

Thoughts on Global Warming

by Peter Jonker

At various times since WW II warnings were sounded about the Earth entering another ice age. As a matter of fact, until the mid-seventies, average northern hemisphere temperatures actually went down, but by less than one degree Celsius. In the seventies, a number of scientists and pseudo-scientists took this bit of data and predicted dire consequences for the Earth. The popular press picked up on this, and even Science magazine stated in 1975 that "the approach of a full-blown 100,000-year ice age" was "a real possibility".

Since the seventies, temperatures have gone up again, and the tiny decrease in temperatures since WW II has now been replaced with an equally tiny increase in (nighttime) global temps. (about 0.065 degrees Celsius, according to measurements by Tiros II, a temperature-measuring satellite). So what happens? The doom and gloom about another ice age are replaced with doom and gloom about global warming! They're BOTH a crock, as I will try to show below. What we're seeing now, and what we were seeing then, are merely natural variations in temps. around the globe, due to natural variations in all kinds of variables, including solar flares.

It is especially ironic that, back then, industry was blamed for the coming ice age: "the continued rapid cooling of the earth since World War II is also in accord with the increased global air pollution associated with industrialization....." (Reid Bryson, "Environmental Roulette", 1971). Twenty-five years later it is industry that is getting the blame again, this time for global warming! [Incidentally, there's nothing new with this sort of flip-flop, because facts don't seem to matter much when it comes to going after industry: invent a nice problem (it helps if it will end civilization as we know it) and then find a convenient scapegoat (industry being generally available for this purpose). Bingo: all kinds of money comes your way to do studies on "the problem", etc. etc. You can make a nice living this way!

A critical piece of information that is virtually always ignored by those reporting on global warming and those professing to be experts on the issue, is that water vapor is responsible for the vast majority of all greenhouse warming in the atmosphere (most scientists agree it's about 98%,

maybe more; recall that in an earlier memo to you I cited EPA's own 94% figure). No one disputes the greenhouse theory, which is that an increase in the concentration of certain gasses in the atmosphere (i.e. those with high heat capacities) will lead to increased atmospheric warming. But, if water is 98% of it and we know we cannot control it, how much effect can the other gasses possibly have? Add to that the fact that the heat content of water in its gaseous state is far greater (by orders of magnitude) than the heat content of CO₂ in its gaseous state, and we really have to wonder how much impact the non-water vapor gasses can have. It is clear the impact of the gasses that can be controlled is minuscule, and this alone should dispose of the global warming myth. But there is more bad news for the global warming groupies.

Of all the other GHGs in the atmosphere (mostly CO₂ and CH₄), the vast majority is non-anthropogenic. Ergo; how much of the total is really caused by humankind (ignoring our own CO₂ exhaust (i.e. from breathing) for now)? It's only a fraction of a percent!! Maybe 0.2. So let's assume we stop ALL manmade CO₂ emissions. How much impact could that possibly have on our atmosphere, when the reduction is only 0.2% of the total? That amount is within the error range of the instruments used to measure atmospheric variables, therefore a reduction of 0.2% in atmospheric CO₂ loading cannot even be discerned!! Query: do you still want to spend trillions? Remember, it's YOUR money!

Further, how is this greenhouse phenomenon affected by other events that take place regularly in the atmosphere? The system that is the Earth and the atmosphere around it is infinitely more complex than the simple lab setting with which Mr. Arrhenius proved the existence of the greenhouse effect some hundred years ago. His lab experiment did not include volcanic ashes floating around (would have a cooling effect); it didn't have cloud covers; it had no rain and no large-scale weather patterns; it had no tidal action and no solar flares; and no CO₂ being produced by forest fires, volcanoes and breathing mammals. Need I go on? Where else have we used a tricycle to model and predict the behavior of a space shuttle a hundred years from now?

Here are some more facts that should give us all pause, before we jump in and join the politically correct mantra about global warming. First, if the global warming theory is correct, then since the beginning of the Industrial Age temps. should have risen several degrees. They haven't. The overall increase over the last 100 years or so is about 1/2 a degree Celsius. So, if we're going to use these wonderful models that forecast disastrous global warming to convince everyone to spend trillions of dollars, shouldn't those same models be able to hindcast accurately what has already happened? And if they don't (which is the case), shouldn't we worry just a little about the veracity of these models? The saying that "all models are wrong, and some are useful" comes to mind.

Secondly, most temperature measurements have been taken on or above land, mainly North America and Europe. These land measurements show no consistent upward trend; in fact the only trend they show is constant variation. But what would measurements above water have shown? Since most of the surface of this planet is covered with water, it seems at the very least that we're operating with very incomplete data. Certainly not enough to spend trillions of dollars. Ocean surface temperature data are in fact available over the last 140 years or so, as gathered by MIT; these data show no trend one way or the other either. But the important data, i.e. those that should be able to tell us something about the temperatures in the atmosphere above the oceans, are totally lacking, except for those high up in space, which, as I mentioned earlier, show no more than a 0.065 degree increase since WW II.

As noted above, the land measurements that we have show ups and downs, i.e. natural variations. For instance, the warmest year on record was 1938. And isn't it interesting, that, during the time that the greatest increase in CO2 took place while humans have been walking around this planet (i.e. the post-WW II period of boom), we saw a drop in temperatures?? In fact, it was this very phenomenon that led many to predict the world was entering another ice age!!

And what if the very small bit of warming that's been picked up by Tiros II were to continue? If that happened, temps. after a 100 years or so would be about the same as they were about a thousand years ago, a time period known as the "Medieval Optimum". Mankind (as well as flora and fauna) survived very nicely, thank you. (Don't people wonder why this period of supposedly disastrously high temperatures is called an "optimum"?)

There are many more nails in the coffins of the global warming "experts". Query: how did Greenland get its name? Guess what: when the Vikings first settled (and named) it, it was in fact green, because there was no ice and snow covering it. Ergo, today it is quite cooler there than it used to be. Furthermore: there used to be citrus trees in the Carolinas, and the USDA has put out maps that show that the area in the US where crops can be grown without frost danger has moved south by more than 100 miles this century (based on temp. readings from 14,500 stations, a rather sizable and highly reliable data sample). Thus, southern North America, too, is cooler than it used to be. Are you confused yet? Anybody still believe we're getting warmer?

How about some more facts (those pesky little things that get in the way of the global warming inventors, but are ignored by them): George Washington at Valley Forge (1777-78) did not experience an isolated cold winter; those kinds of winters used to happen all the time back then.

During the "Little Ice Age" (covering about the last 400 years or so) the river Thames used to freeze all the way to London. In fact, I remember walking on a frozen North Sea at Scheveningen when I was a boy growing up in the Netherlands. None of these pieces of data fit the models used to predict global warming. Is anyone just a little worried about spending trillions on the basis of these models? I'll bet that if you fed some of the above random pieces of info into the models used by the global warming enthusiasts (a euphemism, actually) their model runs would implode!

The bottom line is that climatic change is a given. It is inescapable, it happens. There is no reason to be very concerned about it, or spend bazillions of dollars to try and even things out. We don't know why climate changes and Ice Ages occur. We know they do and that things change significantly every so often (e.g. at some point what is now the Sahara desert had crocodiles!).

One has to wonder: if we don't even know what caused these climatic changes in the first place, how nuts does one have to be to pretend we can now use the same data and predict what will happen 100 years from now? This whole idea strains credulity! Hell, we can't even rely on the weatherman to tell us what the weather is going to be like next weekend, or even two days from now. And what about El Nino? Here's a phenomenon that's real, and that's taking place right now. If we're so smart about being able to predict our global climate 100 years from now, why is it we can't figure out what causes El Nino, using today's data? The global warming enthusiasts can find only one sixteenth of one degree Celsius increase since WW II. Are we really prepared, in view of the enormous uncertainty involved, to use that scant piece of information and use it to force the world to spend trillions to make that increase go away? (What if we overshoot, and temps. go down by 0.065 degrees C? Do we then spend another few trillions to keep us from entering another ice age?)

Let's talk a little bit about CO₂, that villain gas. Actually, CO₂ is a pretty sorry global warming gas. If it were a good one, we would be using it in all kinds of heat exchange equipment all over the world today. Ever wonder why we don't? I'll tell you: because it's one hell of a lousy candidate for the transfer of heat. Anyone who has studied thermodynamics even one semester knows this. Unfortunately, the sociologists, Chinese herbal medicine folks, landscape architects, surgeons, and the like, who make up the Clinton/Gore team of global warming "experts" haven't a clue about this branch of science. And I'm not making this up: these are in fact some of the "experts" on which the Administration relies. It's a pretty sorry state of affairs as far as I am concerned. Where are the skeptics among the journalists? Where is their outrage at this hoax being perpetrated? Why are all of them falling for this global warming nonsense hook, line and sinker?

Back to science. If you want a substance that does a great job in heat transfer applications, water is your answer, that same substance that's so plentiful in our atmosphere and on our planet (and that same substance about which we have been told by 46% of those poor gullible souls interviewed by the Idaho highschool student that it should be banned, because "dihydrogenmonoxide" does all kinds of nasty things (reported in PE Today a few weeks ago)).

For the record, CO₂ levels in the atmosphere have historically changed without human input or intervention. Moreover, rises in temperature have historically preceded increases in carbon dioxide, not the other way around. I'd say that pokes two more rather large holes in the whole theory that CO₂ is to blame.

Guess what growers do: they inject CO₂ into their greenhouses because the stuff promotes plant growth. We need more CO₂, not less, because it not only promotes growth, but also helps plants resist drought and disease. Let's not forget that, while all this BS is being flung around about global warming, not a single person has died from it, while millions have starved to death. More CO₂ and better crop growth might have saved many of these poor souls. Am I the only one who sees something terribly wrong with this picture? Again, where is the outrage? At the very least shouldn't journalists be raising a bunch of questions? I guess when the state of California rebuffs the offer by three Nobel laureates and their team to, free of charge, put together new standards for science curricula for public education in the state, I shouldn't be too surprised. Frankly, it makes me sick.

I mentioned earlier that manmade CO₂ is only a small fraction of the total CO₂ present in the atmosphere. Precisely how much I'm not sure. Dr. Dixie Lee Ray, former head of the Atomic Energy Commission, former Governor of the State of Washington, and one of the straightest shooters that ever served the US in an official capacity, says it's seven billion tons per year, versus nature that puts out 200 billion tons per year. In my calculations that led to the 0.2% figure I used above, I assumed 10% as the manmade contribution. Dr. Ray's figures show it's more like 3.5% (which would make my case even stronger!). In addition, as she indicates, the CO₂ that's bound in limestone worldwide is thousands of times higher than what's in the atmosphere, and she concludes by saying "the earth exudes carbon dioxide". I ask again, how much are we going to accomplish by cutting out all manmade CO₂? One really does not have to be a rocket scientist to conclude doing so would be foolish, futile and farfetched.

Incidentally, in my role as an appointed member of EPA's Clean Air Act Advisory Committee, I hear all kinds of things from EPA staff, including the announcement two weeks ago that EPA is also going to focus its global warming efforts on SF₆, a gas they say has a very high global warming effect. I find this fascinating, yet disheartening. SF₆ may have this capability, but why be concerned about it at all? The concentration of that gas in the atmosphere is so small and its occurrence so rare, that we can hardly find it, even when we look for it. We use this gas in tracer studies to help us determine the fate of emissions in the atmosphere precisely BECAUSE it is so rare! When you pick it up on your instruments, you KNOW it has been deliberately emitted. How completely idiotic to be concerned about it as a global warming actor. It goes to show, again, that it is politics, not science, that drives the global warming agenda.

Lastly, there is something seriously wrong with the whole CO₂ balance in the atmosphere: a whole bunch of the stuff cannot be accounted for! What's going on here? Could it be that all the dihydrogenmonoxide that covers the planet Earth is absorbing more than we had thought? Or maybe plants are tying up more of it in their cells. Personally I think that, as with most natural systems, there's an equilibrium at work here: the more CO₂ is produced, the more plants grow, thus the more CO₂ is removed from the atmosphere via photosynthesis. Some recent work seems to bear this out. Bottom line on CO₂: what we know about the role of CO₂ in weather and climate is pretty lousy; by no means enough to base the expenditure of trillions of dollars on.

In closing, let me quote a few passages from a statement signed by 55 of the world's most respected atmospheric scientists, in their "statement of principle", issued before the Rio UN Conference on global warming in 1992: "highly uncertain scientific theories", "unsupported assumption that catastrophic global warming follows from the burning of fossil fuels and requires immediate action", "there is no consensus about the cause of the slight warming observed during the past century", "the majority of scientific participants in the survey agreed that the theoretical climate models used to predict a future warming cannot be relied upon and are not validated by the existing climate record", and "we are disturbed that activists, anxious to stop energy and economic growth, are pushing ahead with drastic policies without taking notice of recent changes in the underlying science. We fear that the rush to impose global regulations will have catastrophic impacts on the world economy, on jobs, standards of living, and health care, with the most severe consequences falling upon developing countries and the poor". [If you haven't seen this before, blame some of your journalistic compadres who apparently don't believe in balanced reporting and systematically cut out the reporting of any voice against global warming. I guess "if it bleeds, it leads" is still how the press operates.

With regard to the last quote, remember that poverty is the most significant predictor of premature death. Do we take trillions of dollars that could be spent on issues such as poverty, to waste on a theoretical event that has not killed anyone and is unlikely to do so in the future, based on a virtual total lack of data? I know what my answer is. What's yours?

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