

America's native criminal class

Locking up energy, driving up prices and destroying jobs to “save the planet”

Paul Driessen

There is no distinctly native American criminal class, Mark Twain observed – except Congress.

A century later, government power and intrusiveness have increased exponentially – and special interests have adapted by employing lobbyists who can navigate Washington, explain technology to tech-challenged members and staffs, persuade legislators that provisions are vital (or disastrous), and give clients “a seat at the table” where subsidies, mandates, taxes, preferences and penalties are meted out.

The system is both the cause and result of far too many congressmen becoming members of what commentator Charles Krauthammer calls an “ambitious, arrogant, unscrupulous knowledge class” that has arrogated unto itself the right to rule American citizens.

Even legislators who don't keep wads of thank-you cash in their freezers have committed misfeasance and malfeasance, by handling vital energy, environmental and economic matters in ways that would likely be prosecuted if done by businessmen. Lawmakers, eco-activists and companies routinely engage in social experimentation and central planning akin to previous Great Leaps Forward – and refuse to acknowledge the damage their actions inflict on workers, families, minorities and other businesses.

Today, in the name of protecting the environment, politicians have locked up enough oil, gas, coal and uranium to power the United States literally for centuries. Representatives of six of the nation's eight biggest petroleum-guzzling states routinely vote to ban drilling off our coasts and in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Interior Department estimates that these lands could hold more than the proven oil reserves of Iran or Iraq: 139 billion barrels that could be obtained with today's technology.

This energy belongs to all Americans. But politicians keep it off limits, and force us to consume oil that the rest of the world desperately needs. Food and fuel prices soar, poor families get pummeled, and we are compelled to send trillions of dollars to corrupt dictators, and give up jobs, tax revenues, royalties and security that developing US resources would generate.

Drilling bans also increase the risk of more spills from tankers carrying oil to replace what politicians have put off limits. In sixty years of offshore oil operations, only the 1969 Santa Barbara blowout resulted in significant oil reaching shore. Offshore oil platforms rarely pollute; they create magnificent artificial reefs. As a scuba diver, I've seen them firsthand, including the beauty where that blowout occurred.

So when Senator Maria Cantwell and colleagues oppose drilling – and then demand that President Bush tell OPEC countries to produce more oil – they are telling the world's poorest people: Drop dead. We don't care if you need oil and soaring prices are killing you. We refuse to do our part. We are consumers and importers, not producers. We will always put our eco-centric attitudes and our ties to green pressure groups ahead of your welfare.

When Congress doles out subsidies for ethanol, it converts tens of millions of acres of crop and habitat land into cornfields, diverts billions of gallons of water and fertilizer from food to energy, and sends fuel and food prices even higher.

When it silently endorses NRDC campaigns to stop petroleum leasing and drilling in western states – it shows it's happy to eliminate more jobs and energy production in the face of soaring demand and prices, and turn those states into playgrounds for wealthy elites, unaffordable for average Americans.

However, for sheer economy-wrecking, nothing compares to climate change proposals like the 491-page Warner-Lieberman bill. The Senate rejected it last week, but more proposals will soon be introduced – even though 32,000 scientists have signed the consensus-busting Oregon Petition, saying they see “no convincing evidence” that human greenhouse gas emissions disrupt Earth's climate.

Average global temperatures have not increased since 1998, even though atmospheric CO2 levels have risen by 3% a year. Moreover, notes meteorologist Anthony Watts, the 1.4 degree F decline in global temperatures since January 2007 offsets the total net warming during the twentieth century. And this temperature stabilization and downturn was completely missed by every computer model that alarmists use to conjure up apocalyptic climate scenarios.

All this means little to the “arrogant knowledge class.” Senators Clinton, Obama, Reid, Boxer, McCain and colleagues still insist that US carbon dioxide emissions be slashed by 71% – to levels last seen in 1937, during the Great Depression, when our population was one-third of today’s, and electricity use was in its infancy.

They would increasingly tax the 85% of our energy that is generated by fossil fuels. Gasoline could hit \$6 or even \$8 a gallon, and the cost of electricity and natural gas could more than double by 2030, according to the American Council on Capital Formation and other analysts. Moreover, sequestering all that plant-fertilizing CO2 would cost millions of additional megawatts and trillions of additional dollars in electricity.

The impact on services for poor, elderly, disabled and homebound people – and on airlines and manufacturing – would be disastrous. In impoverished Third World countries, the effects would be catastrophic and lethal, as global warming pacts are translated into ever higher prices for food, and a permanent dearth of affordable electricity for economic growth, lights, refrigeration and sanitation.

Many people and lawmakers finally grasp the magnitude of these costs. But four-alarm politicians have the support of activists, banks, scientists and corporations who say the climate bills are landmark “green” legislation – as in \$\$\$\$ for research, complex cap-and-trade tax deals, government handouts, mandates and subsidies for unreliable renewable energy, and opportunities to gain advantages over competitors.

Notes the *Wall Street Journal*: the \$3.3 TRILLION in cap-and-trade auction revenues that Senator Boxer “expects to scoop up” by 2050 under Warner-Lieberman were exceeded only by the trillions in “revenue handouts” she had already promised to its supporters.

Make no mistake. Warner-Lieberman and its kin have nothing to do with saving the planet. They are about the power to *control* – and *curtail* – the power we rely on: for homes, offices, hospitals, food, consumer products, transportation and modern living standards.

They are about *who gets to decide*: where our energy will come from ... how much we will have ... what it will cost ... whether there will be enough to lift more families out of poverty ... and who will be the winners and losers in a world of government-mandated energy scarcity. They are about creating a massive, regressive tax and regulatory scheme – to redistribute people’s incomes to constituencies that politicians judge are more likely to keep them in office.

It’s truly ironic. Fifty years ago, Democrats were defending the Jim Crow laws they had enacted to keep blacks from schools, lunch counters, buses and drinking fountains. Today, Democrats are leading the fight to impose what Congress of Racial Equality chairman Roy Innis aptly calls “[Jim Crow energy policies](#)” that block access to energy, drive up prices, and keep minorities from achieving economic civil rights.

Even more ironic, four decades ago, Republicans led by Senator Everett Dirksen wrote and enacted landmark civil rights bills. Today, a biracial Democratic presidential candidate and Senate Republicans like John Warner and John McCain are championing Jim Crow energy and climate policies that trample on economic opportunities and civil rights.

These policies are far more criminal than anything Mark Twain ever dreamed possible.

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