

Global Warming: Facts and Factoids

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Here we go again! After the IPCC, Sir Nicholas Stern, Al Gore and all the plethora of Greenie NGOs that feed on the “eco-catastrophism,” now it’s the G-8 that comes out from its environmental meeting in Kobe, Japan, sounding the trumpet of global warming as a planetary emergency that would supposedly justify all sorts of drastic measures to curb the use of fossil fuels worldwide. The failure to halve the anthropogenic carbon emissions until mid-century, so they say, would usher the environmental Apocalypse in. (1) Well, fortunately for Mankind it won’t.

First of all, for those seriously interested in the business of global emergencies, there is no shortage of them. Here are some that do not exist only in computer models and are real threats requiring urgent actions on a new level of international cooperation and coordination driven by a “Common Good Principle,” and not by the “business as usual” corporate and great powers’ hegemonic interests:

- The world’s most serious environmental troubles, particularly in the developing countries, are those related to the lack of water and sanitation infrastructure, like water pollution and water-borne diseases that kill a child every 15 seconds worldwide, according to the UNICEF. In Brazil, only 6% of the cities have sewage treatment systems and two thirds of the internments in the public health system were due to water-borne diseases in 2004. A poll conducted last year by the British Medical Journal among physicians all over the world elected fresh water and sanitation infrastructure as the greatest medical advance of the last 150 years - a privilege still unavailable for over 40% of the world’s population (for reasons that will become clear later, Al Gore and the major environmental NGOs never campaign for this). (2)

- Hunger and its consequences kill a child every six seconds, according to FAO. Some 850 million people all over the world suffer from chronic hunger, a scenario that will surely worsen due to the current world food crisis. Besides the waste of productive lives, the annual economic cost of such a tragedy in productivity, revenues, investments and consumption losses is in the order of 500 billion to 1 trillion dollars.

- The lack of access by much of the world’s population to modern energy sources. Fuelwood, the most primitive energy source known to Man, is still the basic resource for the daily needs of 90% of the Africans (besides being a major source of deforestation). Although with lower figures, the same happens in much of Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. Also, as 80% of the world’s primary energy consumption is provided by coal, oil and natural gas, it’s not difficult to ascertain the potential consequences of the intended restriction of their uses proposed by environmentalists, politicians, carbon traders and all the people terrified by the global warming scare stories. Besides that, those fuels are used to generate about two thirds of the world’s electricity, the rest being almost totally provided by hydroelectric and nuclear plants (both

increasingly targeted by the environmentalists too).

- A dysfunctional international financial system in need of an urgent reform, in order to be put again in the service of the real economy, and not the other way around, as it has been the pattern in the last decades of financial "globalization." On May 21, 2008, the French newspaper Le Monde published an open letter signed by seven former European prime-ministers, five former finance ministers and two former presidents of the European Commission, with the significant title "The mad finance should not govern us." Their warning: "The growing income inequality has occurred in parallel with continued growth in the financial sector... The financial capital is now fifteen times the GDP of all countries... The world of finance has accumulated a huge mass of fictitious capital but this has done very little for the human condition and the preservation of the environment." Their call: "(...) to prepare a global financial conference to rethink the rules of international finance and governance on global economic issues." (3)

- The deepening chasm between the body politic agendas and the aspirations and real needs of most of the populations of most countries, easily verified by the observation of daily life facts everywhere. For almost two thirds of the respondents of a recent poll conducted by the University of Maryland's Programme on International Policy Attitudes, involving over 17,000 adults in 19 countries (representing 59% of the world's population), their countries are being run by a "few big interests looking out for themselves," rather than "for the benefit of all people." (4)

The list of real troubles is much longer, but these few examples are enough to demonstrate the distortions of the agenda of global discussions, both among the policymakers and the public opinion in general (which, in the case of climate issues, reflect a widespread deficiency of scientific education among the educated strata of the societies).

In any case, make no mistake. Barring an unexpected technological breakthrough, there won't be large scale alternatives to fossil fuels until mid-century at least. Massive national and international investments in efficient and integrated multi-modal and urban transportation networks may and should help to reduce the use of automobiles and trucks, particularly in the overcrowded big cities. For power generation, the best options are harnessing the hydroelectric potential still available, the development of a new generation of intrinsically safe nuclear fission reactors (including some capable of "recycling" much of the spent fuel), the research on nuclear fusion in joint efforts like the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER), and the interlinking of continental power grids in order to enhance both the energy efficiency and security for all countries involved. However, coal, oil and natural gas will continue to be sources of development for a long time yet.

Science is not driven by "consensus"

The second point to make is that, despite everything the IPCC, Al Gore and his Hollywood friends and a biased media say, there isn't a single piece of scientific evidence (meaning hard facts, not mere factoids or a concocted "consensus") linking the anthropogenic carbon emissions to the atmospheric temperatures. In 2007, an unforeseen combination of weak solar activity and the La Niña phenomenon (a cooling of the Eastern Pacific Ocean surface waters) caused a sudden drop of the world average temperature by no less than 0.7°C, de facto "canceling" in a single year all the warming allegedly registered since 1870 - the pretext for all this fuss about global warming. (5)

Obviously, highly complex planetary-scale biogeophysical phenomena like climate changes cannot be properly analysed from the very limited time frame proposed by the IPCC and most of the global warming scaremongers, namely the latest 150 years. If one correctly takes the geological time scale as a reference point it's easy noticing that during the latest 600 million years temperatures and carbon dioxide concentrations have been rising and falling to levels quite higher and, in the case of temperatures, much lower than the current ones, but most of the time there wasn't a clear fitting between both curves, as shown by a wide array of indirect data (called "proxies"). When they correlate, as in the latest hundred thousands of years, it's the temperature trend that precedes the CO2 trend, not the other way around.

Indeed, most of the time the CO2 atmospheric concentrations have been much higher than the current ones. At the end of the Ordovician period (440 million years ago) they were 16 times higher, whereas the average temperatures in the intertropical zone were approximately the same as today and a vast glaciation covered the higher latitudes of the Gondwana super-continent.

By the way, with the exception of the Permian-Carboniferous glaciations (250-300 million years ago), CO2 atmospheric concentrations have never been so low as during the current geological period, the Quaternary (the latest 2 million years). (6)

As to the warmer periods, they used to be called "climatic optima" before climatology became a "political" science in the last decades. One of them was the Medieval Warming Period between the 11th and 13th centuries, when the average temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere were up to 2oC higher than today. The term derives from the verifiable fact that not only the biosphere but also Mankind have adapted more comfortably to warmer periods than to the cooler ones like the eight ice ages of the last 800,000 years. These glacial periods have lasted some 90,000 years each and were separated by eight inter-glacial periods lasting between 10,000 and 10,500 years in average. Civilized Mankind has been existing entirely in the current 10,700 years inter-glacial called the Holocene.

Hence, instead of being scared to death about warming, climate-concerned people should rather think again. Without pressing the panic button, it doesn't need an actual ice age; a mere drop of 1-2oC in the average temperatures (many scientists who study the cosmic-solar influence on the climate expect a cooling for the next decades) would spell a lot of troubles for the world agriculture, e.g. an increase of killer frosts and droughts. (7) This would be particularly dangerous for a WTO-world where national food security is labeled "market distortions" and has become greatly dependent on a few big food exporting - and geographically vulnerable - countries like the U.S., Canada, France, Argentina, Brazil and Australia.

Little mention has also been made to the fact that most of the Earth's terrestrial plants would benefit from higher CO2 concentrations - the gas is one of their main nutrients, after all.

Concerned about sea levels? Twenty thousand years ago, at the height of the last glaciation, they were 120 meters lower than today. Six thousand years ago, during the Holocene Climatic Optimum, when temperatures were quite higher than today (up to 4-6oC in some regions), the coastline was up to 3 meters higher than today in several places (the most advanced "industry" then existing was ceramic pottering in the Amazon River valley). (8)

Brief, for hundred millions of years the global climate dynamics have been driven by an extremely complex interaction of natural factors – cosmic radiation, solar activity, greenhouse gases, marine currents, volcanic activity, distribution of oceanic and land masses and others – which science is still far from understanding properly, let alone be able to simulate in computer models, sophisticated as they may be (such models are useful scientific tools but by no means should be used to (mis)guide far-reaching public and international policies).

And what about the so-called “scientific consensus” on the matter? Well, to start with, science is not driven by any kind of “consensus,” but by a permanent commitment to the search for truth – and, as history shows, a good deal of scientific breakthroughs have been made *against* the prevailing “consensus.” Notwithstanding, thousands of leading scientists with expertise and high academic degrees in all scientific disciplines related to climate studies, including many with ties to the IPCC itself, have strongly denied the existence of such a thing.

A good example is the Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine’s Global Warming Petition Project, an appeal signed by over 31,000 American scientists (9,000 with doctorate degrees) from many scientific disciplines. The text is surely one of the most concise and precise descriptions of the problem:

“The proposed limits on greenhouse gases would harm the environment, hinder the advance of science and technology, and damage the health and welfare of mankind. There is no convincing scientific evidence that human release of carbon dioxide, methane, or other greenhouse gases is causing or will, in the foreseeable future, cause catastrophic heating of the Earth’s atmosphere and disruption of the Earth’s climate. Moreover, there is substantial scientific evidence that increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide produce many beneficial effects upon the natural plant and animal environments of the Earth.” (9)

Regarding to the IPCC, the UN agency that supposedly embodies the alleged “consensus,” a great number of scientists, even many of its own members, have criticized publicly its biased approach to the subject and particularly its alarmist summary reports “for policymakers.” In fact, the IPCC was set up in 1989 out of the UN Environment Program with a pre-ordained task of “proving” – not probing – the human influence on the global climate. So, its business is not science but politics – and, as we’ll see sooner, business.

On the pursuit of its tainted agenda, the IPCC does not even bother to resort to open fraud. This was the case of its 2001 report, which displayed with great propaganda a graph produced by paleoclimatologist Dr. Michael Mann (the infamous “hockey stick graph”), who tried to demonstrate that the 20th century warming would have been the product of anthropogenic carbon emissions, simply by “ironing out” the well-known Medieval Warming Period (included even in the first 1990 IPCC report). As it was demonstrated later by serious researchers, Dr. Mann and his team had just used a “fixed” algorithm that produced the same result independently of the data input. (10)

Undeterred, the IPCC limited itself to withdrawing the graph from the 2007 report, but stuck to its conclusion, as one can read on page 2 of the *Summary for Policymakers*:

“Average Northern Hemisphere temperatures during the second half of the 20th century

were very likely higher than during any other 50-year period in the last 500 years and *likely the highest in at least the past 1300 years* (emphasis added).” (11)

So much for its vaunted “scientific credibility.”

The model of international scientific cooperation the world needs is not the IPCC, but the 1957-58 International Geophysical Year (IGY), the remarkable effort that united tens of thousands of scientists from 66 countries at the height of the Cold War in order to advance the systemic and comprehensive knowledge of the Earth dynamics and its interactions with the Sun and the Cosmos. It’s indeed regrettable that the 50th anniversary of that great endeavor has gone virtually unnoticed by the global media, because the epistemological approach, the joint research methodologies, standards and procedures developed for it, the huge mass of gathered data and the quality of the obtained results were an enormous advancement for science that brought real benefits for all Mankind – a feat diametrically opposed to the disservice done by the IPCC.

What’s all this fuss about?

Let’s face reality: behind the global warming swindle there are powerful hegemonic internationalist interests oriented by a Malthusian/Social Darwinist vision of Mankind. These people, with strong roots in the Northern Hemisphere Establishment, control the international environmental machine in the first place with generous grants to its militant NGOs. For them, environmental “catastrophism” is just an instrument serving a political agenda aimed chiefly at restricting the world development and controlling a big chunk of the planet’s natural resources. All this while partly directing the scientific research with selected grants and, of course, while doing very big business with the “smoke futures” called carbon credits (as it is the case of that purported paragon of ethics, scientific credibility and statesmanship Al Gore).

Hard to believe? Just listen to two skilled and respected researchers who investigated the subject from different angles. The first one is University of Pittsburgh’s sociologist Dr. Donald Gibson, in his seminal 1994 book *Battling Wall Street: The Kennedy Presidency*:

“In the late 1950s and 1960s, a longstanding inclination among some members of the upper class was about to become a national issue. This inclination was to redefine achievements in science and technology as either evil actions threatening to nature or as futile attempts to reduce human suffering that was said to be the result of overpopulation. This tendency, partly articulated as a worldview in the writings of Thomas Malthus, takes what might be reasonable concerns over issues such as air and water quality and embeds them in an ideology deeply hostile to economic progress and the majority of human beings... The overall thrust was still clear: the U.S. and the world should move in the direction of ending population growth, and protection of the environment should be given an importance equal to or greater than that of improving the standard of living... Economic growth and technology were portrayed as problems...” (12)

The second one is prize-winner Canadian investigative journalist Elaine Dewar, author of *Cloak of Green: The Links Between Key Environmental Groups, Governments and Big Business* (1995), perhaps the best investigation ever made on the movers and shakers of the international environmental movement. Her words:

“By the end of 1991... I had come to believe cross-border pollution was being used as marketing device to sell doubters on the need for regional and global levels of governance... The public was being persuaded to accept environmental protection based on a market model: regulations would be replaced by laws permitting the trading of pollution debits and credits. If (Maurice) Strong’s associates had their way pollution credits and debits would soon be globally traded just like pork bellies and financial derivatives. By the year 2000 there would be few independent national entities left capable of defending local communities from international leviathans. Local communities would compete with each other for the favours of large interests. Those of us living on the brutal margins of these new world powers would find ourselves grateful to trade with anyone at any price.” (13)

Any resemblance to the ongoing rush to convert carbon emissions in commodities and the intended post-Kyoto agenda of establishing quotas of emissions (read energy consumption) for each country is not mere coincidence.

Dewar’s countryman Maurice Strong, is the environmental mastermind, acting in numerous high-profile positions as a businessman, government official, UN super-bureaucrat, foundation trustee, NGO board member and a lot of other hats. In her book, Dewar reveals that he had already proposed an international tax on oil consumption in the 1972 Stockholm Conference, the first major international meeting, of which he was the Secretary General (a position he held again 20 years later in the 1992 Rio Earth Summit). Curiously, the pretext then was already “global warming,” at a time when temperatures were falling since the 1940s in such a way that some people were warning about an incoming “new ice age” (including some who are now crying wolf about global warming). Not surprisingly, our “Mr. Carbon” is one of the brains behind the IPCC and the Kyoto Protocol, and is now a board member of the Chicago Climate Exchange, the world’s first “carbon stock market.”

Strong himself wrote about his role in establishing the warming agenda in an op-ed published in the Toronto *Globe and Mail* on March 7, 2007, in which he proposed the creation of a “super-agency” in order to enforce the carbon-restriction policies worldwide. His words:

“As one whose role in putting the climate-change issue on the public agenda is being targeted by critics, I hasten to confess it. As the first head of the UN Environment Program, I convened a meeting of climate-change experts more than 30 years ago. In 1992, I led the Earth Summit that produced the Climate Change Convention, and was involved in Kyoto when the contentious protocol on targets was agreed... I propose a new kind of commission be established — a World Climate Commission... The commission would be mandated by the United Nations and would be autonomous in its operations... It would monitor all activities involving climate change and report to governments and to the UN, evaluating the progress and performance of all of the actors, providing specific recommendations that would be expected to have a significant influence on public opinion and on the actions of government, industry and others.” (14)

In short, a self-appointed body, staffed by non-elected super-bureaucrats and accountable only to the multi-vested interests hidden behind the global warming scare machine.

Because of all this, any attempt to make the anthropogenic carbon emissions the “bogeyman” of global warming is simplistic and misleading almost to the point of nonsense

- or bad faith. And the insistence in “de-carbonizing” the world economy against all evidences cannot be labeled as nothing less than suicidal - or plainly criminal.

So, it's high time to return the discussion about climate change to the place it should never be withdrawn: that of good science, common sense and the common good. However, this task cannot be left to scientists and politicians alone; it must begin with us common citizens all over the world, by rejecting such a nightmarish agenda for our future.

The author is a geologist, director of the Ibero-American Solidarity Movement in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and co-author of Máfia Verde 2: ambientalismo, novo colonialismo (Green Mafia 2: Environmentalism, New Colonialism), published in 2005; www.msia.org.br; gerald@msia.org.br.

Notes:

1. Agence France Presse, “G8 Ministers Pledge ‘Strong Will’ on Climate Amid Doubts,” May 26, 2008, <http://www.commondreams.org/archive/2008/05/26/9191/>.

2. Sarah Boseley, “Sanitation rated the greatest medical advance in 150 years”, *The Guardian*, January 19, 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2007/jan/19/health.medicineandhealth3>.

3. “La finance folle ne doit pas nous gouverner “, *Le Monde*, May 21, 2008. The signers were: former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt; former prime-ministers Massimo d'Alema (Italy), Lionel Jospin (France), Pavo Lipponen (Finland), Göran Persson (Sweden), Poul Rasmussen (Denmark) and Michel Rocard (France); former finance ministers Daniel Daianu (Romania), Par Nuder (Sweden), Ruairi Quinn (Ireland), Hans Eichel and Otto Graf Lambsdorff (Germany); and former presidents of the European Commission Jacques Delors and Jacques Santer. The text can be found at http://www.lemonde.fr/web/imprimer_element/0,40-0@-2-3232,50-1047738,0.html.

4. WorldPublicOpinion.org, “World Publics Say Governments Should Be More Responsive to the Will of the People”, May 12, 2008, http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/home_page/482.php?nid=&id=&pnt=482&lb =.

5. Phil Chapman, “Sorry to ruin the fun, but an ice age cometh”, *The Australian*, April 23, 2008, <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23583376-7583,00.html>.

6. “The Paleomap Project” (www.scotese.com), the site of Dr. Christopher R. Scotese, a geologist at the University of Texas at Arlington, provides an excellent overview on the Earth's geologic, geographic and climatic evolution over the past 1.1 billion years, with a well-written text and didactic animation maps that are useful and interesting for general readers and professional geoscientists alike. Spanish language readers may find particularly interesting the website of Dr. Antón Uriarte, a geographer at the Universidad del País Vasco, “Paleoclimatología: Historia del Clima y Cambios Climáticos” (<http://homepage.mac.com/uriarte/>). For the carbon dioxide concentrations over the geologic time scale, a good reference is: Robert A. Berner and Zavareth Kothavala,

“GEOCARB III: A Revised Model of Atmospheric CO₂ Over Phanerozoic Time,” *American Journal of Science*, Vol. 301, February, 2001, P. 182-204, http://www.geocraft.com/WVFossils/Reference_Docs/Geocarb_III-Berner.pdf. A didactic graph that combines Scotese’s temperature graph with Berner and Kothavala’s CO₂ graph can be found in the “Plant Fossils of West Virginia” site at http://www.geocraft.com/WVFossils/Carboniferous_climate.html.

7. David Whitehouse, “Ray of hope: Can the sun save us from global warming?”, *The Independent*, 5 December 2007, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/ray-of-hope-can-the-sun-save-us-from-global-warming-762878.html>.

8. Wikipedia’s entry for “Sea level rise” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_level_rise) provides an useful and fairly balanced introduction to the subject for the general reader, including a graph of the Late Quaternary sea-level oscillation. Unfortunately, it doesn’t even mention the fundamental work of the late Australian geologist Dr. Rhodes W. Fairbridge (1914-2006), whose “Fairbridge Curve” is still the basic reference for the study of sea-level oscillation in the last 20,000 years. Dr. Fairbridge was also one of the pioneers of the study of the astronomical influence on the Earth’s climate.

9. Global Warming Petition Project, <http://www.oism.org/pproject/>.

10. Wikipedia has an entry for the “Hockey stick controversy” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hockey_stick_graph) that provides an useful, though somewhat biased summary of the imbroglio. Interested readers may follow the many links provided.

11. IPCC, *Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report - Summary for Policymakers*, http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr_spm.pdf.

12. Donald Gibson, *Battling Wall Street: The Kennedy Presidency*. New York: Sheridan Square Press, 1994, pp. 87, 121.

13. Elaine Dewar, *Cloak of Green: The Links Between Key Environmental Groups, Governments and Big Business*. Toronto: James Lorimer, 1995, p. 329.

14. Maurice Strong, “A super-agency?”, *The Globe and Mail*, March 7, 2007, p. A15.

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