

Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences."* According to the report, "changes in rainfall patterns will bring droughts to the American Southwest, southern Europe, northern Africa and western Australia comparable to those that caused the 1930s Dust Bowl in the U.S." The Times adds, "Scientists familiar with the report said it emphasized the need for immediate action to control emissions."

As far as I can tell, the paper is all bunk. Looks like *PNAS* is trying to outdo *Science* and *Nature* in publishing really bad science -- all to get some media publicity. Deplorable. Actually, the bunk is 5-fold. But I want to run my thinking past some fellow physicists -- before I go public and make an ass of myself:

(1) There is the fundamental issue of whether increases in CO₂ produce any appreciable warming. If you read the NIPCC report, you all know where I stand on this. The authors adopt a climate sensitivity that is likely too high by a factor of ten. Much ado about nothing. I trust they remembered the fact that the response to increasing CO₂ grows only logarithmically.

(2) Then there is the claim of increased drought (and related disasters). Ah, Clausius-Clapeyron, where are you when we need you? If the oceans warm, then there must be more evaporation and precip. Can one really trust models to know where it will rain? If circulation is affected so that the Earth's desert belts expand, then wouldn't this also guarantee more negative climate feedback from water vapor -- offsetting the warming from CO₂? And what about the 'verdant Sahara' during the Holocene Warm Period?

(3) Sea-level rise. The paper produces numbers that greatly exceed those of the 2007 IPCC report (and even more those of NIPCC -- 18cm per century) by ignoring the considerable offsetting effects that come from ice accumulation, mainly on the Antarctic continent.

(4) Much more subtle -- and disputed -- is the question of lifetime of CO₂ increases. Is it really the complicated composite of several removal mechanisms that would let CO₂ increases remain in the atmosphere for millennia? I don't think so -- but to overcome conventional wisdom I will have to make my arguments more convincing. We also have contrary empirical evidence from volcanic injections.

(5) Finally, this business of "the warming in the pipeline," which has become folklore and unchallenged since Hansen and Wigley first invented it about 20 years ago. Hansen used it recently [*Science* 2005] -- and now Solomon. The "pipeline principle" claims that even if GH gases are stabilized, temperatures will keep increasing because of heat stored in the oceans. Apparently, many 'skeptics' believe it also. I think it may violate the Second Law of Thermodynamics -- which is a no-no for physicists like me.

1. The WashPost is somewhat critical of Obama's environmental approaches

2. Real power on enviro policy is held by EPA --- in principle

3. Why don't we drill like Brazil?

4. British climate policy in disarray

5. Elephants vs African children -- Bjorn Lomborg

6. Germany uneasy about EU emissions trading scheme

7. Why kick the auto industry when it's down? -- Holman Jenkins

8. The Goracle tells the Senate: We're doomed

9. Global warming poetry

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Obama urgent on global warming, but public remains cool. So reports Andy Revkin in NYT Dot Earth, 22 Jan 2009 <http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/01/22/obamas-urgency-on-warming-meets-cool-public/?hp>

The latest in an annual series of polls from the Pew Research Center on people's top priorities for their elected leaders shows that America and President Obama are completely out of sync on human-caused global warming. Mr. Obama stressed the issue throughout his campaign and several times in his inaugural speech, mentioning stabilizing climate in the same breath as preventing nuclear conflict at one point. According to the survey of 1,503 adults, global warming, on its own, ranks last out of 20 surveyed issues.

Plans to curb climate change by using plankton to draw carbon dioxide into the world's oceans have been boosted. A spectacular natural algal bloom in the Southern Ocean helped to "lock" carbon away into deep-sea sediments, according to a study in *Nature* journal. Plans to "seed" plankton blooms by adding iron to oceans are strongly opposed by many green groups.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/7856144.stm>

NASA's Jim Hansen's ex-boss comes clean

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2009/01/27/james-hansens-former-nasa-supervisor-declares-himself-a-skeptic-says-hansen-embarrassed-nasa-was-never-muzzled/>

Electric cars are cheaper and faster than any hybrid on the market, says Shai Agassi.

<http://www.newsweek.com/id/178851>

Canadian climate scientist Norm Kalmanovich reports : Using temperature as the real target (instead of GH gases), **2008 was 0.0175C cooler than 1990, the Kyoto base year!**

"When I add up the twelve values for the monthly global temperature anomaly for 2008 to get the average for the year, the number comes out to 0.0583C. For the Kyoto base year of 1990, I get 0.0758C"

UNDER THE BOTTOM LINE

'Gore Effect' Strikes Again! GORE HEARING ON WARMING MAY BE PUT ON ICE - Mother Nature's Sense of Humor. Al Gore is scheduled before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to once again testify on the 'urgent need' to combat global warming. But Mother Nature seems ready to freeze the proceedings. [A 'Winter Storm Watch' has been posted for the nation's capitol](#) and there is a potential for significant snow... sleet... or ice accumulations. "I can't imagine the Democrats would want to showcase Mr. Gore and his new findings on global warming as a winter storm rages outside," a Republican lawmaker emailed the DRUDGE REPORT. "And if the ice really piles up, it will not be safe to travel." A spokesman for Sen. John Kerry, who chairs the committee, was not immediately available to comment on contingency plans. Global warming advocates have suggested this year's wild winter spells are proof of climate change.

<http://www.drudgereport.com/flashghi.htm>

"NASA Study Links Severe Storm Increases, Global Warming" 1/24/09 *Pasadena Star News Green Sheet* includes the following statement: "Climate modelers have long speculated that the frequency and intensity of severe storms may or may not increase with Global Warming." We're sure glad THAT's settled.

BBC Jan 27 A mathematical model based on fading sea ice and the population growth of emperor penguins suggests their likely demise - acc to **research published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences***. [SEPP comment: Of course, Antarctic ice is growing, but why quibble]

<http://tomnelson.blogspot.com/2009/01/youtube-david-bellamy-late-late-show.html>

April '08: **Pure insanity from John Holdren on David Letterman**. Holdren uses the indefensible term "accelerating" several times; twice, around the 5:30 mark of the interview, he actually says "the Earth has a fever"; he also claims that we're already "suffering" from global warming. Note that he talks about the

skeptics, starting at the 4:30 mark. Remember, Holdren isn't just any nut; he's the nut that Obama has chosen as his science advisor. {H/t Marc Morano}

Nobody wants an opera about global warming - Director quits 'An Inconvenient Truth' opera in Milan:

http://www.nypost.com/seven/01252009/gossip/pagesix/truth_is_director_has_bolted_151953.htm

Remember the 'Aria of Prince Algorino'? www.sepp.org/Archive/weekwas/2008/Aug_2_2008.htm

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1. AGENT OF (CLIMATE) CHANGE

President Obama ends White House inaction -- but there's a better way to tackle greenhouse gas emissions.

Wash Post editorial, January 28, 2009; A14

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/27/AR2009012703013_Comments.html

PRESIDENT OBAMA this week made an initial break from the frustrating inaction of President Bush on curbing greenhouse gas emissions. This reflected a welcome change in attitude at the White House. Unfortunately, the regulatory action that Mr. Obama set in motion is not the best, or even the second-best, approach to curbing climate change. It risks creating conflicting standards across the country and further stressing the domestic auto industry while accomplishing less than could be achieved with a simple tax increase on gasoline.

Mr. Obama took two steps. He ordered the Transportation Department to issue interim fuel-efficiency targets for automakers to meet by the 2012 model year. This is a step toward achieving a national fleet average of 35 miles per gallon by 2020, as mandated by the 2007 energy law.

He also told the Environmental Protection Agency to review a request from California to grant it a waiver to implement its stringent tailpipe emissions law. The District of Columbia, Maryland and 12 other states have adopted the California standard. Six others are considering adopting it. Together they account for more than 45 percent of the sales of new vehicles in the United States. The goal is to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from cars and light trucks in participating states by 30 percent by 2016. The Bush EPA rejected the waiver request, despite support for it from EPA scientists and lawyers, in part because a "patchwork" of standards among states would be unwieldy and costly to industry.

It is a relief that talk of reducing greenhouse gas emissions is giving way to action. But there is a more effective way to reduce such emissions than to order Detroit to start making cars that people may not want to buy, or to let states issue such orders. The answer is to change the incentives so that people want to buy fuel-efficient vehicles; then companies will make such cars, even without commands from Washington. We saw this principle in action last summer when gas prices rose; rail ridership and small-car purchases also increased, while SUVs went begging on dealers' lots.

Mr. Obama and Congress could impose a gradual rise in fuel prices that would not shock the system. To avoid an anti-stimulatory effect, they could rebate the proceeds to taxpayers. Yet the action would send a crucial signal to automakers, auto buyers and investors in alternative energy. And that would establish what the nation and its auto industry ultimately need: a robust market for cars and trucks that reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and protect the environment.

2. REAL POWER IN WASHINGTON RESIDES IN ENVIRONMENTAL CHIEF

By MARGO THORNING, January 27, 2009

Think the most powerful person in the U.S. government is President Obama? Think again. It reality it may be Environmental Protection Agency Chief Lisa Jackson.

In the race for action on climate change and to curb man-made greenhouse gases that moves swifter than the pace of legislative change, many are turning to the EPA and the Clean Air Act, which empowered the federal government to enforce clean air standards to improve human health and living conditions.

If President Obama moves to classify carbon dioxide as a dangerous pollutant to be regulated by the EPA, as he pledged during the campaign, the change in policy could significantly alter the lives of Americans.

While the Clean Air Act has been legitimately and usefully used to combat ozone depletion, acid rain, pollution and smog, using it to curb greenhouse gases is about as good an idea as using a power drill to do brain surgery.

Cap-and-trade regulations or a carbon tax are both costly ways to try to cut man-made global warming but using the blunt and heavy regulatory hand of the Clean Air Act will have a huge economic impact, not just on large carbon emitters, but on the lifestyles President Obama pledged to protect in his inaugural address.

California Attorney General and potential gubernatorial candidate Jerry Brown has already made clear the broad brush with which he would like to see the Act used. "Ships, aircraft and industrial equipment burn huge quantities of fossil fuel, causing greenhouse gas pollution . . . Because Bush's Environmental Protection Agency continues to wantonly ignore its duty to regulate pollution, California is forced to seek judicial action," Brown said.

The costs of compliance for this vision would be severe, particularly since technologies to capture and sequester carbon are far from being online. Those sectors that fall victim to severe Clean Air Act regulations will have no choice but to pass along the costs of compliance to consumers. Higher prices will surely cripple an already distressed airline industry, and travelers can expect to see more limited flights at a much higher cost. Regulated shipping fleets will impact trade and commerce.

Commercial office buildings will be affected. Large-scale retailers and restaurants are huge consumers of energy and could also feel the pains of mandated emissions reduction. They, too, will have no choice but to pass their increased costs on to customers.

New automobiles will undoubtedly be mandated to be equipped with the strictest emission standards, driving the costs of a new car out of reach for many. Low carbon-emitting natural gas will quickly become the favored fuel, and prices will rise correspondingly to demand.

Because we are a carbon-emitting society, virtually all aspects of our daily lives could fall under the purview of the next EPA administration.

Will there be any environmental gain for all of the economic pain? Likely not, since greenhouse gas emissions are a global problem not bound by national boundaries. Despite the best efforts of industrial and business sectors to curb emissions, the Clean Air Act will have zero impact on greenhouse gases emitted and migrating from developing nations like China and India.

Until now, the EPA has wisely rejected use of the Clean Air Act to tackle greenhouse gases and has been able to safeguard Americans against these misguided efforts. In July, former EPA administrator Stephen L. Johnson explained the agency's decision: "If our nation is serious about regulating greenhouse gases, the Clean Air Act is the wrong tool for the job."

While recent legal efforts by states and environmental groups could overturn the EPA's decision, broad use of the Clean Air Act against greenhouse gases will likely be left up to Ms. Jackson.

If President Obama wants a meaningful energy and environment policy without putting our struggling economy into a tailspin, business and industry should be invited to the table to come up with a collaborative, market-based approach.

There will also need to be global partnerships that focus on practical steps to promote cleaner, less-emitting technology for electricity generation from coal-fired plants, capturing and storing CO₂, as well as reducing emissions from steel, aluminum production, and coal mining in developing and developed countries.

Energy use and economic growth go hand in hand. Leaders that seek solutions through legislative fiat do not recognize this fact and will do permanent harm to both.

Thorning is senior vice president and chief economist of the American Council for Capital Formation.

3. DRILL LIKE BRAZIL

As the United States seeks to get its economy going by building roads, bridges and bicycle paths, Brazil has decided to create jobs and move toward energy independence by investing in its energy infrastructure and the liquid gold that lies just off its pristine beaches, says Investor's Business Daily (IBD).

- o Brazil's state-owned energy giant, Petrobras, announced on Friday that it plans to spend \$174.4 billion on developing its huge recent offshore oil finds through 2013.
- o A \$28.6 billion spending plan for this year will be financed in part on loans from Brazil's state development bank.

"This is not a rescue," Petrobras CEO Jose Sergio Gabrielli told reporters in Rio de Janeiro. "This is very different than what is happening in other countries. This is not a bailout." Indeed, it's an investment that fosters energy independence, keeps Brazil's energy dollars at home and creates jobs, says IBD. "The volumes of investments will have an important macroeconomic impact in Brazil," said Gabrielli.

Such investments could have a similar beneficial impact on the American economy, and the irony is that the oil companies are willing to use their own money here if we let them. Yet, even more restrictions on U.S. domestic production are planned, says IBD:

- o Thanks in part to a relentless pursuit of domestic energy resources to complement its ethanol production, the Brazilian economy grew 5.8 percent in 2008 and is projected to expand 2.9 percent even in a tough 2009, according to the median estimate of 16 economists surveyed by Bloomberg.
- o If Brazil had copied our current energy policy, it wouldn't have discovered in November 2007 the Tupi field or in April 2008 the Carioca field in the deep-water Santos Basin off Brazil's southeastern coast.
- o Tupi is estimated to contain 5 billion to 8 billion barrels of crude, and Carioca may hold up to 33 billion - the third-largest oil field ever discovered and big enough to supply every refinery in the United States for six years.

These discoveries and others around the world show that oil has not peaked, and new technologies continue to expand reserves beyond the level of consumption. Other countries recognize the economic importance of domestic energy resources. We are in fact the only industrial country to put our reserves off-limits, says IBD.

Source: Editorial, "Drill Like Brazil," Investor's Business Journal, Jan 27, 2009.

<http://www.ibdeditorials.com/IBDArticles.aspx?id=317864993919817> H/t NCPA

4. BRITISH CLIMATE POLICY IN DISARRAY

By Fiona Harvey, Jim Pickard -- Financial Times, 27 January 2009

FULL STORY at <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/86cb909a-ec11-11dd-8838-0000779fd2ac.html>

The UK is losing its attraction for renewable energy generators, putting future energy security and the government's climate change targets in jeopardy, Lord Smith has told the Financial Times in an interview. The chairman of the Environment Agency said he was concerned about several recent announcements from big energy companies that they were reconsidering plans for offshore wind farms. "I'm very worried by the fact that a number of companies have said they are no longer actively considering major schemes in the UK," he said.

German energy group Eon is the latest company to reconsider its plans, the FT disclosed yesterday. Paul Golby, Eon's chief executive, said the economics of the London Array, touted as the world's biggest wind farm, were "on a knife edge".

Lord Smith highlighted BP as an example of a high-profile investor pulling out. The company last year said it would abandon plans to invest in UK offshore wind farms, preferring instead to put its money into onshore wind energy in the US. Shell made a similar announcement when it pulled out of the London Array last summer, leaving Eon and Dong, the other partners, to find a replacement. Centrica also said it would review its offshore wind plans.

[SEPP Comment: This may mean, unfortunately, that the US govt provides greater financial incentives]

The looming energy gap caused by the closure of creaking fossil fuel plants, coupled with strict climate change targets to cut carbon emissions, means the UK must vastly increase the amount of electricity generated by renewables.

A Government-commissioned report said that the country could generate enough electricity to power almost all the homes in the UK by building 7,000 more wind turbines offshore. However, energy companies are already warning that the technology will struggle in the current economic climate with the world's biggest offshore project, the London Array, said to be on a "knife edge" because of rising costs.

Tidal power is another option and the Government announced the shortlist of five schemes for generating power at the mouth of the River Severn. The favourite, a 10-mile barrage from Cardiff to Weston-super-Mare, would provide five per cent of the UK's energy needs. The four other schemes, including two smaller barrages and two innovative lagoon schemes, which would impound a section of the estuary without damming it, would be less damaging but provide a fifth of the energy.

5. THE CLIMATE CHANGE SAFARI PARK

By Bjorn Lomborg, 23 Jan 2009

<http://economicstimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/4019133.cms?prtpage=1>

Barack Obama in his inaugural speech promised to "roll back the spectre of a warming planet." In this context, it is worth contemplating a passage from his book *Dreams from My Father*. It reveals a lot about the way we view the world's problems.

Obama is in Kenya and wants to go on a safari. His Kenyan sister Auma chides him for behaving like a neo-colonialist. "Why should all that land be set aside for tourists when it could be used for farming? These *wazungu* care more about one dead elephant than they do for a hundred black children." Although he ends up going on safari, Obama has no answer to her question. That anecdote has parallels with the current preoccupation with global warming. Many people including America's new President believe that global warming is the pre-eminent issue of our time, and that cutting CO2 emissions is one of the most virtuous things we can do.

To stretch the metaphor a little, this seems like building ever-larger safari parks instead of creating more farms to feed the hungry.

Make no mistake: global warming is real, and it is caused by manmade CO2 emissions. The problem is that even global, draconian, and hugely costly CO2 reductions will have virtually no impact on the temperature by mid-century. Instead of ineffective and costly cuts, we should focus much more of our good climate intentions on dramatic increases in R&D for zero-carbon energy, which would fix the climate towards mid-century at low cost. But, more importantly for most of the planet's citizens, global warming simply exacerbates existing problems.

Consider malaria. Models shows global warming will increase the incidence of malaria by about 3% by the

end of the century, because mosquitoes are more likely to survive when the world gets hotter. But malaria is much more strongly related to health infrastructure and general wealth than it is to temperature. Rich people rarely contract malaria or die from it; poor people do.

Strong carbon cuts could avert about 0.2% of the malaria incidence in a hundred years. The other option is simply to prioritise eradication of malaria today. It would be relatively cheap and simple, involving expanded distribution of insecticide-treated bed nets, more preventive treatment for pregnant women, increased use of the maligned pesticide DDT, and support for poor nations that cannot afford the best new therapies.

Tackling nearly 100% of today's malaria problem would cost just one-sixtieth of the price of the Kyoto Protocol. Put another way, for each person saved from malaria by cutting CO2 emissions, direct malaria policies could have saved 36,000. Of course, carbon cuts are not designed only to tackle malaria. But, for every problem that global warming will exacerbate hurricanes, hunger, flooding we could achieve tremendously more through cheaper, direct policies today.

For example, adequately maintained levees and better evacuation services, not lower carbon emissions, would have minimised the damage inflicted by Hurricane Katrina on New Orleans. During the 2004 hurricane season, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, both occupying the same island, provided a powerful lesson. In the Dominican Republic, which has invested in hurricane shelters and emergency evacuation networks, the death toll was fewer than ten. In Haiti, which lacks such policies, 2,000 died. Haitians were a hundred times more likely to die in an equivalent storm than Dominicans.

Obama's election has raised hopes for a massive commitment to carbon cuts and vast spending on renewable energy to save the world especially developing nations. As Obama's Kenyan sister might attest, this could be an expensive indulgence. Some believe Obama should follow the lead of the European Union, which has committed itself to the goal of cutting carbon emissions by 20% below 1990 levels within 12 years by using renewable energy. This alone will probably cost more than 1% of GDP.

Even if the entire world followed suit, the net effect would be to reduce global temperatures by one-twentieth of one degree Fahrenheit by the end of the century. The cost could be a staggering \$10 trillion.

Most economic models show that the total damage imposed by global warming by the end of the century will be about 3% of GDP. This is not trivial, but nor is it the end of the world. By the end of the century, the United Nations expects the average person to be 1,400% richer than today.

An African safari trip once confronted America's new president with a question he could not answer: why the rich world prized elephants over African children. Today's version of that question is: why will richer nations spend obscene amounts of money on climate change, achieving next to nothing in 100 years, when we could do so much good for mankind today for much less money? The world will be watching to hear Obama's answer.

(The author, adjunct professor at the Copenhagen Business School, is the organiser of the Copenhagen Consensus.)

6. GERMANY'S SERIOUS MISGIVINGS ABOUT EU EMISSIONS TRADING SCHEME

Eureferendum, 24 January 2009

<http://eureferendum.blogspot.com/2009/01/nice-old-dust-up.html>

On Thursday, German economy minister Michael Glos was expressing "serious misgivings" about the EU's emissions trading scheme, complaining that it could cost jobs if it went ahead in its current form. His own scientific advisory board is urging the repeal of strict limits for CO2 emissions, and an easing of the system in order to stabilise the price of permits.

This may or may not be connected with an announcement yesterday that the German energy giant RWE has decided to build no more new power plants in western Europe, as the EU's emissions trading scheme has rendered new projects "unprofitable".

"We will go ahead with power-plants which we are already planning or which are already under construction," said Johannes Lambertz, chief executive of RWE's power unit. "Further projects are on hold until they become economical." Lambertz adds that, "The current framework leads to a situation where it can be more economical to continue operating old power plants than to build new ones and then having to bear the costs for the construction and the emission certificates."

Connection or not, it looks like the Germans are set for a confrontation with the EU over "climate change", a dust-up which is potentially even more attractive than the one pictured. "I tell you, its obsession with "climate change" is going to be the undoing of the EU. The electricity riots of 2015 are going to make this look like a Sunday school outing." (H/t CCNet)

7. DETROIT TAKES ONE (MORE) FOR THE TEAM: OBAMA OFFERS ANOTHER COSTLY, DESTRUCTIVE GESTURE

By HOLMAN W. JENKINS, JR. WSJ, JANUARY 28, 2009

Why kick the auto industry when it's down?

President Obama rolled out his first big gesture on energy and the environment this week. It consisted of a cunning, even brutal judgment -- we're tempted to liken it to the besieged submarine commander in the movies who fills his torpedo tubes with his dead comrades and jettisons them overboard to fool the enemy destroyer circling overhead.

In this case, the circling destroyer is Mr. Obama's green constituency, hungry for a gesture on climate change and energy independence. The dead crewmen are the Detroit automakers. They've already been blown to pieces by last year's runup in gas prices and then the credit meltdown. They'll hardly notice an additional blow in Mr. Obama's EPA likely granting a California request to regulate vehicular emissions of carbon dioxide, which means effectively stepped-up fuel mileage mandates stiffer than the federal government's.

Never mind the absurdity of the issue. California has received waivers to set its own Clean Air Act rules since the very beginning because California suffered unique air pollution problems. California does not suffer unique global warming problems. In no way is the state uniquely affected by the climate risks posed by tailpipe emissions of carbon dioxide. California politicians were acting purely in a grandstanding capacity to seek such a waiver. Mr. Obama would be acting from purely a least-cost political calculation in granting it.

On Monday, Mr. Obama also ran out a plan for newly hiked-up federal mileage standards, giving the greenies one bite of the apple and making it sound like two.

How the Detroit auto industry set itself up to become a safe political target for such costly, destructive gestures is a subject we've covered before. But let us grant the political system a certain adaptive wisdom. The car industry must die a thousand deaths so the rest of the economy may live -- especially since we've already committed to using taxpayer dollars to make it up to Detroit and buy the acquiescence of its lobbyists.

What must Mr. Obama's incoming regulatory czar, Cass Sunstein, an expert on cost-benefit analysis, make of this regulatory excursion? His accession has hardly delighted the greenies, not least because of papers he's written suggesting the U.S. has relatively little to fear from climate change compared to other nations, as well as entertaining the possibility that the costs of fighting global warming might be greater than the benefits.

Is there room in Prof. Sunstein's cost-benefit models for a policy that makes no sense on its own terms, but is meant to stave off something worse?

On Monday, like every politician since Nixon (practically), Mr. Obama invoked "every president since Nixon" on the subject of the need urgently to pursue energy independence. He actually channels John Kerry's 2004 evasion, however, promising to reduce America's oil consumption decades hence by a tiddly two million barrels a day or "nearly the amount we import from the Persian Gulf."

Big whoop. We and the rest of the world would end up more dependent on Middle East oil, not less so. Low-cost oil is consumed before high-cost oil. The lowest-cost production is in the Mideast, so any reduction in our consumption would result in non-Mideast oil being squeezed out of the market.

8. WITH AL DUE RESPECT, WE'RE DOOMED: GORE URGES ACTION ON ECONOMY, GLOBAL WARMING

Former Vice President Al Gore urged lawmakers Wednesday not to let the U.S. economic crisis get in the way of addressing global warming.

By Dana Milbank, January 29, 2009; Page A03

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/28/AR2009012803318.html>

The lawmakers gazed in awe at the figure before them. The Goracle had seen the future, and he had come to tell them about it. What the Goracle saw in the future was not good: temperature changes that "would bring a screeching halt to human civilization and threaten the fabric of life everywhere on the Earth -- and this is within this century, if we don't change."

The chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, John Kerry (D-Mass.), appealed to hear more of the Goracle's premonitions. "Share with us, if you would, sort of the immediate vision that you see in this transformative process as we move to this new economy," he beseeched. "Geothermal energy," the Goracle prophesied. "This has great potential; it is not very far off."

Another lawmaker asked about the future of nuclear power. "I have grown skeptical about the degree to which it will expand," the Goracle spoke. A third asked the legislative future -- and here the Goracle spoke in riddle. "The road to Copenhagen has three steps to it," he said.

Sen. James Risch (R-Idaho) begged the Goracle to look further into the future. "What does your modeling tell you about how long we're going to be around as a species?" he inquired. The Goracle chuckled. "I don't claim the expertise to answer a question like that, Senator." It was a jarring reminder that the Goracle is, indeed, mortal.

Once Al Gore was a mere vice president, but now he is a Nobel laureate and climate-change prophet. He repeats phrases such as "unified national smart grid" the way he once did "no controlling legal authority" -- and the ridicule has been replaced by worship, even by his political foes. "Tennessee," gushed Sen. Bob Corker, a Republican from Gore's home state, "has a legacy of having people here in the Senate and in public service that have been of major consequence and contributed in a major way to the public debate, and you no doubt have helped build that legacy." If that wasn't quite enough, Corker added: "Very much enjoyed your sense of humor, too." Humor? From Al Gore? "I benefit from low expectations," he replied.

The Goracle's powers seem to come from his ability to scare the bejesus out of people. "We must face up to this urgent and unprecedented threat to the existence of our civilization," he said. And: "This is the most serious challenge the world has ever faced." And: It "could completely end human civilization, and it is rushing at us with such speed and force."

Though some lawmakers tangled with Gore on his last visit to Capitol Hill, none did on the Foreign Relations Committee yesterday. Dick Lugar (Ind.), the ranking Republican, agreed that there will be "an almost existential impact" from the climate changes Gore described. As such, the Goracle, even when questioned, was shown great deference. Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.), challenging Gore over spent nuclear fuel,

began by saying: "I stand to be corrected, and I defer to your position, you're probably right, and I'm probably wrong." He ended his question by saying: "I'm not questioning you; I'm questioning myself."

Others sought to buy the Goracle's favor by offering him gifts. "Thank you for your incredible leadership; you make this crystalline for those who don't either understand it or want to understand it," gushed Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), who went on to ask: "Will you join me this summer at the Jersey Shore?"

The chairman worried that the Goracle may have been offended by "naysayers" who thought it funny that Gore's testimony before the committee came on a morning after a snow-and-ice storm in the capital. "The little snow in Washington does nothing to diminish the reality of the crisis," Kerry said at the start of the hearing. The climate was well controlled inside the hearing room, although Gore, suffering from a case of personal climate change, perspired heavily during his testimony.

The Goracle presented the latest version of his climate-change slide show to the senators: a globe with yellow and red blotches, a house falling into water, and ones with obscure titles such as "Warming Impacts Ugandan Coffee Growing Region." At one point he flashed a biblical passage on the screen, but he quickly removed it. "I'm not proselytizing," he explained. A graphic showing a disappearing rain forest was accompanied by construction noises.

The Goracle supplied abundant metaphors to accompany his visuals. Oil demand: "This roller coaster is headed for a crash, and we're in the front car." Polar ice: "Like a beating heart, and the permanent ice looks almost like blood spilling out of a body along the eastern coast of Greenland." The lawmakers joined in. "There are a lot of ways to skin a cat," contributed Isakson, who is unlikely to get the Humane Society endorsement. "And if we have the dire circumstances we're facing, we need to find every way to skin every cat."

Mostly, however, the lawmakers took turns asking the Goracle for advice, as if playing with a Magic 8 Ball. Lugar, a 32-year veteran of the Senate, asked Gore, as a "practical politician," how to get the votes for climate-change legislation. "I am a recovering politician. I'm on about Step 9," the Goracle replied, before providing his vision. Prospects for regulating a future carbon emissions market? "There's a high degree of confidence." The future of automobiles in China and India? "I wouldn't give up on electric vehicles." The potential of solar power in those countries? "I have no question about it at all."

Of course not. He's the Goracle.

9. POETRY ABOUT GLOBAL WARMING

There once was a warmer named Mann.....(from Prof Norm Kalmanovich)
Who had trouble with the models he ran
So he called on the mystics
To fudge the statistics
In support of the great Goracle plan.

I am the very model of a modern climate scientist <http://www.climateaudit.org/?p=3393#comment-285810>

I can program my computer in style archaic and diabolical
I can simulate in Fortran and list in order alphabetical
I can document my articles using references -- real and hypothetical
[Chorus explains - in press and preparational]
In short, I am the very model of a modern climate scientist

For my knowledge of statistics, though I'm plucky and adventury
Has only been brought down to the middle of the century
But still, in matters modeling and simulationist,
I am the very model of a modern climate scientist