

Even the Warmists Don't Believe In Global Warming

Louis Woodhill, Forbes, 12-29-11

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Much was written about the most recent United Nations Climate Change Conference, which was held in Durban, South Africa November 28 through December 9 of this year. However, most commentators gave short shrift to the most important—in a sense, the only—outcome of the meeting. This was, of course, the agreement to hold yet another conference in yet another nice location (Qatar) about a year from now.

The Durban conference was the seventeenth conference of its kind. They have been held annually since 1995 in places such as Geneva (in July 1996) and Bali (in December 2007). Don't hold your breath for one to be held in Newark, New Jersey, or Fargo, North Dakota.

The meeting in Durban provided an opportunity for Progressives to make their latest argument that ordinary people should surrender their freedom and hand all money and power over to unelected, unaccountable “experts” like, well, the people at the conference. This is, of course, in order to “save the planet” from “climate change”. (The issue that had for years been called “global warming” was rebranded as “climate change” when the most recent decade's worth of data proved uncooperative.)

First, let's get the known and knowable facts out of the way. Is the climate changing? Yes. One feature of the manifested universe is the impermanence of all things. The climate has changed over time and will continue to change. Is the change good or bad? Like all change, it is both good and bad.

But, overall, is it good or bad? We can't say. We don't even have a conceptual framework that would allow us to answer that question, or even to adequately describe how the climate is changing. “Climate” is an abstraction, and all abstractions are untrue (or at least incomplete).

Is human activity causing the climate to change? We don't know, and there is no way, even in principle, that we can know. It is difficult enough to determine the “what” of climate change. To determine the “why”, we would need to do controlled experiments. And, for this, we would need another planet, identical in every way to our own earth, which we could use as a “control”.

But wait! Isn't the science “settled”, thus making anyone who questions the climate change “consensus” an anti-intellectual Luddite? No. Nothing in science is ever settled.

“Science” consists of nothing but theories that have not yet been disproved by evidence, but which, in principle, could be so disproved. Even Einstein's theory of relativity, which has been validated by thousands of experiments and measurements over almost a century, was recently called into question by experiments involving neutrinos that appeared to travel faster than light.

If something is “settled”, it is not science. It is religious dogma, and an assault upon freedom of thought and inquiry.

But don't the climate scientists' computer models prove that carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels are causing climate change? No. First, no computer model can ever prove anything (see the definition of “science” given above). Second, we do not have the capability to model a system as complex as the earth.

The most any computer model can be is a useful tool. As it happens, all of the computer models that have been developed over the years by climate change proponents have already been invalidated by events that they did not accurately predict. For example, given the fast rising CO₂ concentration in the earth's atmosphere, global temperatures should have gone up much faster than they have over the past ten years. (And, it is not even clear that they have risen at all.)

So, we don't know what is really happening to the earth's "climate". Even if we did, we could not be sure why it was happening. And, we have no way of knowing whether the change was good or bad for mankind as a whole.

But what of the Progressives' argument that, because the effects of climate change are potentially so disastrous, we should surrender our freedom and move to a centrally planned world economy managed by experts, "just in case"?

Two points about this: first, it's not going to happen. The Progressives will have to content themselves with extracting a few billion dollars per year from taxpayers to fund cushy "research" and "advocacy" jobs, and to hold climate change conferences like the one that just concluded in Durban. Second, the climate change advocates obviously don't believe in climate change themselves.

You can't necessarily tell what people are truly committed to from what they say. However, you can always tell what they are truly committed to by how they negotiate. If someone really wants to do something, they will react to a suggestion by engaging it. They will "work with" the suggestion, trying to see how it can help them do what they say they want to do. If someone says that they want to do something but they really have some other agenda, they will respond to a suggestion with an instant, "Yes, but..."

The climate change crowd has been frantically "yes, butting" geoengineering, which involves using technology to control the climate directly. Their efforts in this regard would be hilarious if the stakes in terms of money and freedom were not so high.

It is obvious that even if "climate change" is happening, and even if it is a bad thing, it is not going to be reversed by reducing CO₂ emissions. Despite decades of climate change conferences, protocols, and agreements, fossil fuel use has been rising rapidly as people all over the world have adopted free market economics as a way of escaping poverty. So, if anything at all is going to be done about climate change, it will have to be done by "geoengineering".

Geoengineering is a far more logical response to "global warming" than are efforts to curb CO₂ emissions. First of all, geoengineering does not require that our assumption that it is man-made CO₂ emissions that are causing the problem be correct. It would work regardless of what was "really" causing global temperatures to rise. Second, there are geoengineering approaches that could cool the earth at a cost of a few billion dollars per year, rather than tens of trillions of dollars per year. And, third, geoengineering does not require that the people of the world surrender their personal and economic freedom.

Given that geoengineering has the potential to actually do something about the climate change "problem", the reaction of the climate change crowd to it has been illuminating. They have gone all-out to stop geoengineering experiments from being conducted, and they are doing everything they can to prevent geoengineering from even being discussed.

Climate change proponents recently mounted a desperate effort to stop an experiment in Britain designed to spray 40 gallons of pure water into the upper atmosphere (the so-called SPICE project). Thus far, they have

managed to delay the test, and they are arguing that even if the experiment goes ahead, the results should not be made public.

The Progressives are well aware that their opposition to geoengineering experiments exposes their entire game, which is all about money, power, and central-planning control of people's lives, and has nothing to do with concern about the earth. Unfortunately (for them), they have no choice. Geoengineering solutions might actually work, but they do not require that Progressives be given taxpayer money to hold lavish conferences in lovely places like Durban, South Africa.