The Week That Was: 2010-10-30 (October 30, 2010)
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The Science and Environmental Policy Project

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PLEASE NOTE: The complete TWTW, including the articles, can be downloaded in an easily printable form at the web site: http://www.haapala.com/sepp/the-week-that-was.cfm

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Quote of the Week:

For me, it is far better to grasp the Universe as it really is than to persist in delusion, however satisfying and reassuring. Carl Sagan

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Number of the Week: 24 to 1

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THIS WEEK:

By Ken Haapala, Executive Vice President Science and Environmental Policy Project (SEPP)

On Thursday, The French Academy of Sciences released a report declaring the global warming exists and is unquestionably due to human activity. The academy president declared the debate is over. Former education minister Claude Allegre, who questioned the orthodoxy, signed off on what he considered a compromise report stating: "I have not evolved, I still say the same thing, that the exact role of carbon dioxide in the environment has not been shown."

The report recognized uncertainties in solar influence, clouds, oceans and atmosphere. Those who believe that human carbon dioxide emissions may have some warming effect, but are not the dominant driver of climate change, may find the report acceptable except that it gives carbon dioxide a principal role in climate change. We await the translation of the full report, but apparently there is no precision in the report. A vague statement, no matter how forcefully made, remains vague. Please see Article # 1.

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In an article published on October 12, Bjorn Lomborg discusses the change in the vocabulary of the global warming alarmists. No longer is global warming, or climate change, the major theme. Instead, it has been replaced by clean energy, clean jobs – a green economy. Lomborg also discusses how much a green economy is costing his native country, Denmark. He believes that drastic carbon cuts are a poor response to global warming. Please see Article # 2.

In another article for the Investors' Business Daily (IBD), Lomborg advocates committing streams of money to technical improvements in new wind and solar energy, as well as other technical innovations. Lomborg's comments are rebutted in a follow-up article in IBD by Willie Soon, Bob Carter, and David Legates who bring up a seldom mentioned issue: the benefits of increased CO2 Much is made of what economists call the external costs of carbon dioxide emissions, namely global warming which is always considered bad. But increased CO2 in the atmosphere stimulates more vigorous growth of plant life that benefits humanity and the environment.

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The Department of Interior has approved the building of what is called the world's largest solar-thermal power plant on 7,000 acres of Federal land in the desert of Southern California. The project is a venture by two German companies. The first half of the project could be eligible for a cash subsidy of $900,000,000 from the stimulus bill. The cash subsidy program ends on December 31, 2010. Also, the companies are seeking Federal loan guarantees and, no doubt, an array of benefits from the state.

To put the cash subsidy perspective, it is useful to calculate the employment benefits. The administration claims this project will provide up to 300 new permanent jobs. This calculates out to $3,000,000 per permanent job. At that rate it would cost about $20.27 Trillion to reduce the current unemployment rate (9.2% est. by US Bureau of Labor Statistics) to the rough average over the past 15 years of 5%. $20.27

Trillion is about 1.4 times the entire gross domestic product of the US in 2009 (estimated to be $14.26 Trillion by the US Bureau of Economic Analysis). The expenditure is enormous, but does it benefit the citizens of California by providing affordable electricity?

As seen in other reports (Article # 3 and articles under California Dreaming) there are additional solar projects in California which promoters are trying to start before December 31. These stories indicate that even after subsidies, the cost of the electricity generated will be 30 to 70 percent more expensive than electricity generated by natural gas, the dominant electricity generating fuel in California. The promoters of the projects consider a 30 to 70 percent increase in cost to be competitive – a clear consequence of the state's renewable energy mandates. Only in California!

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THE NUMBER OF THE WEEK: 24 to 1 – the number of nuclear power plants under construction in China (as reported by the World Nuclear Association) compared to the number of nuclear power plants under construction in the US.

Green energy promoters stridently insist that we are in a race with China to develop green energy, namely solar and wind. Spain and Germany were in the race but dropped out and their green energy firms are suffering as the subsidies stopped.

The question seldom asked is China really in the same race? Over the next several weeks, The Number of the Week will explore that question. If China is in a nuclear power race it is clearly winning. Please see Nuclear Power in China under Energy Issues.

[Please note that the 104 nuclear power plants in the US have a very high average capacity factor of over 90%.]

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SEPP SCIENCE EDITORIAL #32-2010 (Oct. 30, 2010)

S Fred Singer Chairman, and President, Science and Environmental Policy Project (SEPP)

Why the Confusion about Global Warming?

No one denies that the Earth has warmed in the past century. So of course, the past decade must be the warmest – even though there has been no upward *trend* since the 1998 temperature peak. [Note the important distinction between temperature *level* (measured in deg C or deg F) and *trend* (expressed in deg C per year).] The dispute is (and always has been) about the *cause* of the warming. In fact, the major warming during the first 50 years of the 20th century and the latter part of the 19th century is generally accepted to be natural – a recovery from the Little Ice Age. But there's no credible evidence that identifies the most recent warming as human-caused. On the contrary, while the UN's IPCC claims to be quite certain that it is anthropogenic, the independent NIPCC (Non-governmental International Panel on Climate Change) concludes that "*Nature – Not Human Activity – Rules the Climate.*" See http://www.sepp.org/publications/NIPCC_final.pdf

In this connection note the obfuscatory language used by the EPA in turning down all of the 'Petitions for Reconsideration' of its Endangerment finding on CO2: *"The scientific evidence supporting EPA's finding is robust, voluminous, and compelling. Climate change is happening now, and humans are contributing to it. Multiple lines of evidence show a global warming trend over the past 100 years. Beyond this, melting ice in the Arctic, melting glaciers around the world, increasing ocean temperatures, rising sea levels, altered precipitation patterns, and shifting patterns of ecosystems and wildlife habitats all confirm that our climate is changing."*

Yet there is no evidence at all that humans are indeed contributing to warming in a significant way. We'll see you in court, dear EPA, and gladly examine your "compelling" evidence!

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ARTICLES:

For the numbered articles below please see: **www.haapala.com/sepp/the-week-that-was.cfm**.

1. Global warming 'unquestionably' linked to humans: France

By Claire Snegaroff, APF, Oct 28, 2010
http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5j9oNuf2f5wJV22Rs_YEqvRGcLHig?docId=CNG.bbdd6801f80cdbf0612fea94e8414607.3e1

2. What Have Climate Activists Learned

By Bjorn Lomborg, Project Syndicate, Oct 12, 2010 [H/t Berol Robinson]
http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/lomborg65/English
[SEPP Comment: The new hype is green energy, green jobs but the purpose is the same – control of carbon dioxide emissions.]

3. Huge Solar-Plant Project Approved

By Cassandra Sweet and Siobhan Hughes, WSJ, Oct 26, 2010
http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303467004575574392614626562.html?mod=ITP_pageone_1

4. Disputing The Skeptical Environmentalist

By Willie Soon, Robert Carter, and David Legates, IBD, Oct 29, 2010
http://www.investors.com/NewsAndAnalysis/ArticlePrint.aspx?id=552190

5. Observe Other's Past Energy Experiences

By Charles Battig, Letter, Richmond Times Dispatch, Oct 21, 2010
http://www2.timesdispatch.com/news/2010/oct21/ed-batt21-ar-575964/

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NEWS YOU CAN USE:

Challenging the Orthodoxy

Cabal of climate skeptics to descend on parliament
By Leo Hickman, Guardian, UK, Oct 26, 2010
http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/blog

Defending the Orthodoxy

Climate Change May Alter Natural Climate Cycles of Pacific
Science Daily, Oct 18, 2010 [H/t Toshio Fujita]
http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/10/101017133641.htm
[SEPP Comment: The IPCC and other advocates have ignored the influence of natural cycles in the Pacific on global warming. Now some claim global warming will change these cycles.]

Why Can't We Innovate Our Way To A Carbon-Free Energy Future?
By Bjorn Lomborg, IBD, Oct 22, 2010
http://www.investors.com/NewsAndAnalysis/Article/551367/201010221842/Why-Cant-We-Innovate-Our-Way-To-A-Carbon-Free-Energy-Future-.aspx

Weather Extremes

Arctic Temperatures and Ice – Why it is All About Natural Variability
By Joseph D'Aleo, ICECAP, Oct 24, 2010
http://www.icecap.us/

Warmer Arctic Temps Tied to U.S. Snowstorms
CBS News, Oct 22, 2010, [H/t Joe D'Aleo ICECAP]
http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/10/22/tech/main6982328.shtml

NOAA: "Arctic Report Card: Update for 2010"
By Arnd Bernaerts, Digging In the Clay, Oct 25, 2010 [H/t ICECAP]
http://diggingintheclay.wordpress.com/2010/10/27/noaa-%E2%80%9Carctic-report-card-update-for-2010%E2%80%9D/

2010 Hurricane Factoids
Roger Pielke, Jr, Blog, Oct 25, 2010 [H/t Marc Morano, Climate Depot]
http://rogerpielkejr.blogspot.com/2010/10/2010-hurricane-factoids.html
[SEPP Comments: Another disappointing season for those hyping hurricanes.]

BP Oil Spill and Aftermath

Panel Says Firms Knew of Cement Flaws Before Spill
By John Broder, NYT, Oct 28, 2010
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/29/us/29spill.html?_r=1&nl=&emc=a1

Another Drilling Smackdown
Editorial, WSJ, Oct 25, 2010
http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304741404575564520883929464.html?mod=ITP_opinion_2

Energy Issues

Nuclear Power in China
World Nuclear Association, Oct 22, 2010
http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/inf63.html

Half The Productivity, Twice The Carbon
By Staff Writers, Energy Daily, Oct 26, 2010 [H/t Catherine French]
http://www.energy-daily.com/reports/Half_The_Productivity_Twice_The_Carbon_999.html
[SEPP Comment: The IT industry needs affordable, reliable electricity. This is news?]

Can Solar Shield Protect The North American Power Grid
By Tony Phillips, Science News, [H/t Toshio Fujita]
http://www.spacedaily.com/reports/Can_Solar_Shield_Protect_The_North_American_Power_Grid_999.html

Is Wind the Next Ethanol?
By Ben Lieberman, CEI, Oct 26, 2010 [H/t Cooler Heads Digest]
http://cei.org/studies-point/wind-next-ethanol

German grid aching under solar power
UPI, Oct 19, 2010
http://www.upi.com/Science_News/Resource-Wars/2010/10/19/German-grid-aching-under-solar-power/UPI-13471287518368/

Time To Remove The Roadblocks To A National Transmission Grid
By Gilbert Metcalf, IBD, Oct 26, 2010
http://www.investors.com/NewsAndAnalysis/Article/551658/201010261819/Time-To-Remove-The-Roadblocks-To-A-National-Transmission-Grid.htm

Hydrogen-generating technology might power boats, store energy from wind, solar sources
By Emil Venere, Press Release, Purdue University, Oct 7, 2010 [H/t Toshio Fujita]
http://www.purdue.edu/newsroom/research/2010/101007WoodallBoats.html

Subsidies and Mandates Forever
Spending Review: Honesty is the best policy before the bigger fuel bills start to bite.
By Charles Moore, Telegraph, UK, Oct 22, 2010 [H/t Bob Ferguson, SPPI]
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/charlesmoore/8081276/Spending-Review-Honesty-is-the-best-policy-before-the-bigger-fuel-bills-start-to-bite.html

Perplexing energy policy
By Steen Syre, Boston Globe, Oct 26, 2010 [H/t Randy Randol]
http://www.boston.com/business/articles/2010/10/26/perplexing_energy_policy/

Remember Renewable Energy?
Editorial, NYT, Oct 27, 2010
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/28/opinion/28thurs1.html?_r=1&nl=&emc=a211

The Race for Future Clean-Energy Jobs
By Terry McAuliffe, Richmond Times Dispatch, Oct. 27, 2010
http://www2.timesdispatch.com/news/oped/2010/oct/27/ed-mcaulif27-ar-588390/

California Dreaming
Solar Power Project Face Potential Hurdles
By Todd Woody, NYT, Oct 28, 2010
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/29/business/energy-environment/29solar.html?nl=&emc=a25

DOI Approves 1,000-MW Rated Parabolic Trough Project
Power News, Oct 27, 2010
http://www.powermag.com/POWERnews/3127.html?hq_e=el&hq_m=2075070&hq_l=11&hq_v=5e660500d0

EPA and other Regulators On the March
NERC: EPA Regulations Could Impact System Reliability
Power News, Oct 27, 2010
http://www.powermag.com/POWERnews/3125.html?hq_e=el&hq_m=2075070&hq_l=4&hq_v=5e660500d0

Oh, Mann!
Cuccinelli Demands Called 'Governmental Intrusion' Into Climate Science
By Eli Kintisch, Science Insider, Oct 21, 2010 [H/t Toshio Fujita]
http://news.sciencemag.org/scienceinsider/2010/10/cuccinelli-demands-called-govern.html
[SEPP Comment: Climate science is largely dependent on government support. Now an investigation of possible inappropriate application of such funds is a governmental intrusion?]

Review of Recent Scientific Articles by NIPCC
For a full list of articles see www.NIPCCreport.org

Flocks of Birds Coping with Climate Change
Reference: Van Buskirk, J., Mulvihill, R.S. and Leberman, R.C. 2010. Declining body sizes in North American birds associated with climate change. *Oikos* **119**: 1047-1055.
http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2010/oct/27oct2010a5.html

Amphibian Population Declines
Reference Rohr, J.R., Raffel, T.R., Romansic, J.M., McCallum, H. and Hudson, P.J. 2008. Evaluating the links between climate, disease spread, and amphibian declines. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA* 105: 17,436-17,441.
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Effects of Elevated CO2 on Longevity and Fecundity of an Invasive Weevil Feeding on Aspen, Birch and Maple Foliage
Reference: Hillstrom, M.L., Vigue, L.M., Coyle, D.R., Raffa, K.F. and Lindroth, R.L. 2010. Performance of the invasive weevil *Polydrusus sericeus* is influenced by atmospheric CO_2 and host species. *Agricultural and Forest Entomology* **12**: 285-292.
http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2010/oct/28oct2010a4.html

Unexpected Biological Resilience to Climate Change
Reference: Bell, R.C., Parra, J.L., Tonione, M., Hoskin, C.J., Mackenzie, J.B., Williams, S.E. and Moritz, C. 2010. Patterns of persistence and isolation indicate resilience to climate change in montane rainforest lizards. *Molecular Ecology* **19**: 2531-2544.
http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2010/oct/28oct2010a6.html

Other Scientific Issues

Introducing the A-Train
By Adam Voiland, NASA Press Release, Oct 27, 2010 [H/t Anthony Watts, WUWT]
http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/a-train/a-train.html#
[SEPP Comment: An explanation of a train of satellites measuring the earth's changes.]

Changing Our Understanding Of Atmospheric Aerosol Properties And Climate Effects
By Staff Writers, Terra Daily, Oct 18, 2010 [H/t Toshio Fujita]
http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Changing_Our_Understanding_Of_Atmospheric_Aerosol_Properties_And_Climate_Effects_999.html
[SEPP Comment: The influence of aerosols on the earth's climate is largely unknown. Better understanding of the physical nature of some aerosols is an important step.]

Bees' tiny brains beat computers, study finds
Bees can solve complex mathematical problems which keep computers busy for days research has shown
Guardian, UK, Oct 24, 2010 [H/t A.J. Meyer]
http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/oct/24/bees-route-finding-problems

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BELOW THE BOTTOM LINE:

Al Gore compares human heart to hydrological cycle
By Rance Leroy, French Tribune, Oct 21, 2010 [H/t Best on the Web]
http://frenchtribune.com/teneur/101652-al-gore-compares-human-heart-hydrological-cycle

Space tourism to accelerate climate change

By Adam Mann, Nature News, Oct 22, 2010 [H/t A.J. Meyer]
http://www.nature.com/news/2010/101022/full/news.2010.558.html

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ARTICLES:

1. Global warming 'unquestionably' linked to humans: France

By Claire Snegaroff, APF, Oct 28, 2010
http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5j9oNuf2f5wJV22Rs_YEqvRGcLHig?docId=CNG.bbdd6801f80cdbf0612fea94e8414607.3e1

Global warming exists and is unquestionably due to human activity, the French Academy of Science said in a report published Thursday and written by 120 scientists from France and abroad.

"Several independent indicators show an increase in global warming from 1975 to 2003. This increase is mainly due to the increase in the concentration of carbon dioxide," the academy said in conclusion to the report.

"The increase in carbon dioxide, and to a lesser degree other greenhouse gases, is unquestionably due to human activity," said the report, adopted unanimously by academy members.

The report contradicts France's former education minister Claude Allegre, a geochemist, who published a book called "The Climatic Deception" which claimed that carbon dioxide was not linked to climate change.

The report was commissioned in April by Minister for Research Valerie Pecresse in response to hundreds of environmental scientists who complained that Allegre in particular was disparaging their work.

Allegre is a member of the Academy of Sciences and also signed off on the report.

"He has the right to evolve," the academy's president Jean Salencon said. Pecresse said: "The debate is over."

But Allegre told AFP that the document was a compromise and "I have not evolved, I still say the same thing, that the exact role of carbon dioxide in the environment has not been shown."

"Of course it's a compromise, but it's a satisfactory compromise because what I defend, that is the uncertainty in our knowledge about climate change, is explicitly mentioned, the word uncertainty appears 12 times," he said.

In his book, Allegre questioned the work of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and criticised worldwide mobilisation around "a myth without foundation."

He disagreed with linking climate change and an increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and said clouds or solar activity had more of an influence.

The IPCC, established to sift through scientific research and produce the most authoritative report possible on climate change for world leaders, has been hit by a raft of criticisms and the UN has said it needs a major overhaul.

Glaring errors were revealed in the panel's landmark 2007 Fourth Assessment Report -- notably that Himalayan glaciers which provide water to a billion people in Asia could be lost by 2035, a claim traced to a magazine article.

The Academy's report said that "solar activity, which has dropped slightly on average since 1975, cannot be dominant in warming observed during this period" even if the mechanisms involved "are not yet well understood."

"Major uncertainties remain on how to model clouds, the evolution of marine ice and the polar caps, the connection between the oceans and the atmosphere, the biosphere's evolution and the carbon cycle," the report said.

Allegre wrote that it was impossible to predict the climate's long-term evolution, but the Academy said that "climate evolution predictions of 30 to 50 years are little affected by uncertainties on modelling slow evolution processes."

"These predictions are particularly useful in responding to society's current concerns, worsened by the predictable population growth."

The IPCC's deputy head, Frenchman Jean Jouzel, welcomed the report.

"Even if in this text lots of space is given to the arguments put forward by climate change sceptics, I note that the document clearly reaffirms the IPCC's broad conclusions," he told AFP.

"Clearly sceptics will find some things to make their case. It says that not all is clear about the sun's role. The debate is never over," he said.

The report was the result of written contributions as well as closed-door discussions held at the Academy on September 20 and subsequent exchanges, the Academy said.

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2. What Have Climate Activists Learned

By Bjorn Lomborg, Project Syndicate, Oct 12, 2010 [H/t Berol Robinson]
http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/lomborg65/English
[SEPP Comment: The new hype is green energy, green jobs but the purpose is the same – control of carbon dioxide emissions.]

COPENHAGEN – Advocates of drastic cuts in carbon-dioxide emissions now speak a lot less than they once did about climate change. Climate campaigners changed their approach after the collapse of the Copenhagen climate-change summit last December and the revelation of mistakes in the United Nations climate panel's work – as well as in response to growing public skepticism and declining interest.

Although some activists still rely on scare tactics – witness the launch of an advertisement depicting the bombing of anybody who is hesitant to embrace carbon cuts – many activists now spend more time highlighting the "benefits" of their policy prescription. They no longer dwell on impending climate doom, but on the economic windfall that will result from embracing the "green" economy.

You can find examples all over the world, but one of the best is in my home country, Denmark, where a government-appointed committee of academics recently presented their suggestions for how the country could go it alone and become "fossil fuel-free" in 40 years. The goal is breathtaking: more than 80% of Denmark's energy supply comes from fossil fuels, which are dramatically cheaper and more reliable than any green energy source.

I attended the committee's launch and was startled that the "Climate Commission" barely mentioned climate change. This omission is understandable, since one country acting alone cannot do much to stop global warming. If Denmark were indeed to become 100% fossil-free by 2050, and remain so for the rest

of the century, the effect, by 2100, would be to delay the rise in average global temperature by just two weeks.

Instead of focusing on climate change, the Climate Commission hyped the benefits that Denmark would experience if it led the shift to green energy. Unfortunately, on inspection these benefits turn out to be illusory.

Being a pioneer is hardly a guarantee of riches. Germany led the world in putting up solar panels, funded by €47 billion in subsidies. The lasting legacy is a massive bill, and lots of inefficient solar technology sitting on rooftops throughout a fairly cloudy country, delivering a trivial 0.1% of its total energy supply.

Denmark itself has also already tried being a green-energy innovator – it led the world in embracing wind power. The results are hardly inspiring. Denmark's wind industry is almost completely dependent on taxpayer subsidies, and Danes pay the highest electricity rates of any industrialized nation. Several studies suggest that claims that one-fifth of Denmark's electricity demand is met by wind are an exaggeration, in part because much of the power is produced when there is no demand and must be sold to other countries.

The sorry state of wind and solar power shows the massive challenge that we face in trying to make today's technology competitive and efficient. Direct-current lines need to be constructed to carry solar and wind energy from sunny, windy areas to where most people live. Storage mechanisms need to be invented so that power is not interrupted whenever there is no sunshine or wind.

Proponents of carbon cuts argue that green-energy technologies only seem more expensive, because the price of fossil fuels does not reflect the cost of their impact on the climate. But allowing for this would make little difference. The most comprehensive economic meta-study shows that total future climate impacts would justify a tax of around €0.01 per liter of petrol ($0.06 per gallon in the United States) – an amount dwarfed by the taxes already imposed by most European countries.

Despite the fact that changing from fossil fuels to green energy requires a total economic transformation, Denmark's Climate Commission claimed that the price tag would be next to nothing. The Commission reached this conclusion by assuming that the cost of *not* embracing its recommended policy would be massive.

The Commission believes that over the next four decades, fossil-fuel costs will climb sharply, because sources will dry up and governments will place massive taxes on fossil fuels. But this flies in the face of most evidence. There is clearly plenty of cheap coal for hundreds of years, and with new cracking technology, gas is becoming more abundant. Even oil supplies are likely to be significantly boosted by non-conventional sources like tar sands.

By the same token, the prediction that governments will impose massive carbon taxes has little basis in reality. Such assumptions seem like a poor framework on which to build significant public policy, and seem to ignore the substantial cost of eliminating fossil fuels, which is likely to amount to at least 5% of GDP per year.

The shift away from fossil fuels will not be easy. Policymakers must prioritize investment in green-energy research and development. Trying to force carbon cuts instead of investing first in research puts the cart before the horse. Breakthroughs do not result automatically from a combination of taxes on fossil fuels and subsidies for present-day green energy: despite the massive outlays associated with the Kyoto Protocol, participating countries' investment in R&D as a percentage of GDP did not increase.

The change in message after the disaster of the Copenhagen summit was probably inevitable. But the real change that is needed is the realization that drastic, early carbon cuts are a poor response to global warming – no matter how they are packaged.

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3. Huge Solar-Plant Project Approved

By Cassandra Sweet and Siobhan Hughes, WSJ, Oct 26, 2010
http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303467004575574392614626562.html?mod=ITP_pageone_1

A proposal to build the world's biggest solar-thermal power plant in the Southern California desert got the go-ahead Monday from the Obama administration, which used the announcement to bolster its message that renewable energy creates jobs.

The $6 billion project is being developed by Solar Trust of America, a joint venture between Germany's Solar Millennium AG and privately held Ferrostaal AG on 7,025 acres of federally owned land near Blythe, Calif. The approval clears the way for the developers to seek federal grants and loan guarantees.

The Obama administration has been criticized over the past year for hurting job creation by holding up coal-mining permits and suspending deep-water drilling in the Gulf of Mexico after the worst offshore oil spill in U.S. history.

The Obama administration said the Blythe solar-power project will create 1,066 jobs at the peak of construction and almost 300 permanent jobs to operate the facility.

The project is the sixth solar-energy installation approved for public lands. The Interior Department said in total the projects could generate as much as 2,800 megawatts of electricity, enough to power two million homes. California regulators have approved or plan to approve a total of nine solar-thermal power plants for the state.

State and federal regulators pledged last year to work together to fast-track approval for a raft of large solar-power projects to enable developers to meet a Dec. 31 deadline required to take advantage of federal financial incentives.

The Interior Department's action on the Blythe project coincides with the final days of a hard-fought battle in California over a ballot proposal that would suspend a 2006 state law that required action to cut the state's greenhouse-gas emissions.

The federal approval allows Solar Trust to start construction on the plant this year and take advantage of government incentives that would reduce the cost of the project. In order to receive cash grants in exchange for unused tax credits, a popular but expiring program, companies must break ground on projects or spend 5% of construction costs by year end.

The estimated cost of the first two units of the Blythe plant is $3 billion.

The company could be eligible for a $900 million cash grant for the first two units from the U.S. Energy Department and the U.S. Treasury Department in lieu of a tax credit.

Unlike familiar photovoltaic solar panels, solar-thermal plants utilize curved mirrors that direct the sun's heat to a central tube in which steam is generated to drive turbines.

Driving demand for solar energy is a California state mandate that requires utilities to get one-third of their power from renewable sources by 2020. The mandate is part of the state's climate law. Advocates of solar power say the planned projects could create thousands of jobs in the economically hard-hit state.

Solar Trust is awaiting approval from the Energy Department for a federal loan guarantee for the first two of four total units. Deutsche Bank AG and Citigroup Inc. are working with Solar Trust to obtain project-equity and tax-equity investment, said Bill Keegan, a spokesman for Solar Trust of America.

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4. Disputing The Skeptical Environmentalist

By Willie Soon, Robert Carter, and David Legates, IBD, Oct 29, 2010
http://www.investors.com/NewsAndAnalysis/ArticlePrint.aspx?id=552190

This is a response to "Why Can't We Innovate Our Way To A Carbon-Free Energy Future?", a "Perspective" by Bjorn Lomborg that ran in this space a week ago. [Please see the referenced article under "Defending the Orthodoxy.]

Bjorn Lomborg, author of "The Skeptical Environmentalist" and "Cool It," is right about the need to focus on critical health and economic priorities. But he is wrong about human carbon dioxide emissions causing what is now being called "global climate disruption."

By demonizing the gas of life, in league with Al Gore and Bill Gates, Lomborg commits several serious scientific errors. As independent scientists, with broad training in mathematics, physics, chemistry, geology and geography, we know CO2 is not a pollutant, and the notion of "carbon-free" or "zero-carbon" energy is inherently harmful and anti-scientific.

If nitrogen, oxygen, hydrogen, helium or any other nontoxic gas is pumped into a chamber containing air and a growing plant, the response is barely measurable. By contrast, if more CO2 is added, the plant and its root system benefit enormously, displaying enhanced growth and more efficient use of available water and nutrients.

Far from having detrimental effects, carbon dioxide has decidedly beneficial impacts on plants, aquatic and terrestrial alike, and a new study connects enhanced plant productivity to greater bird species diversity in China. How, therefore, can anyone conclude that human carbon dioxide is a pollutant that must be eradicated?

These facts erect a formidable barrier for "zero-carbon" advocates. By insisting that no human CO2 should be emitted, they are promoting continued suboptimal growth of food plant species in the face of impending global food shortages — and poorer functioning and less diversity in the global ecosystem.

Zero-carbon activists respond to these facts by asserting that human CO2 emissions cause "dangerous global warming." They are wrong about this, too.

If rising atmospheric CO2 levels drive global temperatures upward, as they insist, why is Earth not suffering from the dangerous "fever" that Al Gore predicted? Instead, after mild warming at the end of the twentieth century, global temperatures have leveled off for the past decade, amid steadily rising carbon dioxide levels.

Lomborg's claim that we need to "cure" so-called "unchecked climate change" is thus fallacious and contradicted by reality. Reducing human CO2 emissions will likely have no measurable cooling effect on planetary temperatures.

His insistence that we prioritize expenditures is spot-on when applied to genuine environmental and societal problems. However, it is irrelevant when the problems are mythical — or devised to advance ideological agendas. Moreover, even if human impacts on the global climate can actually be measured at some future date, humans currently lack the scientific and engineering understanding and capability to deliberately "manage" Earth's constantly changing climate for the better.

Most certain of all, atmospheric carbon dioxide is not the "climate control knob" that anti-hydrocarbon alarmists assert, and it is irresponsible for Lomborg to claim his socio-political agenda will provide a low-cost solution for the global warming "problem."

The scientific reality is that even the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has been unable to demonstrate a cause-and-effect scientific connection between rising human CO2 emissions and dangerous warming. To support global limits on CO2 emissions, in the absence of real-world data showing clear cause and effect, is scientific and policy incompetence on the highest order.

Imagine a drug company seeking FDA approval for a new drug, based on an analysis that says simply: "Our supercomputers say the drug is safe and effective. We have no clinical data to support this, but can think of no reason actual results would contradict what our computers predict. Moreover, failure to license the drug will be disastrous for patients suffering from the targeted disease." Failing to demand actual dose-and-response studies, before licensing the drug, would be gross negligence on FDA's part.

Between 2007 and 2009, U.S. carbon dioxide emissions dropped approximately 10%, to their lowest level since 1995, largely because of reduced energy consumption during the recession. Similar CO2 emission reductions occurred in Britain, Germany, France and Japan.

Have their climates gotten better or less dangerous? Are they now a better place, for having a lower intensity carbon energy diet? Have global temperatures been statistically unchanged since 1995 because, or in spite of, Chinese and Indian carbon dioxide emissions increasing far more than the aforementioned countries reduced theirs?

These are practical, not rhetorical questions. As far as we can see, the only direct effect of decreasing CO2 levels via expensive renewable energy programs has been to cost more American and European jobs than would otherwise have been the case during the global economic recession.

The central issue is not whether rising CO2 levels will cause a warmer planet. The fundamental concern is whether globally warmer temperatures are factually worse (or better) for human societies — and more (or less) damaging to the environment — than colder temperatures (like those experienced during the ice ages and Little Ice Age).

Bjorn Lomborg, Al Gore and Bill Gates need to consider the likelihood that, driven by changes in solar activity and ocean circulation, Earth will cool significantly over coming decades. Damaging the global economy with ineffectual carbon dioxide controls, in a futile quest to "stop global warming," looks stupid now.

Viewed later, with hindsight, it will be judged outrageously irresponsible.

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• Legates is a hydroclimatologist at the University of Delaware and serves as the state climatologist of Delaware.

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5. Observe Other's Past Energy Experiences

By Charles Battig, Letter, Richmond Times Dispatch, Oct 21, 2010
http://www2.timesdispatch.com/news/2010/oct21/ed-batt21-ar-575964/

Gov. Bob McDonnell's "all-of-the-above strategy" on energy has an open-minded appeal. However, this is no reason to ignore the energy production experience of others.

Spain was President Obama's model for a green-energy jobs market. The financial meltdown in Europe revealed the unsustainable levels of Spanish tax subsidies propping up solar and wind-power industries. More jobs were destroyed than created at a reported ratio of nine lost to four created.

Danish consumers pay one of the highest electric rates in spite of their embrace of onand offshore wind turbines. Denmark deals with the erratic nature of wind power by dumping excess wind power energy into Sweden's hydroelectric dams and into the German energy market at a subsidized cost to the Danish consumer. The recent Bentek wind power analysis indicates that wind turbine power in Texas and Utah is overall more polluting because of the on-off, inefficient operation of the gas-turbine backup power plants. U.S. wind and solar tax subsidies average 20 times those for nuclear and oil (U.S. Energy Information Agency).

The report of algae (or switchgrass) used to produce fuel is not new. The question is why bother. Coal, oil, and natural gas are the original biofuels and are in abundance. The cost of natural gas has collapsed, putting T. Boone Pickens' Texas wind-farm project on hold. Federal policy and environmentalists are the impediments to our energy self-sufficiency.

Doug Domenech wants to encourage cost-effective energy alternatives. Cost-effective for whom? The energy producers or Virginia taxpayers? Page 6-2 of the "2010 Virginia Energy Plan" (Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy) lists many incentives for renewable energy, including a standard calling for 15 percent production from renewables with an enhanced rate-of-return to the utilities, grants, incentive funds, and tax credits. All of these are Virginia taxpayer costs, not entrepreneurs risking their own money.

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