



Here's what's going to happen if we all keep putting one foot in front of the other courtesy of Jeremy Leggett, geologist turned environmentalist writing about the near-future in 2006, "The price of houses will collapse. Stock markets will crash. Within a short period, human wealth -- little more than a pile of paper at the best of times, even with the confidence about the future high among traders -- will shrivel.

There will be emergency summits, diplomatic initiatives, urgent exploration efforts, but the turmoil will not subside. Thousands of companies will go bankrupt, and millions will be unemployed. Once affluent cities with street cafés will have queues at soup kitchens and armies of beggars. The crime rate will soar. The earth has always been a dangerous place, but now it will become a tinderbox.

... As with the Great Depression, economic hardship will bring out the worst in people. Fascists will rise, feeding on the anger of the newly poor and whipping up support. These new rulers will find the tools of repression -- emergency laws, prison camps, a relaxed attitude toward torture ..."

If that's as bad as it's going to get, then everybody can breathe a huge sigh of relief. But sadly we've got a lot more down to go.

We keep on making babies so the world's population is projected to reach 7.9 billion by 2025. In 14 short years from today, 5 billion people, over half the world's population, is expected to experience periodic water shortages. Rising temperatures and lack of water are likely to decrease the production of staple foods in many of the planet's poorest countries by up to 50%.

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