

Following Europe's lead on climate change

Which lead should we follow? Even if it takes us off an economic cliff? To what end?

Paul Driessen

Environmentalists, journalists and politicians say tough climate legislation is a moral imperative. Global warming science is settled, the United States is out of step with other nations, America must follow Europe's lead to prevent climate chaos.

It's great rhetoric. But which European lead should we follow? And how is it morally responsible to enact climate legislation that kills jobs and punishes families and businesses, to reduce global temperatures by perhaps 0.2 degrees?

There is no "consensus" on the "problem" or "solution." Over 31,000 [scientists](#), including hundreds of [climate scientists](#), vigorously [disagree](#) with the assertion that human carbon dioxide emissions will cause a climate cataclysm.

Long ago ice ages and interglacial periods, the Sahara's shift from verdant valleys to parched desert, and protracted droughts in the Yucatan and American Southwest had nothing to do with humans, they note. Sunspot counts are now at a 50-year low, indicating reduced solar activity and possibly explaining why planetary temperatures haven't risen in a decade, despite soaring CO2 levels, say solar experts. Some computer models predict major climatic shifts, but they don't include solar and other natural factors.

Hydrocarbons provide 85% of all US energy. They are the foundation of an economy that has been shaken to its core and may be entering a recession. Wind and solar represent less than 0.5% – and provide only intermittent auxiliary power. The new ["Lights out in 2009?"](#) study warns that the United States "faces potentially crippling brownouts and blackouts," beginning in 2009, especially in regions that experience prolonged hot spells during summer months, due to insufficient generating capacity.

A bank that wanted to install solar panels found it would cost \$850,000 – but would cut only 12% off its electricity bill. That meant it would take 90 years to pay off panels would last only 30 years. Fiscal and technological realities must remain the foundation of "social responsibility."

House Democrats are nevertheless promoting new cap-and-trade legislation that could be even more punitive than Warner-Lieberman, which even sponsors admitted would cost nearly \$7 trillion. They oppose oil and gas drilling, and new coal, nuclear and hydroelectric plants. Many want to "transform" our energy and economic system – from one that works to one based on heavily subsidized technologies that aren't ready for prime time, and may not exist for decades.

We have to do our part, they insist, and join other nations in "saving the planet." But which "responsible" leaders should we follow?

* Countries that signed the Kyoto Protocol and agreed to slash greenhouse gas emissions to 7% below 1990 levels? Or those whose actual emissions are well *above* their Kyoto targets: eg, Portugal 12% above, Italy 17% above, Spain 22% above, Denmark 25% above, Canada 27% above?

* A European Union that solved this predicament by agreeing to slash emissions 20% by 2020 – and presumably 30% by 2030 (or 40 by 40) when this new promise also proves too difficult or painful?

* Angela Merkel 2006, who promised to eliminate coal and nuclear power in Germany – or the chancellor of today, who wants to build new coal-fired power plants and shield chemical, steel, manufacturing, cement and automotive industries, by reducing emission goals or providing free cap-and-trade permits.

* Poland and other former Eastern Bloc nations, which intend to block a new EU climate change agreement, because they depend on coal for up to 90% of their electricity and on Russia for up to 97% of their natural gas, were held back for 50 years under Communist dictators – and now are loathe to be kept from developing by dictates from Brussels?

- * France, Germany and Austria, which want EU climate restrictions eased to help industries that are struggling with high energy prices, the economic crisis, and competition from less regulated overseas competitors that rely on coal for power generation and easily undercut European production costs?
- * Britain, where politicians are being pummeled because climate taxes and skyrocketing energy prices have forced 5.5 million households to live in “fuel poverty” – and factories are saying they may have to close their doors and furlough workers all winter, because of soaring fuel prices?
- * Canada, where 78% of the citizens feel they have been misled about the costs and benefits of Kyoto, and want fair and objective information from the media and politicians?
- * The Australia of 2007, which supported taking action on climate change by a 55% margin? Or the Down Under of 2008, which *opposed* such action by 55% *before* the global financial meltdown?
- * China and India, which put reducing rampant poverty, with its high human and environmental costs, ahead of the speculative effects of future climate change – and say they will be better able to adapt to climate changes (natural or human) if they are rich and technologically advanced?
- * Countries that want to help impoverished nations develop abundant, reliable, affordable energy to reduce lung and intestinal disease and death, by powering prosperity, safe water, refrigeration and modern hospitals? Or those that tell African and other destitute countries they must be satisfied with pitiful amounts of intermittent energy from “sustainable” sources like wind and solar?
- * Al Gore, the prophet of ecological doom? Or Al Gore who flies only private jets, owns a fancy houseboat, and uses more electricity in a week than 28 million Ugandans together use in a year?
- * Bureaucrats, scientists and politicians who seek open, robust, honest debate on climate change? Or those who use global warming hysteria to secure research grants, control every aspect of our energy and economic lives, and attend conferences at four-star resorts in Bali?
- * Or perhaps three Italian ministers, who called the EU climate action plan “politically correct garbage” that “would kill any economic improvement” and “achieve very modest environmental benefits,” in a period of international economic difficulties that call for prudent decision-making?

California gets much of its electricity from coal-fired power plants located 600 miles from Los Angeles – enabling it to claim it’s “a leader” in curbing carbon dioxide. (It also gets substantial electricity from a nuclear power plant in Arizona, and most of its oil from Alaska.) Utah, on the other hand, generates most of its electricity from coal-fired plants within the state.

How many states can outsource their power and pollution? Which ones have more affordable electricity and gasoline, enabling poor families to live better on lower incomes – and still have money left for rent, college, retirement, healthcare and charity? Which states are the more socially responsible leaders?

Morality, environmental justice and corporate social responsibility are too often defined by narrowly-focused environmental ideologies. They are too often winner-takes-all contests, pitting rich countries and eco-elites against poor families and nations that must worry more about immediate life-or-death concerns than speculative human-caused climate chaos. They too often replace rough-and-tumble debate over science and economics with intimidation and dogmatism.

We need to protect our economies, jobs and planet. We need conservation and all forms of energy: whatever works best, at lowest cost, for particular cities, states, regions and nations.

Will we follow politicians and activists who offer fear-mongering and utopian promises, as they lead us lemming-like off an economic cliff? Or will we follow leaders who offer honest, unflinching analysis and sound judgment – and stop us short of the precipice?

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