

## Global warming insanity?

When do symbolic gestures turn into “doing something” about climate change?

Paul Driessen

“The object of life is not to be on the side of the majority,” Marcus Aurelius opined, “but to escape finding oneself in the ranks of the insane.”

An even worse fate would be to end up in minority status and an asylum. Recent developments suggest that this might be the destiny of climate change alarmists.

Now that NASA has corrected its US temperature records, the hottest year on record is no longer 1998, but 1934. Five of the ten hottest years since 1880 were between 1920 and 1940 – and the 15 hottest years since 1880 are spread across seven decades. This suggests natural variation, not a warming trend.

Plant and insect remains found at the base of Greenland’s ice sheet indicate that, just 400,000 years ago, the island was blanketed in forests and basking in temperatures perhaps 27 degrees F warmer than today.

Land area temperatures in South America, Africa and Australia have declined slightly over the last few years. Since 1998, sea surface temperatures over much of the world have decreased slightly, while globally averaged atmospheric temperatures have shown no change.

Many US temperature gauges are near air-conditioning exhausts, hot asphalt and other heat sources. Their readings are thus too high and must be revised downward – along with claims about rising temperatures.

Over the past 650,000 years, global temperatures almost always rose or fell first – followed centuries later by changes in atmospheric carbon dioxide levels, as warming oceans exhaled CO<sub>2</sub> or cooling seas absorbed the gas. (This inconvenient fact is what Al Gore is referring to when he says the temperature-CO<sub>2</sub> relationship “is actually very complicated.”)

More scientists are pointing to solar energy levels, cosmic rays and clouds as determinants of climate – and saying CO<sub>2</sub> plays only a minor role. Thousands of scientists have questioned claims that humans are causing catastrophic climate change, and over the past year dozens have publicly switched from believers to skeptics about climate Armageddon theories. There is obviously no consensus on climate change.

Latvia and seven other eastern European countries are threatening legal action against EU decisions to restrict their emissions, as they work to grow their economies after decades of impoverishment under Communism. China and India refuse to sacrifice economic growth to concerns about climate chaos.

China has surpassed the US as the world’s leading CO<sub>2</sub> emitter – and EU carbon dioxide emissions have increased faster than those in the United States, where both population and economic growth have been substantially higher than in Western Europe.

During the just-concluded UN climate conference in Vienna, a number of industrialized countries rejected binding targets of 25-40% greenhouse gas reductions by 2020 – while a bloc of 77 developing nations said industrialized countries should reduce their emissions 80% by that date.

The response of climate alarmists is fodder for psychological textbooks. Greenpeace says cataclysm skeptics are “climate criminals.” NASA scientist James Hansen calls us “court jesters.” *Grist* magazine wants “Nuremberg-style war crimes trials.” Robert Kennedy, Jr. says we should be treated like “traitors.”

Phil Jones at the University of East Anglia’s Climate Research Unit refused to reveal the methodology for his dire-sounding temperature data. “Why should I make the data available,” he asked, “when your aim is to find something wrong with it?” And Senator Barbara Boxer turned climate hearings into inquisitions for catastrophe skeptics, while Congressman Jim Costa walked out on a witness who pointed out that proposed legislation would dramatically increase energy and food prices, cost millions of jobs, and severely hurt poor families – while doing nothing to stabilize global temperatures.

*Newsweek* said climate holocaust “deniers” had received \$19 million from industry, to subvert the “consensus” it claims exists about global warming. It made no mention of the \$50 BILLION that alarmists

and other beneficiaries have received since 1990 from governments, foundations and corporations – or of its 1975 article, which declared that scientists are “almost unanimous” in believing that a major cooling trend would usher in reduced agricultural productivity, famines and perhaps even a new Little Ice Age.

(*Newsweek* contributing editor Robert Samuelson called the global warming “denial machine” article “highly contrived” and based on “discredited” accusations about industry funding.)

Alarmists have blamed global warming for hurricanes, tornadoes, malaria, and even the Minneapolis bridge collapse, terrorism, Italian suicides, teenage drinking and “irritability” in mice. By combining far-fetched speculation with various computer-generated temperature projections and worst-case scenarios, they concoct even more ominous auguries, like this whopper from London’s Benfield UCL Hazard Research Centre:

If CO<sub>2</sub> levels keep rising, global temperatures could soar, ice caps could melt, oceans could rise dozens of feet – and all that extra water pressure could destabilize Earth’s crust, squeeze out magma and cause volcanoes to erupt. The volcanic gases and dust could then cool the earth, and cause a new ice age.

A 1993 blockbuster movie used a similar what-if pyramid scheme to generate terrifying encounters with raptors and tyrannosaurs. But when the lights came up, people knew it was just a movie.

When it comes to climate change, however, many seem unable to separate science from science fiction – or even distinguish between headline-grabbing pronouncements, preposterous disaster flicks like “The Day After Tomorrow,” and pseudo-documentaries like “An Inconvenient Truth” and “The 11th Hour.” Instead of fostering rational discourse and responsible action, alarmists insist that we “do something” immediately to prevent climate cataclysm.

Al Gore is buying carbon offset indulgences. Leonardo DiCaprio is replacing his incandescent lightbulbs. Cheryl Crow promotes one square per trip to the ladies room. Cate Blanchett will wash her hair less often in her new \$10-million Australian mansion. Cameron Diaz promotes “indigenous” lifestyles in Third World countries.

But they all support laws mandating greatly reduced energy use and economic growth – outside of Hollywood and Nashville’s Belle Meade area.

In response, Congress has introduced a half-dozen “climate stabilization” bills – and state legislatures are reviewing 375 more – even as the scientific “consensus” fades, Europe’s united front on emissions trading collapses, and countries in the Asia-Pacific Partnership reject mandatory greenhouse gas cutbacks in favor of steady technological progress in pollution control and energy efficiency.

These bills would cost American consumers many billions of dollars a year. But they would reduce average global temperatures by a tiny fraction of the 0.2 degrees F that scientists say the Kyoto Protocol would accomplish by 2050 (assuming CO<sub>2</sub> really is a primary cause of climate change).

It’s time to ask: At what point do symbolic gestures and political grandstanding become “doing something” about climate change? At what point do they amount to insanity?

Many suspect that anxiety about climate change was never really about preventing a global warming – or global cooling – catastrophe. Instead, they say, the real purpose is controlling energy use, economic growth and people’s lives. Alarmist efforts to intimidate climate catastrophe skeptics and legislate mandatory energy restrictions suggest that these suspicions are valid, and that climate doomsayers are becoming increasingly desperate.

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