

CO2 HYSTERIA

Wendell Krossa

Richard North in the ([The Great Global Warming Letdown](#)) as reported by Benny Peiser on March 26, 2007 makes a decent effort to appear even-handed in reporting on the opposing views in this great climate change battle. But in several telling statements he reveals an adherence to the basic ideological assumption re CO2 that is held by environmental alarmists. It may be the most widespread public assumption today- this background perception that the human contribution to CO2 in the atmosphere is dangerously high and growing to catastrophic proportions. This seems to fuel this CO2 hysteria more than any other single factor.

North says that we may come to wish that we had never “unleashed our carbon orgy...once it was kicked off, there was precious little to be done about its awesome capacity to run on by itself”. Carbon orgy? Awesome capacity? What? Our 0.117% contribution to the natural carbon cycle?

And then you have people around like David Suzuki that are preaching about the dangerous ‘poison’ that is CO2 and its destructive effect on the world. With this kind of distortion filling the airwaves it helps to return to something like Geocraft’s article [Global Warming](#): a clearer look at the numbers to put it all back into perspective every once in a while.

Our contribution to CO2 and the greenhouse effect is so dwarfed by natural sources as to be almost undetectable.

The Geocraft people note such things as the difference between the human contribution to total greenhouse gases and our contribution to the “greenhouse effect”. This is explained by the use of a “global warming potential” multiplier (GWP) that relates the warming impact of other gases to CO2’s impact. For example, methane is apparently 21 times more potent in heat retention characteristics than CO2. Nitrous oxide (N2O) is 310 times more potent. Our contribution to each of these gases is included in charts.

Now, as many have pointed out here and elsewhere, CO2, methane, N2O, CFCs, and other gases make up only 5% of greenhouse gases with water vapor making up the other 95%. The human contribution to water vapor is almost nil. Our contribution to the other 5% noted above comes in at 5.53% (5.53 % of the 5%). This is a very tiny part of the minor greenhouse gases.

Working out the numbers, our contribution to the CO2 greenhouse effect is 0.117%. Our contribution to all the greenhouse gases in terms of their greenhouse effect comes to 0.28%. As the Geocrafters conclude, “This is insignificant”. They make another important conclusion: “Reducing man-made CO2 emissions by 30% (as called for under Kyoto) would have an undetectable effect on climate while having a devastating effect on economies”. Even if the entire world complied fully with Kyoto the reduction in human greenhouse contributions would be only 0.035%. The cost to real people would be devastating while the impact on climate would be “statistically negligible in terms of measurable impacts and climate change”.

Noting how insignificant the human contribution to greenhouse gases actually is, and noting the mounting hysteria over CO2, one is then led to ask why such demonization of CO2 (a life-enhancing nutrient) and why such hysteria over our tiny contribution? And here we find ourselves repeatedly confronted with the ideology and beliefs that drive environmental alarmists, which includes such things as an anti-capitalist stance (CO2 serving as a proxy for capitalist success), anti-technology and anti-progress beliefs (peasant utopianism), anti-consumerism, along with a general anti-human stance, and so much more anti-whatever. See Alston Chase’s *In A Dark Wood* for detail on these varied ideas and beliefs that have formed the environmental religion or ideology (a summary of these ideas- The ideological and religious beliefs of environmentalism- is provided at www.thehumanspirit.net).

It seems that these people exaggerate the human contribution to CO2 because they need to exaggerate the damage that people are doing to nature. This is also why they portray CO2 as a destructive poison. It suits their assumption, in accordance with the general dogma of environmental extremism, that whatever humanity does is destructive of nature. You get the feeling from them that we just don't belong here on Earth.

This exaggeration of the human contribution to CO2 (along with the supposedly destructive nature of CO2) forms a basis from which the alarmists can then argue for constraining and even stopping the free enterprise movement. Oh yes. Bill Rees, the inventor of the ecological footprint concept, actually told our class in Environmental Impact Assessment at the University of BC that he would not just stop economic development and growth but he would actually "reverse it" in an attempt to return land to nature. He seems entirely unaware of the 'environmental transition' noted by Indur Goklany (The Improving State of the World) which shows that free enterprise success has already been returning land to nature over the past decades. And free enterprise success has also been cleaning up the air, even before government regulation started commanding people to do so (CO2 emissions per capita have already been declining). So economic growth and development are already saving the world. This is because the wealthier we get, the more we restore and conserve nature. Why? Because we are all natural environmentalists and we all want a clean environment. And when we get the bucks to do so, we make nature nice.

Lets hope the continued repetition of factual information like this in the public realm will stem this ideologically and mythologically driven hysteria over CO2.

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