply the expertise and creativity essential to the location and extraction of the fossil fuels (among other subterranean resources) that will remain essential until sufficient alternative energy sources are created. Geoprofessionals' expertise and creativity also are essential to develop those alternatives, just as they are integral to the design and construction integrity of buildings, bridges, tunnels, harbors, airports, highways, rail-

ways, water and sewer systems, and virtually every other structure built on or beneath the planet's surface. Geoprofessionals also develop systems to clean up environmental pollution of the past and prevent more from occurring in the future. They also develop systems that support sustainability, so the current human generation does not compromise future generations' ability to flourish...or at least survive.

Strangely, few of the planet's inhabitants know geoprofessionals exist, and even those who do seem to have little concept of how important geoprofessionals are. Even stranger, the planet's geoprofessionals themselves fail to appreciate their importance, perhaps explaining why so few take the time to tell others about geoprofessionals' contributions to humankind and why so many seem content to be unknown and undervalued. So, instead of informing their fellow humans about what is occurring (regardless of why), and what geoprofessionals can and should be working on now to ensure a future for humankind, geoprofessionals seem focused on selling their talent, experience, and knowledge as cheaply as possible. “We're all the same,” some say, suggesting that those who purchase their expertise might as well pay the lowest rate, much as they would for gasoline (a primitive form of liquefied fossil fuel used to operate internal combustion engines). Some say otherwise, but their deeds belie their words. They dress the same. They construct and decorate their workplaces the same. They even write the same.

Geoprofessionals' situation is made even worse by their unwillingness to speak up: They fail to protest what they know is wrong. They allow what's wrong to be accepted as right because they remain out of public leadership, thus – by default – entrusting their future to the same people who have done such a poor job with their past and present.

This note: As we were leaving P582, a group of geoprofessional firms was initiating a movement to achieve more recognition and respect for the geoprofessions, beginning with defining “geoprofessions” in their universal “Wikipedia” repository of knowledge. They hope to have other geoprofessional organizations join with them to develop examples of geoprofessional ingenuity and explain to peers, colleagues, clients, and those who influence clients why geoprofessionals, when wisely retained



and deployed, create value otherwise unattainable. Achieving their purpose will enable geoprofessionals to think better of themselves, tell their story to others, attract more good minds to their cause, and earn compensation more appropriate for their contributions. We wish them success, for their own sakes and for the sakes of all others who currently enjoy P528.

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