

The Week That Was (May 23, 2009) brought to you by SEPP

Heartland's Third International Conference on Climate Change June 2, 2009 in Washington, DC
For Registration and Program see www.heartland.org

NO TWTW ON MAY 30 because of GW discussions at Princeton Univ

Quote of the Week:

It is not possible to engage in rational discussion with irrational beliefs. It is also not possible to engage in rational discussion with those whose interest in the global warming bandwagon is as a way to make money or build a career. -- Prof. Jonathan Katz (Washington University)

THIS WEEK

On May 21, the House Energy and Commerce Committee approved the all-encompassing American Clean Energy and Security Act (H.R. 2454 or "ACES") 33-25, after repeatedly turning back GOP attempts to kill or weaken the measure during four days of debate.

The panel's action increases the likelihood that the full House will address broad legislation to tackle climate change for the first time – although the Ways and Means Committee will consider it before it goes to the House floor. In the Senate, leaders say they lack the votes to pass the bill as it is now written.

Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif., the panel's chairman, said the bill represents "decisive and historic action" to increase America's energy security and deal with global warming. "When this bill is enacted into law, we will break our dependence on foreign oil, make our nation the world leader in clean-energy jobs and technology, and cut global-warming pollution," said Waxman.

Republicans argued that the pollution cuts would lead to soaring energy prices and threaten economic growth by imposing new costs on energy-intensive industries already facing economic hardships. "We don't want to put the economy in jeopardy," said Rep. Joe Barton of Texas, the committee's ranking Republican. He offered an alternative that would have scrapped the cap on greenhouse gases and pollution-trading scheme, provide more incentives for nuclear energy, and bolster research into capturing carbon from coal-burning power plants. It was defeated 35-19.

To get the support of Democrats from coal and industrial states, Waxman agreed to give away significant emissions allowances to industries in their states, including the electric utilities, steel manufactures, automakers and refineries. In weeks of closed-door negotiations with these Democrats, and after millions spent on lobbying, Mr. Waxman doled out billions of dollars worth of free pollution permits, known as allowances, to cushion any price shock caused by imposing a cap on emissions of heat-trapping gases. The government would sell only 15 percent of the allowances and use the money to provide direct relief to consumers.

Waxman also scaled back the required greenhouse gas reductions between now and 2020 from 20 percent to 17 percent. And he eased somewhat the requirement for utilities to use renewable energy such as wind and solar for electricity production.

Democrats also added language to create a clean energy bank to dispense grants for new forms of energy and inserted a "cash for clunkers" program that would provide rebates to consumers who turn in gas-guzzling vehicles for more fuel-efficient cars.

But some groups, like [Greenpeace](http://www.greenpeace.org), Friends of the Earth, and [Public Citizen](http://www.publiccitizen.org), expressed concern that the bill as drafted gave away too much to 'polluting' industries and depended excessively on hypothetical reductions in emissions of heat-trapping gases from developing countries.

In the end, 85 percent of all pollution allowances were given at no cost for various purposes, including compensating energy-intensive industries, state governments, oil refiners and low-income households, at least in the early years of the program.

However, a provision in the ACES bill allows polluting firms in the U.S. to finance emissions reductions overseas in lieu of reducing their own global warming pollution and may allow American emissions to continue to rise for up to twenty years, according to new analysis from the Breakthrough Institute.

The provision allows power plants, oil refiners, and other polluters regulated under the bill's cap and trade program to use up to one billion tons of international emissions reductions, or "offsets," to be used instead of reducing their own emissions each year. The bill also allows up to one billion tons of additional offsets each year, sourced from sectors of the U.S. economy that do not fall under the pollution cap, such as forestry and agriculture. If a suitable supply of domestic emissions offsets is unavailable, the limit on the use of international offsets may be raised to 1.5 billion tons annually at the discretion of the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The extensive use of these international and domestic offsets would effectively allow U.S. firms in capped sectors to continue emitting greenhouse gases at levels well above the reductions supposedly driven by the emissions cap. New analysis from the Breakthrough Institute reveals that if fully utilized, the offset provisions in the ACES bill would allow continued Business-As-Usual growth in U.S. GH gas emissions until 2030.

SEPP Comment: ACES lacks any scientific basis, is hugely expensive, yet ineffective, and needlessly complicated. The simplest policy would have been to impose a carbon tax that would raise prices so much that households and businesses would use less energy from coal, oil and natural gas. Proceeds from the tax could then be rebated to consumers or used for other government purposes. Even a 'simple' carbon tax has its complications; enviros would likely oppose it because it gives a cost advantage to nuclear energy.

SEPP Science Editorial #15-2009 (5/23/09)

The West Antarctic Ice Sheet (WAIS) and Sea-Level Rise

Guest Editorial by Thomas Sheahen tsheahen@alum.mit.edu

Ref.: J.L. Bamber et al, *Science* v. 324, pp 901- 903 (15 May 2009).

The topic is of interest because the WAIS has been known to collapse in the past, most recently maybe about 400,000 years ago. The main thing the *Science* paper does is re-calculate with more accurate input data what had first been published in 1975, when less was known of the surface features.. Parts of the WAIS are on bedrock that is beneath sea level and parts are elevated above sea level.

The "region of interest" eligible for collapse is smaller than earlier supposed. The old estimate of maximum sea level rise was about 6 meters; the new calculation gives a maximum of 3.2 m. The sea level rise that is actually expected is about 1.8 m -- based on taking ice on certain places in Antarctica and having it melt into the ocean. To pursue that point, you have to go to the online supplemental material and look at tables and figures there.

There are a few points of interest to those who pay attention to the political spin of *Science*:

First, the 1.8 m expected value appears in one sentence, never in the abstract, which talks about the maximum value.

Second, much is made of the notion that the coasts of America will experience a sea-level rise about 25% higher than global average. This is because the earth's axis of rotation will change a little due to redistribution of mass when the ice leaves its present position.

Third, an associated "Perspectives" article (p. 888-889) goes to considerable length to paint the picture as gloomy as possible, emphasizing all that could go wrong. Without mentioning the 1.8-

m figure buried within the Bamber et al paper, the Perspectives article asserts that "...just 0.5 to 1.0 m of uniform sea-level rise will cause catastrophic geopolitical and economic devastation in many urbanized coastal settings." It also says things like "The time scale of the fully manifested instability cannot currently be predicted." Clearly, this permits alarmists to go right on insisting that inundation of cities is imminent, while previous estimates visualized WAIS survival for several millennia (assuming that the present Holocene persists that long).

Finally, remember that the Hansen-Al Gore-ism of "20 feet" is a vestige of the 1975 calculation, now laid to rest.

- 1. Bogus Models Used To Justify Anti-CO2 Push**
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NEWS YOU CAN USE

Lord Monckton addresses the central question: Climate Sensitivity

http://scienceandpublicpolicy.org/images/stories/papers/originals/central_question_on_sensitivity.pdf

Rep. Steve Scalise's remarks on the Federal Building Code contained in ACES, the Climate Change and

Clean Energy Bill <http://www.liberalmadness.com/video/global-warming-building-code>

Skeptics have maintained for a long time that AGW alarmism was nothing more than a transparent scam to grab power and grow government. This video demonstrates one of many reasons why this is true.

Wash. Post, May 22, 2009: Climate bill 'badly flawed': 'It would be difficult to implement even in Sweden' – 'The opportunities for waste, fraud, and regulatory screw-up look enormous.' 'It's not too late to change our minds' – [Excerpts, courtesy of ClimateDepot.com. Full story at:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/21/AR2009052104402.html>]

US CO2 goals 'to be compromised' Energy Secretary Steven Chu says the US will not be able to cut emissions as much as needed due to domestic opposition.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/8061929.stm>

“The ‘Summaries for Policymakers’ of the various IPCC reports are agreed line-by-line in meetings of Government representatives... They actually represent ‘‘Summaries approved BY policymakers’’ – Vincent Gray -- *New Zealand Climate Newsletter*

Polish National Academy of Sciences joins Climate Skeptics. This is a bit of news that might be helpful to letter writers & debaters. <http://motls.blogspot.com/2009/04/polish-nas-joined-climate-skeptics.html>

Good news about CO2 for older men <http://www3.telus.net/public/rrobbie/essay/CO2sex.html>

UNDER THE BOTTOM LINE

NYT editorial: “The Earth Wins One: New emissions standards will put America back on the road toward energy independence. But the biggest winner could be the atmosphere.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/20/opinion/20weds1.html?th&emc=th>

Examples of recent ‘climate research’ (All names have been deleted):

“Climate change and sexual size dimorphism in an Arctic spider. Biol Lett 12 May 2009. <http://highwire.stanford.edu/cgi/medline/pmid;19435831>

“Climate change effects on migration phenology may mismatch brood parasitic cuckoos and their hosts. Biol Lett 14 May 2009. <http://highwire.stanford.edu/cgi/medline/pmid;19443508>

“Climate and acute/subacute paracoccidioidomycosis in a hyper-endemic area in Brazil. Int J Epidemiol 11 May 2009. <http://highwire.stanford.edu/cgi/medline/pmid;19433518>

Listen, biologists have to make a living too

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1. BOGUS MODELS USED TO JUSTIFY ANTI-CO2 PUSH

By ROBERT SAMUELSON, April 24, 2009

<http://www.ibdeditorials.com/IBDArticles.aspx?id=325470780474339>

Few things are more appealing in politics than something for nothing. As Congress begins considering anti-global-warming legislation, environmentalists hold out precisely that tantalizing prospect: We can conquer global warming at virtually no cost.

Here's a typical claim from the Environmental Defense Fund: "For about a dime a day (per person), we can solve climate change, invest in a clean energy future and save billions in imported oil."

This sounds too good to be true, because it is. About four-fifths of the world's and America's energy comes from fossil fuels — oil, coal, natural gas — which are also the largest source of man-made carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas.

The goal is to eliminate fossil fuels or suppress their CO2. The bill now being considered in the House would mandate a 42% decline in greenhouse emissions by 2030 from 2005 levels and an 83% drop by 2050.

Re-engineering the world energy system seems an almost impossible undertaking. Just consider America's energy needs in 2030, as estimated by the Energy Information Administration.

- Compared with 2007, the U.S. is projected to have almost 25% more people (375 million), an economy about 70% larger (\$20 trillion) and 27% more light-duty vehicles (294 million). Energy demand will be strong.

But the EIA also assumes greater conservation and use of renewables. From 2007 to 2030, solar power grows 18 times, wind six times. New cars and light trucks get 50% better gas mileage. Light bulbs and washing machines become more efficient. Higher energy prices discourage use; by 2030, oil is \$130 a barrel in today's dollars.

For all that, U.S. CO₂ emissions in 2030 are projected at 6.2 billion metric tons, 4% higher than in 2007. As an example, solar and wind together would still supply only about 5% of electricity, because they expand from a tiny base.

To comply with the House bill, CO₂ emissions would have to be about 3.5 billion tons. The claims of the EDF and other environmentalists that this reduction can occur cheaply rely on economic simulations by "general equilibrium" models.

An Environmental Protection Agency study put the cost as low as \$98 per household a year, because high energy prices are partly offset by government rebates. With 2.5 people in the average household, that's roughly 11 cents a day per person.

The trouble is that these models embody wildly unrealistic assumptions: there are no business cycles; the economy is always at "full employment"; strong growth is assumed, based on past growth rates; the economy automatically accommodates major changes — if fossil fuel prices rise (as they would under anti-global warming laws), consumers quickly use less and new supplies of "clean energy" magically materialize.

There's no problem and costs are low, because the models say so. But the real world, of course, is different.

Half the nation's electricity comes from coal. The costs of "carbon capture and sequestration" — storing CO₂ underground — are uncertain, and if the technology can't be commercialized, coal plants will continue to emit or might need to be replaced by nuclear plants.

Will Americans support a doubling or tripling of nuclear power? Could technical and construction obstacles be overcome in a timely way? Paralysis might lead to power brownouts or blackouts, which would penalize economic growth.

Countless practical difficulties would arise in trying to wean the U.S. economy from today's fossil fuels. One estimate done by economists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that meeting most transportation needs in 2050 with locally produced biofuels would require "500 million acres of U.S. land . . . more than the total of current U.S. cropland." America would have to become a net food importer.

In truth, models have a dismal record of predicting major economic upheavals or their consequences. They didn't anticipate the present economic crisis. Earlier, they didn't predict the run-up in oil prices to almost \$150 a barrel last year.

In the 1970s, they didn't foresee runaway inflation. "General equilibrium" models can help evaluate different policy proposals by comparing them against a common baseline. But these models can't tell us how the economy will look in 10 or 20 years, because so much is assumed or ignored — growth rates; financial and geopolitical crises; major bottlenecks; crippling inflation or unemployment.

The selling of the green economy involves much economic make-believe. Environmentalists not only maximize the dangers of global warming — from rising sea levels to advancing tropical diseases. They also minimize the costs of dealing with it.

Actually, no one involved in this debate really knows what the consequences or costs might be. All are inferred from models of uncertain reliability. Great schemes of economic and social engineering are proposed on shaky foundations of knowledge. Candor and common sense are in scarce supply.

SEPP Comments: If you think that the economic models are bad, the climate models are worse. And they provide the sole justification for going after CO2 as a pollutant.

2. 'ACES' BILL PROVIDES A GUIDE FOR MASS UNEMPLOYMENT

Pulp Fiction: On Page 781 of Waxman Cap-and-Tax Bill, a Response Guide for Mass Unemployment: Beneficiaries to receive 3 years of salary, health insurance, job training, and relocation package as a result of this job-killing measure

Washington, DC – With 946 pages of legislative text, it comes as no surprise that as the days pass by, interesting new provisions buried deep in the Waxman-Markey cap-and-tax bill are revealed. Today we expose section 426.

“While the authors of this bill continue to insist that cap-and-tax will be a clear economic winner, several provisions buried deep in the text confirm their true belief that it will massively stimulate the unemployment rolls,” said Thomas J. Pyle, president of the American Energy Alliance.

Pyle is referring to Title IV, Subtitle B, Part 2, Section 426, of the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009, which states; An eligible worker (specifically, workers who lose their jobs as a result of this measure) may receive a climate change adjustment allowance under this subsection for a period of not longer than 156 weeks...80 percent of the monthly premium of any health insurance coverage...up to a maximum payment of \$1,500 in relocation allowance...and job search expenses not exceed[ing] \$1,500.

“America is supposed to be a land of opportunity and prosperity – not a land where political elites work behind closed doors to ship jobs offshore,” continued Pyle. “And with only 24 percent of the American people even knowing what cap-and-trade is, I am convinced that when the public learns that the leaders of this government are indeed, purposely and knowingly, outsourcing American jobs in the name of global warming, they will demand answers and hold them accountable.”

The American Energy Alliance (AEA) is a not-for-profit organization that engages in public policy advocacy and debate surrounding the function, operation, and government regulation of global energy markets. AEA, an affiliate of the Institute for Energy Research, works to educate and mobilize citizens around the idea that freely-functioning energy markets provide the most efficient and effective solutions to today's global energy and environmental challenges.

3. PUBLIC HEARING ON EPA 'ENDANGERMENT FINDING'

Oral Testimony by S. Fred Singer, PhD

May 18, 2009, Arlington, VA

I am Professor Emeritus of Environmental Sciences at the University of VA and an atmospheric physicist. I have researched climate science problems for over 50 years. I was the founding director of the US Weather Satellite Service. Later, concerned about environmental quality, I was in the forefront of Clean-Water action and Estuarine Protection in the US Department of Interior and have also served as a Deputy Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. As a reviewer of IPCC climate reports I share the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with Al Gore, Rajendra Pachauri, and about 2000 others.

In my professional opinion, the EPA Endangerment Finding is fatally flawed and should be rejected.
 Its science is based primarily on the United Nations-IPCC report. But the IPCC conclusion about the

human cause of climate warming is not supported by any kind of credible evidence. None whatsoever! Their so-called proof of a human cause relies solely on computer models that have never been verified by atmospheric data. Please remember: In science, data always trumps theory.

We should realize that current climate models are just computer exercises; they are not evidence. No matter how smart these computers are, they cannot capture the complexity of the real atmosphere that gives us terrestrial climate. The best description is: G.I.G.O: Garbage in, garbage out. I am reminded of this every time I read that some change in climate is “worse than expected.” That’s just another way of admitting that the model predictions have failed.

Every one of the 20-odd IPCC models predicts that climate must warm rapidly as CO2 levels increase. But there has been no warming now for more than a whole decade. And empirical studies on real data – not models – show far smaller climate sensitivity to CO2 than predicted by IPCC models. Clearly, CO2 does not control the climate and cannot be considered a pollutant.

The evidence against the IPCC and the Endangerment Finding is marshaled in the report of the N-IPCC, the Non-governmental International Panel on Climate Change. In contrast to the IPCC, the N-IPCC concludes that “Nature rules the climate, not human activity.” This N-IPCC conclusion is supported by more than 30,000 scientists; their names are listed in the full N-IPCC report. You can access N-IPCC through any search engine like Google or on the website www.sepp.org.

If climate is controlled by natural forces, as N-IPCC clearly demonstrates, then regulation of CO2 is not only pointless and ineffective -- but also very costly. It’s all pain and no gain.

To sum up:

**We reject the current climate models that have not been verified.

**We reject the IPCC conclusion that human activity causes significant warming.

**We urge you to reject the EPA Endangerment Finding as unscientific and fatally flawed.

4. CANADA'S OIL BONANZA

By *INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY*, May 18, 2009

Talk about alternative energy! Canada has the oil the American economy desperately needs — and then some. So why do we treat this and other energy allies like pariahs?

The next Saudi Arabia? Why, Canada. Don't believe it? A new study by the respected energy consultancy IHS-CERA (formerly Cambridge Energy Associates) says Canada's oil sands could provide the U.S. with billions of barrels of oil — oil we must have or our economy will shudder to a halt.

In 2000, Canada's sands produced just 600,000 barrels of oil a day; today, it produces 1.3 million. By 2030, it could be producing as much as 6 million.

It's a good thing they're doing it, because we'll need it — despite all the blather you hear about so-called alternative energy picking up the slack. It won't. It can't.

Virtually no major reputable forecaster sees anything other than a very minor role for alternative energy over the next three decades. Like it or not, fossil fuels are the name of the game.

Both the U.S. Energy Department and the American Petroleum Institute forecast that, barring some miracle breakthrough, at least until 2030 oil, coal and natural gas will be needed for at least 80% of our energy output — even as our own oil production shrinks.

To keep our economy growing, we must have more oil. Weirdly, however, the U.S. seems bent on making it harder to get it here. The budget unveiled by the White House earlier this year contained a slew of taxes, regulations and punishments for our domestic oil industry. This makes no sense.

The U.S. has taken more than 31 billion barrels of oil, 154 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 11 billion tons of coal off the market intentionally through laws that make it difficult, if not impossible, to prospect and produce energy on federal lands. Years from now, people will scratch their heads in wonder at such foolishness.

Never mind that a study by ICF International last year said tapping our own energy resources could generate \$1.7 trillion in federal revenues, create thousands of jobs and make us more energy secure. Instead, our sick obsession with the chimera of global warming keeps us from doing what's economically sensible.

Meanwhile, we've gone after energy-rich Canada — already our No. 1 supplier of oil — with "buy American" provisions in our recently passed stimulus plan.

Rubbing sand in the wound, U.S. officials have even suggested we might not want Canada's oil, since it's so "dirty" and likely to increase our carbon footprint.

Here's a little yellow Post-It for U.S. policymakers: Make nice with Canada. Given our ridiculous refusal to exploit our own vast energy resources, it's going to be the best friend we can have.

5. THE CLIMATE-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX:

Some businesses see nothing but profits in the green movement.

WSJ, May 21, 2009

By BJORN LOMBORG

Some business leaders are cozying up with politicians and scientists to demand swift, drastic action on global warming. This is a new twist on a very old practice: companies using public policy to line their own pockets.

The tight relationship between the groups echoes the relationship among weapons makers, researchers and the U.S. military during the Cold War. President Dwight Eisenhower famously warned about the might of the "military-industrial complex," cautioning that "the potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist." He worried that "there is a recurring temptation to feel that some spectacular and costly action could become the miraculous solution to all current difficulties."

This is certainly true of climate change. We are told that very expensive carbon regulations are the only way to respond to global warming, despite ample evidence that this approach does not pass a basic cost-benefit test. We must ask whether a "climate-industrial complex" is emerging, pressing taxpayers to fork over money to please those who stand to gain.

This phenomenon will be on display at the World Business Summit on Climate Change in Copenhagen this weekend. The organizers -- the Copenhagen Climate Council -- hope to push political leaders into more drastic promises when they negotiate the Kyoto Protocol's replacement in December.

The opening keynote address is to be delivered by Al Gore, who actually represents all three groups: He is a politician, a campaigner and the chair of a green private-equity firm invested in products that a climate-scared world would buy.

Naturally, many CEOs are genuinely concerned about global warming. But many of the most vocal stand to profit from carbon regulations. The term used by economists for their behavior is "rent-seeking."

The world's largest wind-turbine manufacturer, Copenhagen Climate Council member Vestas, urges governments to invest heavily in the wind market. It sponsors CNN's "Climate in Peril" segment, increasing support for policies that would increase Vestas's earnings. A fellow council member, Mr. Gore's green

investment firm Generation Investment Management, warns of a significant risk to the U.S. economy unless a price is quickly placed on carbon.

Even companies that are not heavily engaged in green business stand to gain. European energy companies made tens of billions of euros in the first years of the European Trading System when they received free carbon emission allocations.

American electricity utility Duke Energy, a member of the Copenhagen Climate Council, has long promoted a U.S. cap-and-trade scheme. Yet the company bitterly opposed the Warner-Lieberman bill in the U.S. Senate that would have created such a scheme because it did not include European-style handouts to coal companies. The Waxman-Markey bill in the House of Representatives promises to bring back the free lunch.

U.S. companies and interest groups involved with climate change hired 2,430 lobbyists just last year, up 300% from five years ago. Fifty of the biggest U.S. electric utilities -- including Duke -- spent \$51 million on lobbyists in just six months.

The massive transfer of wealth that many businesses seek is not necessarily good for the rest of the economy. Spain has been proclaimed a global example in providing financial aid to renewable energy companies to create green jobs. But research shows that each new job cost Spain 571,138 euros, with subsidies of more than one million euros required to create each new job in the uncompetitive wind industry. Moreover, the programs resulted in the destruction of nearly 110,000 jobs elsewhere in the economy, or 2.2 jobs for every job created.

The cozy corporate-climate relationship was pioneered by Enron, which bought up renewable energy companies and credit-trading outfits while boasting of its relationship with green interest groups. When the Kyoto Protocol was signed, an internal memo was sent within Enron that stated, "If implemented, [the Kyoto Protocol] will do more to promote Enron's business than almost any other regulatory business."

The World Business Summit will hear from "science and public policy leaders" seemingly selected for their scary views of global warming. They include James Lovelock, who believes that much of Europe will be Saharan and London will be underwater within 30 years; Sir Crispin Tickell, who believes that the United Kingdom's population needs to be cut by two-thirds so the country can cope with global warming; and Timothy Flannery, who warns of sea level rises as high as "an eight-story building."

Free speech is important. But these visions of catastrophe are a long way outside of mainstream scientific opinion, and they go much further than the careful findings of the United Nations panel of climate change scientists. When it comes to sea-level rise, for example, the United Nations expects a rise of between seven and 23 inches by 2100 -- considerably less than a one-story building.

There would be an outcry -- and rightfully so -- if big oil organized a climate change conference and invited only climate-change deniers.

The partnership among self-interested businesses, grandstanding politicians and alarmist campaigners truly is an unholy alliance. The climate-industrial complex does not promote discussion on how to overcome this challenge in a way that will be best for everybody. We should not be surprised or impressed that those who stand to make a profit are among the loudest calling for politicians to act. Spending a fortune on global carbon regulations will benefit a few, but dearly cost everybody else.

Mr. Lomborg is director of the Copenhagen Consensus, a think tank, and author of "Cool It: The Skeptical Environmentalist's Guide to Global Warming" (Knopf, 2007).

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6. EARTH DAY REMEMBERED

I Hate the Media, 22 April 2009

<http://www.ihatethemedia.com/earth-day-predictions-of-1970-the-reason-you-should-not-believe-earth-day-predictions-of-2009>

Earth Day is past now, but this article is so popular we're pinning it at the top of the home page today so everyone looking for it can find it.

For the next 24 hours, the media will assault us with tales of imminent disaster that always accompany the annual Earth Day Doom & Gloom Extravaganza.

Ignore them. They'll be wrong. We're confident in saying that because they've always been wrong. And always will be.

Need proof? Here are some of the hilarious, spectacularly wrong predictions made on the occasion of Earth Day 1970.

"We have about five more years at the outside to do something." - -Kenneth Watt, ecologist

"Civilization will end within 15 or 30 years unless immediate action is taken against problems facing mankind." -- -George Wald, Harvard Biologist

"We are in an environmental crisis which threatens the survival of this nation, and of the world as a suitable place of human habitation." -- -Barry Commoner, Washington University biologist

"Man must stop pollution and conserve his resources, not merely to enhance existence but to save the race from intolerable deterioration and possible extinction." -NYT editorial, the day after the first Earth Day

"Population will inevitably and completely outstrip whatever small increases in food supplies we make. The death rate will increase until at least 100-200 million people per year will be starving to death during the next ten years." -- Paul Ehrlich, Stanford University biologist

7. LIGHT CARS ARE DANGEROUS CARS

Today, the majority of pollution comes from the oldest, dirtiest cars. In fact, the dirtiest 10 percent of cars account for more than 50 percent of smog and carbon monoxide, and the dirtiest one-third account for 80 percent. The Clean Air Act's requirements have sent emissions in the right direction, but Barack Obama's new plan to nationalize fuel efficiency standards for cars and trucks and a new tailpipe standard for CO2 emissions could slow the progress, says Robert Grady, a former trustee of the Environmental Defense Fund.

The irony of Obama's proposals is that they may actually worsen emissions. By the White House's own calculation, the new rules, when combined with earlier proposed increases in Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards, will increase the average price of a new car by \$1,300, says Grady. Herein lies the problem:

- o If you raise the price of new cars, people will buy fewer of them or put off the purchase while they drive the old clunker for a few thousand more miles.
- o Fewer new cars means more pollution, which can cause significant health problems.
- o The costs associated with excessive emissions of air pollutants like fine particulates and smog are substantial, immediate and observable.
- o The plan may also contribute to a significant increase in highway deaths as vehicles are required to quickly meet the new CAFE standard and will likely become lighter in weight as a result.

None of this is intended to argue that Obama shouldn't be attacking the problem of climate change, says Grady. Indeed, some in Congress are proposing to cap carbon emissions and allow carbon credits to be traded, while others are proposing an increase in gasoline or carbon taxes.

Both of these approaches have their merits, although, in order not to damage the ailing economy, any increases in gasoline or carbon taxes should be matched by a cut of at least equal size in payroll taxes, concludes Grady.

Source: Robert E. Grady, "Light Cars Are Dangerous Cars," *Wall Street Journal*, May 22, 2009.
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124294901851445311.html> [H/t NCPA]

SEPP Comments: Consumer reactions are not easily predictable. But it is likely that greater fuel efficiency (which reduces the marginal cost of driving) will lead to more traffic, more urban congestion, and more accidents. All this might be avoided by means of simply increasing the gasoline tax. It would be a sure way to reduce driving and oil use and imports.

8. IS GLOBAL WARMING BAD?

Jonathan Katz (Washington University)

The tacit but unstated assumption that has brought "global warming" such prominence is not the scientific question of whether anthropogenic greenhouse gases explain the observed warming in the last century, especially the last few decades. It is the assumption (hardly ever discussed) that global warming is bad for humanity, and important enough to warrant a world-wide sense of crisis and expensive and disruptive action.

To the extent that we can infer broad generalizations from historical records, periods of warm climate, such as the Late Medieval Climatic Maximum, were good for humanity. How could extended growing seasons in temperate and sub-arctic regions be bad? It is speculated that climate change will imply deleterious changes in rainfall patterns. These are certainly beyond climatologists' ability to predict, but one observation is that in the last two decades the Sahel has become wetter than it was in the previous few decades, when there was much fear (not then associated with global climate change) that it was being turned into desert.

We may be dealing with a quasi-religious (certainly not rational) belief that anything "natural" is good, and that any human intervention in the natural world is bad and should be minimized. There were people who opposed vaccination on these grounds, and still are some who prefer "organic" and "natural" food for similar reasons.

It is not possible to engage in rational discussion with irrational beliefs. It is also not possible to engage in rational discussion with those whose interest in the global warming bandwagon is as a way to make money or build a career.

9. NEWS FROM THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

Nearly six months after all [U.S. asthma patients were required to switch](#) from CFC inhalers to more environmentally sound HFA inhalers, some people are reporting problems with the new devices. HFA inhalers have a distinct taste, a weaker-feeling spray, and require patients to take slow, deep breaths. But as

[Megan McArdle writes](#) on her *Atlantic* blog:

[S]aying that the inhalers are just the same except that they require perfect technique is saying that the inhalers are not just the same. In the real world, it's hard to get perfect technique. So substituting an inhaler that requires really very extensive maintenance...is the kind of thing that only a non-asthmatic would think was a good trade. Again, if this has to be done to save the ozone layer, fine. But I don't see that it did; I see that we did something stupid and costly to sick people for no good reason.

ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross agrees, "CFC and HFA inhalers may appear to be 'the same' when testing them in the lab, but it's a different story when you put them out in the real world. Experimental studies do not necessarily apply to the experiences of individual patients." For more on asthma and the inhaler switch, check out ACSH's publication [Asthma: Causes, Diagnosis, and Treatment](#).

It appears that [many more chemicals](#) will soon be added to the list of "carcinogens" governed by California's Proposition 65, which mandates that chemicals that can, even hypothetically, cause cancer or harm the reproductive system be kept out of drinking water and be listed on warning labels. But, as [ACSH has explained](#), the law does not protect public health because its list of "dangerous chemicals" is based on high-dose animal studies. "Prop 65 is simply a drain on the economy of California that does no good for anyone except for litigation lawyers."