

Climate Change

Being a lover of the outdoors, I have always been sympathetic to matters associated with environmentalism and conservation. For me, the climate change debate has always boiled down to a simple, age old adage: Better safe than sorry. A little less pollution, or even a lot, couldn't be too bad of a thing, especially if the big polluters were the ones cutting back. Living more frugally myself also resonated, not only due to environmental reasons but also economic and spiritual. But in time, I couldn't help notice that there was something strange going on with the handling of this issue, beginning with the emotionally laden, apocalyptic language being used which so often seemed at odds with genuine inquiry. I also noticed that less pollution by the big polluters was not what was being called for, in fact, quite the contrary.

It's not that taking care of the environment is a bad idea. Rather, the problem critics correctly cite stems from the fact that there is a hidden agenda that is very different than the ostensible one. If "everyone agrees," as is purported to be the case by many proponents, then why is it so easy to find publications with titles like "*a brief history of fossil fueled climate denial*"? If we're having to keep lists of so called "deniers," then how could it be that everyone agrees? Why do we see intimidation, ostracization and even death threats being leveled at so-called "deniers"? What is the real reason for claims of "settled science," provocative language, believer/denier dialectics and the use of disingenuous methodology that goes far beyond Climategate? It seems that we would see far less of this sort of thing if motives were in the right place because it would be unnecessary. Yet we have seen, and are still seeing, all of this.

Several examples of the aforementioned disingenuous methodology belong to the IPCC, or Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the modeling techniques of which has been likened to "appealing to a ouija board" by MIT atmospheric physicist, Richard Lindzen. Canadian investigative reporter, Donna Laframboise, cites problems with the IPCC methodology. They have used several graduate students as lead writers. They do not poll their scientists individually on the key questions and then allow only a few dozen people (those on the "Attribution Chapter") to draw conclusions and make final judgements for the reports, which helps to explain the curious use of grad students. So the IPCC is billed as the best of the best, yet in reality only a select few make final decisions.

According to Dr. Martin Hertzberg, meteorologist for the US Navy, the IPCC also ignored the faulty methodology behind the infamous hockey stick theory which, according to Hertzberg, used a “notoriously unreliable” temperature proxy; tree rings. When other researchers (Loehle, et al) repeated the study using 18 other, more reliable proxies (rainfall, sunlight, pests, competition from adjacent trees, etc...) the hockey stick theory disappeared. Why did the IPCC ignore this? Because, according to Hertzberg, the hockey stick theory was exactly what the greenhouse gas industry wanted to hear. But this is in accord with widely held sensibilities regarding the UN, which has taken ideas like forced acquiescence and manufactured consent to new heights, so that the interests of the few can be advanced “for the good of the whole.” But who is surprised to hear this anymore?

Another example of ambiguous veracity in methodology was the 2010 letter published in the journal "Science" entitled, "Climate Change and the Integrity of Science," which had over 250 NAS signatories. Yet, as one journalist noted;

"However, an investigation into the professional backgrounds of the scientists finds that many do not work in climate science and some work in fields not even remotely related to it."

"Pediatric surgeons, an expert in the Maya and the Olmec civilizations, a chemist that studies bacteria, a 'computer pioneer' with Microsoft, an electrical engineer, the chairman of a biotechnology firm, and even an expert studying corn are but a few of the 255 'experts' that signed the letter."

Similarly, in 2011, a comprehensive report was published called "America's Climate Choices," ostensibly by the National Academies of Sciences. But the report had a steering committee consisting of 23 individuals, only 5 of which have a Ph.D. in a field related to climate science. Why? There is no shortage of qualified scientists within the NAS ranks. So while most of these did not participate, this report is billed as an NAS report.

The chair of the steering committee, Albert Carnesale, also chairs two other committees at the National Academies: the Committee on Conventional Prompt Global Strike Capability and the Committee on Nuclear Forensics. He is also on the Advisory Board of the RAND Corporation and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. Joining Carnesale on the steering committee were various lawyers, public policy makers, many professors (of sociology, law, decision sciences, political science, applied economics, agricultural economics), various economists and economic advisors, a director from the

RAND Corporation, a former FEMA director, industrial engineers, environmental engineers, a chemical engineer at DuPont, a mechanical engineer, the chief atmospheric scientist at DuPont, a DuPont CEO, a former chief economist and VP of General Motors. Meanwhile, the vast majority of qualified NAS scientists sat on the sidelines for this report. How can this be viewed as a scientific consensus?

How much veracity may we justifiably attach to this curious use of lists, panels and studies which are supposedly full of scientists who “all agree” on the “settled science”? Which question, exactly, is there consensus on? That there is climate change? That humans have some impact? That c02 levels impact global temperatures? Of course everyone agrees on these simple questions. But how much impact do humans have? How much does c02 impact global temperatures? And what about the positive aspects of c02 on global plant growth? NAS member Richard Lindzen, atmospheric physicist and Professor of Meteorology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who has published more than 200 papers and books, says that a compelling, scientific consensus on climate change does not exist, because as soon as you begin to ask the more salient questions the consensus disappears. It comes as no surprise that Lindzen is one of the many highly qualified NAS scientists who were excluded from the "America's Climate Choices" report, even though he is a NAS member and is far more qualified to speak on climate change than the preponderance of the panelists who did participate.

And how about the cui bono question? Sure, it's understandable that there would be concern over big industry funding polluter friendly studies. This does happen and it's a valid concern. At the same time, however, it's equally important to ask; how easy is it likely to be, realistically, to find reputable scientists willing to lie, to produce phony science to take a pay off? Isn't it far more likely that corporations seek out particular scientists because their ideas or studies are already in keeping with the needs of the corporation? Yet this is never how it is presented. It is presented as if the scientists are throwing caution to the wind, ignoring their legacies and reputations and just flat out lying to make a quick buck.

Most importantly, why ignore the financial agenda on the other side of this issue and the trappings of scholarship that are supporting it? Often alluded to as a new fiat currency and quite possibly the next sub prime bubble, carbon credits are expected to eclipse both gold and oil en route to becoming a 10 trillion dollar market at maturity, according to Richard Sandor, widely known as “the father of carbon trading.” Incidentally, Sandor is also the founder of the Chicago Climate Exchange (CCX) and, coincidentally, a pioneer in the area of derivative financial instruments, credited with having "brought derivatives to the agricultural, insurance, and utilities sectors.” Another proponent of the market

approach to combating pollution and global warming is J.P. Morgan Chase's own Blythe Masters, who is credited with creating the modern credit default swap.

"Masters says banks must be allowed to lead the way if a mandatory carbon-trading system is going to help save the planet at the lowest possible cost. And derivatives related to carbon must be part of the mix, she says. Derivatives are securities whose value is derived from the value of an underlying commodity -- in this case, CO2 and other greenhouse gases."

Al Gores Generation Investment Management (GIM) owns stakes in CCX, as does Goldman Sachs. In fact, Gore has teamed up with a host of personnel from Goldman Sachs in the founding of GIM, including David Blood, former CEO of Goldman Sachs Asset Management, Mark Ferguson, former co-head of GSAM pan-European research; and Peter Harris, who headed GSAM international operations. Gore's primary founding partner in GIM was Hank Paulson, former Goldman Sachs Chief Executive. According to energy analyst, Antonia Juhasz, Goldman Sachs appears to be morphing into an oil company, buying up oil fields, tankers, pipelines and that they own (along with other oil companies) the primary trading floor on which oil futures are now traded, the intercontinental exchange (or "ICE" - based in Atlanta) which is unregulated by the US government. Last, it comes as little surprise that oil profits are unparalleled even by pharmaceuticals, defense, and banks, as Juhasz has also pointed out.

If the global warming movement is going to do any good at all, it will have to reconcile the very inconvenient truths hiding behind it, starting with the mother of all financial incentives, the ushering in and administrating of what is expected to become the largest commodity market the world has ever known; c02. As Richard Lindzen has pointed out, it's difficult to imagine a better mechanism of control.

Corruption in national governments, as well as global, intergovernmental bodies like the UN, is pretty widely acknowledge and well documented. It's not at all surprising to find this trend carrying through to the IPCC and our National Academies, the latter of which routinely liaises with other learned societies and government policy makers, playing an important organizational role in academic exchanges and collaborations between countries. It's even less surprising considering what is at stake financially. No doubt the US National Academies possess the credentials, and therefore the potential, to provide the valuable service of forming legitimate, scientific consensus on important issues, as do the national academies of other countries. Too bad most NAS scientists who are qualified to speak on climate change sit on the sidelines while the establishment uses IPCC and

NAS creme de la creme prestige for purposes of realpolitik and advancing the usual sorts of economically motivated agendas.

The quid pro quo, commodification of carbon will dovetail quite nicely with the current financial milieu of hucksterism, bailouts, derivatives, and the Kyoto Accord. The latter of these puts a “green” veneer on cutting indigenous people off of their ancestral lands, so rich in natural resources, to make way for things like "clean development mechanisms" (eg; hydroelectric dams) and "carbon sinks," presumably to generate “offsets” so we can save the planet. What it really does is sanctify the excesses of the big polluters, wipe out their competition, and displace people with some of the smallest carbon footprints in the world to make way for corporations with some of the largest, a sort of organic label for all global industry. In the end, it’s ok to pollute. But only if you can afford it.

"In a couple of hundred years historians will be comparing the frenzies over our supposed human contribution to global warming to the tumults at the latter end of the Tenth Century as the Christian millennium approached. Then as now, the doomsters identified human sinfulness as the propulsive factor in the planet's rapid downward slide."

"Then, as now, a buoyant market thrives on fear. The Roman Catholic Church sold indulgences like checks. The sinners established a line of credit against bad behavior and could go on sinning. Today a world market in "carbon credits" is in formation. Those whose "carbon footprint" is small can sell their surplus carbon credits to others less virtuous than themselves."

Alexander Cockburn (former editor for Counterpunch and columnist for The Nation)

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