

Global Warming: A Guide to the Hype



By Christopher C. Horner

Open the paper, turn on the evening news, listen to Congress on CSPAN, step into a public school classroom, or go to a corporate seminar, and you'll get the same story: By driving too much, using too much power, and relying too much on fossil fuels, Man is causing global warming that will be disastrous to the planet. Global warming will cause glaciers to melt and sea levels to rise.



The debate is over, they tell us. The science is proven. We have *consensus*. Anyone who doubts us is either blind or (more likely) dishonest. Skeptics are usually in the pay of the oil companies—the very companies who are “polluting” the air with dreaded carbon dioxide.

We must act now, they implore us. Thankfully, real solutions are at hand. Responsible lawmakers from both parties have put forward legislation that will tackle global warming. Even corporate America is on board. The rest of the planet has started on their way to the solution with the Kyoto Protocol, but George W. Bush, the Texas oilman, pulled us out of the treaty. We are alone in the world, as Europe is cutting its greenhouse gases.

This story, like any good myth, is useful for those who proffer it, but it has little grounding in facts.

The main hole in the “settled” theory of catastrophic Manmade global warming is that it is not catastrophic, Manmade, or global.

WHAT'S CAUSING THE WARMING?

The climate is always changing. Different parts of the planet are always getting colder or warmer, wetter or drier. Many things can cause this climate change. The sun has cycles, sometimes producing more energy, and sometimes producing less. The Earth's wobble and eccentric orbit mean that different parts of the planet will be exposed to varying amounts of heat over different periods. If more snow or land is exposed, more heat might be reflected. If more water is exposed, more heat will be absorbed. If the sky gets darkened by dust—caused by a volcano, a meteor, or pollution—it

can make the planet colder. Land-use changes, Manmade or otherwise, greatly impact local climate. Finally, there is the most famous (but still one of only many) factor in temperature: greenhouse gases.

“Greenhouse gases” are gases that principally occur naturally. Carbon dioxide is one greenhouse gas. We make CO₂ when we breathe out. Plants release CO₂ and other GHGs when they die. Oceans store and release enormous quantities of CO₂. Nitrous oxides are greenhouse gases produced in soils by microbial processes. Methane is another. It comes from decaying plants, seeps from swamps, bogs, rice paddies, and leaks out the front and back ends of masticating animals. By

allowing sunlight to enter our atmosphere freely but then absorbing and otherwise trapping infrared solar radiation (heat), these gases form a protective blanket sustaining life; without them, Earth would be uninhabitable, as our atmosphere would be, for all purposes, equivalent to that of Mars.

Humans add to the greenhouse gas concentration by not just by exhaling but by harvesting plants, and releasing methane, typically after a meal of Mexican food. (*Measure that, EPA!*) But we also create greenhouse gases by the processes through which we generate or release energy—for our homes, our factories, and our cars—all processes that involve hydrocarbons.

Hydrocarbons, which include petroleum, coal, and natural gas, consist largely of hydrogen and carbon atoms. The bonds in these hydrocarbon molecules are very strong, and so breaking the bonds releases a good bit of energy. They are easily combusted and, therefore, make great fuels.

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To release the energy, we burn them—or *oxidize* them—and then use the freed energy to keep our houses warm, our refrigerators humming, our cars moving, and our Internet servers serving. The coal or oil being burned typically possesses impurities, which can go into the air as pollution. If the hydrocarbon fuel is incompletely burned, it can give off poisonous carbon monoxide. Ideally, hydrocarbons are transformed entirely into energy and the odorless gas carbon dioxide.

As such, CO₂ is not a *byproduct* or *pollutant* but an intended result of energy production. The more efficiently one combusts a hydrocarbon, the more CO₂ one produces. This is one reason why advocates of “energy efficiency” as a global warming solution haven’t quite perfected their argument.

While SUVs and power plants garner the most media and environmentalist attention, combustion emissions contribute about 2 percent of greenhouse gases currently keeping our atmosphere habitable. This bears repeating: Of all the factors causing climate change, Man-made greenhouse gases are a tiny fraction of *one* factor.

Most greenhouse gases are produced by “natural” processes. Still, “greenhouse warming” theory vows that man’s marginal contribution will tip the atmospheric system into some disequilibrium producing delirious climate change (the “tipping point” claim, which assumes, again, that climate was once stable).

But Man’s emissions are chemically indistinguishable from Nature’s own (assuming, as do the greens and Kyoto, that Man is not part of nature). Earth itself varies wildly in terms of relative volume of GHGs it produces or



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releases each year. Somehow, by this thinking, the planet treats Man’s contribution to greenhouse gases differently. So the argument goes.

HOW MUCH ARE WE WARMING?

Warming is happening, but it is slight, it is relative, and it is not “global” in that it is not warming everywhere (for example, the Southern Hemisphere).

Alarmists proclaim the 1990s as the “hottest decade,” pointing to the infamous “Hockey Stick” graph of temperature reconstructions melded onto actual temperature measurements. It turns out that the ’90s not only fail to live up to the “hottest” title, but coincided with the closure of hundreds of measuring stations (including many in the former Soviet Union as their priorities turned to more pressing domestic matters such as the collapse of an empire). If you shut down measuring stations in the cold parts of the world, your average global temperatures will go up. It turns out that the 1990s’ temperature increases track nicely with these closures. At the very least, one should be wary comparing post-1990 temperature averages with data from before the massive shut-down of stations. Yet not one journalist can be bothered with this concern.

While anecdotal observations serve as the basis for prominent climate scare stories in the media, the principal basis for alarmism is computer climate model projections. These, as with any model, can be designed to produce whatever outcome is desired.

Reconciling computer model projections with real-world experience (observations over the past three decades of a

0.17-degree C rise per decade) suggests that we might expect a warming of about 1.7 degrees C over the next century. Further, all but two among dozens of climate models predict linear warming (steady), not exponential (skyrocketing, as in Al Gore's celluloid fable). Remember, predicting that the planet will get warmer says nothing at all about what—if any—contribution Man might have, but this does raise the question of *why the hysteria?*

In a crushing blow to the media, it appears that things are turning out even milder than that. In May 2006, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued a report, co-authored by Dr. John Christy, that worked out even more the differences in temperature trends between surface and satellite measurements (a major controversy given that the atmosphere was supposed to warm first and worst, but couldn't seem to keep up with the surface, which was being layered with more heat-absorbing concrete all the time). The report found that "global-average temperature increased at a rate of about 0.12 degrees C per decade since 1958, and about 0.16 degrees C per decade since 1979. In the tropics, temperature increased at about 0.11 degrees C per decade since 1958, and about 0.13 degrees C per decade since 1979." This is far less than the models generally predict, and, as such, Christy noted (reported, surprisingly, by *The Washington Post*), the Earth is not heating up rapidly.

Further, to claim "global warming" with



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any degree of accuracy one must be referring to an increase in measured global mean surface temperature—a quantity that has never actually been measured. Surface temperature is not measured globally but rather haphazardly, wherever measuring stations have been placed. As noted, coincidentally enough the number of measuring stations changed drastically immediately prior to the "hottest decade on record," and stations in poorer countries are maintained differently compared to those in wealthier countries. This

is why one leading climate scientist says that the "global mean surface temperature" means as much to him as would the global mean telephone number.

Note also that this does not make today's average temperatures warm by historic standards. Considering that it is only warm right now if you deliberately choose as your baseline a year colder than today, "global warming" has been occurring since the 600- to 700-year cooling period known as the Little Ice Age ended—to the tune of about 1 degree Fahrenheit in the past 100-plus years. That's what all of the fuss is about. A degree is supposedly responsible for all of the tales of woe, despite that it's been warmer, and cooler, in the past.

The warming of the Earth's surface that many scientists associate with Manmade greenhouse gas emissions is actually distributed in the least catastrophic—and most beneficial—fashion possible. During the recent, slight warming trend, it is the nighttime and winter temperatures that have seen any notable



increase—and tilted toward the northern latitudes, if not so much as predicted. In fact, winter, polar, and nighttime warming has accounted for nearly all of the counted warming, increasing twice as much as the daylight or summer (“maximum”) temperatures. This translates to longer growing seasons and warmer nights, which foster plant growth and agricultural productivity by reinforcing the fertilization effect of carbon dioxide. Oh, the humanity.



Don't most flora and fauna live in warmer areas for the very good reason that they survive better there?

Yet this does not mean that the warming trend of the past three decades will continue at its current pace, much less at a catastrophic pace. Consider my infant son. He grew nearly a foot in his first 12 months on this planet. Shall we assume that in mere years he will be terrorizing skyscrapers as any giant should? Of course not. Like the impact of carbon (carbohydrates) on an infant's growth pattern, the global warming impact of the GHGs that Man adds to Nature's mix is logarithmic, not linear. That is, my son will not in fact grow to be 40 feet tall and weight a ton; he will grow steadily then cease doing so (as with climate, certain regional exceptions will arise, like difficulty buttoning his bell bottoms).

In short, the evidence cited for catastrophic Manmade global warming does not credibly demonstrate that Man is capable of causing the sort of greenhouse calamity promised by the alarmists to justify their “bold” “solutions.” Notably, that “cure” is the same cure that has been offered over decades for any number of ills both real and not-so-real, including global cooling: drastic cuts in energy use, combined with the environmentalist community's longstanding goal of far, far fewer people occu-

pying the Earth and using its resources.

HOW DESTRUCTIVE IS THIS WARMING?

An increase of 0.12, 0.17, whatever. Though they insist the warming will be dramatic, when pressed the alarmists promise that a temperature rise of even 1.2-1.7 degrees C—over a century—will be calamitous. This raises some questions:

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that they survive better there, actually, the same reason that 90 percent of Canadians are huddled near their southern border? Hasn't it been warmer than that in Man's earthly experience? Has the planet—and life on it—adapted and thrived after such temperature increases in the past? Hasn't the Earth experienced even the projected *rate* of warming before? In fact, doesn't all planetary life experience major temperature swings between midnight and noon nearly every day, and much more throughout the seasons of the year, clearly without mass extinction or catastrophe? The answer to all of these is “yes.”

We need to ask whether warmer is necessarily worse. Russian president Vladimir Putin made waves when rhetorically asking why a cold country such as Russia would fear a couple of degrees of warming. (Indeed, the Russian Academy of Sciences last November warned about the ice age returning.) Given geographic retirement trends, Putin does seem to have a point. Cold is not only not pleasant, but it kills like heat rarely can, as is statistically borne out *whatever* one's baseline. For example, the UK Department of Health calculates that, if the southern UK warmed by 3

degrees C by the 2050s, as some claim it might, 2,000 more people would die in summer heat waves each year, but 20,000 fewer people would die of cold in the winter.

Even substantial global warming would likely be beneficial to the United States. As Yale economics professor and climate expert Robert Mendelson testified to the Senate:

Climate change is likely to result in small net benefits for the United States over the next century. The primary sector that will benefit is agriculture. The large gains in this sector will more than compensate for damages expected in the coastal, energy, and water sectors, unless warming is unexpectedly severe. Forestry is also expected to enjoy small gains. Added together, the United States will likely enjoy small benefits of between \$14 and \$23 billion a year and will only suffer damages in the neighborhood of \$13 billion if warming reaches 5C over the next century. Recent predictions of warming by 2100 suggest temperature increases of between 1.5 and 4C, suggesting that impacts are likely to be beneficial in the U.S.

THE SHAME

So low has the discourse fallen that the European Parliament in a draft resolution blamed Hurricane Katrina on Manmade global warming, rhetorically winking at the supposed culprit (the U.S.). They did so in self-parodying fashion, stating how the body “. . . notes with regret that the often predicted impact of



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climate change has become a reality in that poor sections of society living in coastal regions bore the brunt of the hurricane.” Of course. If it weren't for that darn climate change, poor sections of society living in coastal regions wouldn't bear the brunt of hurricanes; they would continue staring happily overhead as storms passed on to abuse the wealthier people living inland.

In fact, while many European commentators and individual politicians toed the line of actually blaming the storm on the United States, some crossed it with abandon. Even accepting their premise that Man causes the weather, in typical fashion this ignores that Europe's CO₂ emissions have gone up markedly since Kyoto, which cannot be said about the U.S. (all while the U.S. economy and unemployment improved markedly, which cannot be said about Europe). Were one inclined to stoop to continental-style environmental hysteresis, one might therefore be tempted to say that in addition to inflicting the cruelty of its welfare and economic policies on its own people Europe caused Hurricane Katrina.

The important thing to remember is that hurricanes—like malaria, floods, and the entire “global warming” parade of horrors—happen with or without “global warming” as posited, and the “cure” of policies imposing suppressed energy use, like the Kyoto Protocol, make no one any safer, but only poorer and less able to deal with these ever-present threats.

Advancing glaciers can be found within miles of their melting brethren yet the former watch in loneliness as overheated journalists



flock to the more cooperative ice. Similarly, the vaunted disappearing ice caps generally aren't disappearing. Much melting activity began at the end of the Little Ice Age and continues, often found in areas that are actually experiencing decades-long cooling. In fact, the Earth's atmospheric temperature (arguably a more relevant measure, given that anthropogenic global warming is an *atmospheric*, not a surface, theory) is not warming, like the surface (which is disproportionately influenced by development, and therefore will, of course, increase). Today's temperatures are about the same as in the 1930s and cooler than a thousand years ago. Someday the Vikings may be able to resume their agricultural lifestyle on Greenland.

Climate modelers will tell you they can predict cooling if that's what is desired, but for years elected activists made clear that warming was on order. With \$5 billion in taxpayer dollars now at stake annually, bucking that edict would get you professional Siberia, which for some actually occurred. These massive sums are the lifeblood of research science, and, so, few risk rocking the boat. What prompted such enormous expenditure was a prior reliance upon 20 or so years' data to generate "consensus" panic, over "global cooling," serialized in *Newsweek* magazine. *Newsweek* remains ever-vigilant now against Manmade global warming, yet so far as I can tell never particularly noted the stunning nature of how Man's fate has been reversed. Isn't *that* news?

Green alarmism has become more breathless, more convoluted, and more well-coordinated with the establishment press as the "skeptics" continue to win on the relevant economic questions and science continues to be bipolar, so to speak (as science, frankly, should be). The global warming agenda is,

after all, the brass ring, the mother lode, the movement's be-all-and-end-all. Victory means control over energy policy and many individual freedoms long loathed by the greens.

CURE WORSE THAN THE POSSIBLE DISEASE

That prescription itself is the greens' real goal, not remedying any particular environmental phenomenon. Control energy and you control the economy. Kyoto is rationing, plain, simple, and expressly so. Given foreseeable technologies cutting emissions means rationing energy use, which the greens have long seen as the enemy.

Much of the increased energy demand projected over the next three decades will be in rapidly developing countries, such as India. Until people have electricity and some access to modern

transportation they can't enjoy the benefits of modern industrial civilization. Bringing power to those hundreds of millions who now must spend several hours a day gathering brush or firewood or cow dung to cook their meals will have enormous benefits far outweighing any remotely feasible, negative consequences.

This massive increase in energy use will improve people's lives, allow them to work much more productively and thereby raise their incomes, improve their health, and improve environmental quality. Certainly in India as well as other tropical and semi-tropical places, most of this energy will come from coal because they don't have much prospect for wind energy, but many of them do have lots of black gold.

Projected, dramatic increases in energy demand is actually the good news which, of course, the greens see as the nightmare scenario. Yet consider their preferred outcome. The world is at present energy poor, not energy

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rich. Starving the world's poor—or rich—of access to modern energy means starving the world's poor. Moreover, no matter how badly activists might desire to do so, the scientific community is simply not equipped to drive the debate on questions that are at heart economic or political, such as the wisdom of schemes like the Kyoto Protocol.

The “solution” to global cooling, as with warming, was to stop having babies, adopt riskier lifestyles away from which we have technologically developed, and cede national energy budgets to a supranational body pre-

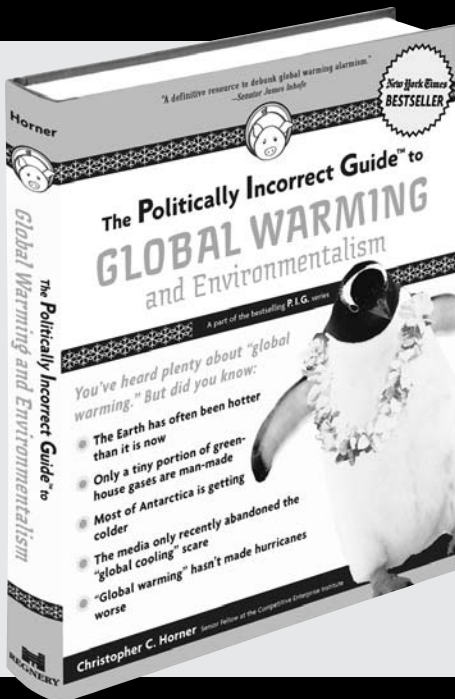
scribing each nation's ration. But the science that would support rationing energy continues to elude them.

Global warming policies to put the world on an energy diet will, on the whole, threaten human welfare.

—Mr. Horner is a Senior Fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute. This article is excerpted from his book *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Global Warming and Environmentalism*, published by Regnery, © 2007 by the author.

The Inconvenient Truth

Environmentalism Is NOT Political Science . . .



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THE LIBERALS ARE CRYING “global warming catastrophe” again. But in the New York Times bestseller, *The Politically Incorrect Guide™ to Global Warming and Environmentalism*, Christopher C. Horner lays out incontrovertible evidence that catastrophic man-made global warming is nothing but a bunch of hot air.

In breezy, light-hearted, and always entertaining *Politically Incorrect Guide™* fashion, Horner gives you the facts, not the hype.

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