

Convenient Lies

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I believe the most savvy individuals are those with the nerve to hang out their own shingle. The somewhat less venturesome, yet competent, sign on with an up-and-comer, and do whatever is necessary to climb the corporate ladder. Others with a relatively low tolerance for risk aim to become bureaucrats with salary, benefits and pension increases indexed so as never to suffer the ravages of inflation. The do-gooders, with little chance of getting ahead in the real world, strive to become politicians. Which is to their credit, except that all too many are scared stiff to question the respective party line for fear of being excluded from the caucus. They also have a propensity to want to spend the taxpayers' money as though it flowed like water. Why even prime ministers with an almost lascivious desire for a majority government have a habit of abandoning their principles, the massive, unconservative, and fiscally irresponsible expansion of government a frightening example. Proof that even political leaders of ideological fervour do not hold up well in Ottawa. Sooner or later they get Canadianized, joining up with the great moderate horde who make the country what it is.

Even though global climate is an incredibly complex and complicated set of phenomena, there may well be some sort of spur-of-the-moment carbon dioxide emissions regulation before the next federal election in Canada and the United States, supplanting the key issues of health care and education. It behooves us all to uncover the truth about global warming as, according to the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity, a majority of Canadians fear not the possibility of a consequential economic collapse if rumoured directives come into effect.

TIME TO GET A MOVE ON

The urge to save humanity is almost always a false front for those striving to rule the roost. No matter the number of choices, there is a limit any sane government should be prepared to go. The prime minister needs to have a method to address the madness, or risk the chance of a golden opportunity to have citizens of all walks of life understand the difference between fact, opinion and hysteria. We must learn that climate change is not the result of burning fossil fuels. The driver is solar radiation activity of the sun. It also appears to be affected by a slight shift in the tilt of the Earth, and nor can anyone do anything about that. Those who are taken in by the possible use of carbon dioxide to enhance the recovery of crude oil must come to realize it has to be competitively priced or else it will not even be tested. Complicating matters is that it must be collected from the likes of the tarsand

plants, refineries and upgraders, scrubbed clean, dried, and pipelined to its final destination. Though oilfield injections have almost a hundred percent chance of staying contained for at least 5,000 years, the petroleum industry will never lead the way in reducing so-called greenhouse gases. The good news for worry warts is that energy production accounts for far less exhaust than the transportation industry.

Sustainability is the biggest ever challenge for contemporary capitalism. Its genius is that consumers not only get what they want, they cherish what is given them. Human nature being what it is, it is highly unlikely we are ready to settle for less than what other leading countries have. Given as we do not fully understand the reasons for the Arctic's warming, the wide-ranging International Polar Year research programme will include study of ocean currents, polar bear and reindeer migration, glaciers and the disappearing permafrost, the ecosystem, health and human behaviour. Though it is always difficult to deal with fanatics, some may gain comfort in learning that the polar bear has coped with climate changes far longer than have human beings. With easier access to food their population is on the rise. There is every reason to believe they, and we, will survive and prosper in the future.

When an issue gains as much momentum, reality is often lost in a combination of crass political posturing, diction, and sloganeering, and not in understanding what realistic choices are available. The fundamental problem is that the Kyoto Accord guidelines are simultaneously impossibly ambitious, environmentally inconsequential, inordinately expensive, and few countries could ever live up to them. The challenge is to find a viable, long-term strategy that is smart, equitable, and does not require inordinate sacrifice for trivial benefit. Fortunately, there is such a master plan: research and development, allowing future generations to make serious and yet economically feasible and advantageous decisions. The very idea Canada could meet the dictum's specific targets over the next five years is tantamount to believing in the tooth fairy. Unlike Al Gore, the ozone man, whose environmental activism inspired the vigorously spun Oscar-winning documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, we should walk the walk not just talk the talk of his incredible delusion that carbon dioxide emissions fundamentally affect our planet's weather patterns.

Fossil fuels account for 80 percent of the world's energy: crude oil 35 percent, coal 25, natural gas 20, nuclear power 6.5, hydro 2.2, and biomass 11. Solar, wind and geothermal sources together supply but 0.4 percent. According to a recent study by two renowned scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the use of coal will increase under any foreseeable scenario, as it is cheap and abundantly available about the globe. Although ultra clean, nonemitting nuclear power may in the end be used as an alternative to natural gas in the development of the tarsands and the method of storing spent fuel is sound, it is critical governments not fall into the trap of picking a winner based on technological reasons alone.

Not only are the alarmists' assumptions cooked, their ethical underpinnings skewed, they demonstrate utter naiveté in stoking public furor by making the cost-of-action appear to be as low as possible, those of alleged inaction as horrifying as can be. All too obviously, their primary interest is in serving themselves, by supporting the kind of scientific and economic insanity that is driving the debate. The truth is that advances occur in rich countries, acting unilaterally and independently, investing large amounts of money privately and publicly, either to preserve environmental legacies or to restore them. Ever mindful of earnings, balance sheet strength and liquidity, it is still too early to put an upside value on companies promising climate-change friendly solutions, or a downside on prominent dischargers.

It is not a matter of assuring our winters are as cold as they once were when, as old-timers claim, spit froze before it hit the snow. Rather, and as per a recent report issued by the US Navy, we might be lucky enough to have the Northwest Passage open to conventional shipping for a month a year come the summer of 2015, entirely ice-free by that of 2050, cutting the distance between Asia and Europe by as much as 5,000 kilometers. In keeping, the Canadian government has promised to build three armed naval ice breakers, an Arctic sensor system for underwater surveillance of foreign submarines, and squadrons of unmanned aerial vehicles like the famous self-piloted Predator aircraft, capable of flying for forty hours at a time. Along with an expansion of the Canadian Rangers, the approximately 1,600 part-time military reservists who assert sovereignty in the north, our rhetoric confirmed by their very physical presence. According to the 2003 signatory of the United Nations Convention about the law of the sea, Canada has but another six years to precisely map the boundary of its Arctic continental shelf, which could extend far beyond the 200-mile limit that the treaty otherwise recognizes. Fewer icebergs will help us do so. As has been suggested, the offshore may possess huge reserves of crude oil, natural gas and diamonds, exceeding those of the mainland.

COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

Question period in the House of Commons is like watching kindergarten brats holler at one another in a schoolyard. A range of relatively easy and sensible climate-change programmes could be put into place without ripping the economy apart. Adopting any of them would make the politicians look like adults, and that would be a welcome change.

The Liberals' Kyoto Accord initiative was and is the equivalent of economic suicide. Now they are leading the charge to force parliament to live up to their undertaking of 1998, ratified in 2002, and binding as of 2005. The US balked on the basis that the world's emerging economies were exempt. As was every country in the Middle East, Asia, and Russia. As a consequence, the protocol is a dead duck, not worth the trees cut down and energy expended to provide the paper it is written on, nor the sea of unbalanced newspaper and magazine articles still devoted to it. As negotiated, it is ruinous to Canada and must be rejigged. Having previously admitted it was virtually impossible to meet the targets, Stéphane Dion is now in full-fledged denial. He wants us all to believe he meant something else at the time of his utterance, running from confession merely to save the cornerstone of his political strategy. It would appear that he and his party members are still having trouble giving voters the straight goods.

The Conservative Party's challenge is to resist the temptation to embrace the public's awkward and rising concern for the environment, and guard against a handful of entrepreneurs in the international market for tradable emission credits earning an almighty fortune at our expense. One also has to ponder whether or not the issue will serve as a beachhead leading up to the next federal election. Or, are there other questions to be asked and intelligent answers provided? As to saving the world, the polls show that Canadians are not willing to pay extra. Which would make related levies a tough sell for any government. Though the benefits of ethanol are inconclusive, and it would be better to divert attention to technologies of proven benefit, the majority of politicians hold to the plan of subsidizing its production, and drive domestic grain prices higher in the hope of gaining the farmers' support come the next election.

WHY CAP CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSIONS?

A perfect shade of pragmatic green is Stephen Harper's proposal to preserve ecological jewels deemed critical to Canadian watershed and wildlife. Whereas the Official Opposition declined the opportunity to act when it had the power to deliver this tangible legacy, the Conservatives' plan should attract a chorus of praise from once-hostile climate-change activists. Furthermore, it will cost relatively little to implement. At this point in time the juggernaut is the political debate, which appears to be less about the facts and more to do with party platforms. Documents underlying the issue suggest global warming is hardly the apocalypse, and is not nearly as damaging as some declare. Despite the selective presentation of the facts, the method of measurement is anything but settled. If there is a reason to limit carbon dioxide emissions it is because fossil fuels are a non-renewable resource, and the United States is so dependent on unstable foreign sources. Pitting the crude oil and natural gas- and coal-rich provinces against those endowed with hydroelectric power is utter nonsense. As is the public policy to subsidize the production of ethanol, which by way of the endothermic chemical reaction required to make it, consumes more energy than it can ever be expected to generate, and throws off more CO₂ than would otherwise be the case. Thus, the frantic claims of alarmists are either impossible, or unlikely to threaten the credibility of scientific discipline if we proclaim their reality.

Though the presidents of the US and Brazil have come to embrace the new biofuels initiative and the parallel development of clean coal and carbon-sequestration technologies, Canada is right in refusing to sign a co-operative agreement, as global warming is not a weapon of mass destruction. A lack of energy security is more to the point. Even if every car and truck were to be taken off the road in favour of public transit, we would still fall short of achieving the Kyoto Accord objectives. Though competitive systems have lowered costs and increased service levels, the hopeless monopoly model has not. Neither is it ever going to get people to where they want to go, and certainly not on time or at a reasonable fare. But, for sake of argument, suppose what might happen if the raving environmentalists got their way, and instead of going into the maws of pigs, cattle, and people, the entire corn harvest was used to produce alternatives, it would require twice the existing cropland in order to replace gasoline. Which is impossible!

OUT OF THIS WORLD

Believe it or not, global warming extends to Mars, where the polar ice cap is shrinking, deep gullies in the landscape are now laid bare, and the temperature is the warmest it has been in decades, or centuries. With each passing year, more evidence arises of the dramatic changes occurring on the only other planet in the solar system to give up its climate secrets. Tossing cold water on the theory that carbon dioxide creates a greenhouse effect. The parallel and simultaneous happening can only be a straight-line consequence of the one common factor: a long-time change in solar irradiance. We should also be cognizant that, when any gas is heated, it becomes lighter as a result of expansion, and ascends to the atmosphere only to give the absorbed warmth away.

The cooling occurring in the upper levels of the world's oceans suggests Earth's temperature has likely hit its ceiling, ushering in a protracted period of moderation, leading to a mid-century deep freeze lasting fifty years or more, after which more temperate times will return. Such will come about whether industrialized countries reduce CO₂ emissions or not. To suggest otherwise is a misinterpretation of cause-and-effect

relationships. So, do not allow yourself to be gored by the preacher-in-chief of the carbon-footprint gospel. Why even the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 1,600 page report, the work of 2,000 scientists worldwide, is bereft of data provoking concern. They know as we and every politician should that the Earth's atmosphere is composed of nitrogen at 78 percent and oxygen at 21 percent, neither a greenhouse gas. Carbon dioxide accounts for only 0.04 percent of which more than 95 percent occurs naturally and less than 5 percent is due to human activity. It is difficult to image how anyone of a sane mind could possibly conclude that such an insignificant measure of a benign substance might cause the end of our planet as we know it today. Furthermore, if we are foolish enough to allow ourselves to fall prey to the global warming scaremongers there will inevitably be a massive increase in bureaucratic control over our daily lives, and that is the scariest thought of all. So much for the politically expedient hypocrites and their oh so convenient lies!