

# The perfectly respectable environmental movement has been hijacked by climate radicals

My views of the Paris conference on the environment were published here last week and need not be revisited. But I think the phenomenon of climate change rigidity is so unusual and widespread, it is worthy of more analysis. We start from the fact that absolutely everyone is an environmentalist in the sense that the term enjoyed for many years. This was in having a concern, even if belated, for clean air and water, reforestation, preservation of species, and of all mankind being responsible stewards of the physical planet. No one today claims that lakes belong to industry, and no one, at least in the Western world, accepts the industrial smog that used to prevail in almost all industrial cities, or the untreated sewage that made most of the world's urban waterways from early in the Industrial Revolution until the last 40 or 50 years a fecal ooze. In London, in the 1860s, for instance, the Thames was so foul with sewage that the windows of the Palace of Westminster had to be closed to reduce the nausea that afflicted members of Parliament and peers in their deliberations. Even with that precaution, the ghastly odour combined with the summer heat caused frequent unscheduled recesses. London was widely reckoned the greatest city in the world, though Paris, Vienna, and even New York preceded it in building comprehensive sewer systems which did not really treat the effluent but conveyed it some distance from the nostrils of the most populous and prestigious urban areas.

The battles for cleaning up the air and water in North America, and such specific problems as acid rain, achieved very wide support and were carried, ultimately with little

opposition, though the implementation was very costly to the corporate sector and municipalities, and the waste disposal picture remains far from perfect, though very much improved. On the heels of this victory, the conservation-environmental movement, which had previously confined itself to fairly notorious concerns no one could dispute, relatively quickly graduated to the higher plane of predicting the end of life on Earth due to human-generated emissions of carbon dioxide that would overheat and devastate the planet with astonishing swiftness. They went from cleaning up what everyone could see was ugly and unsanitary, to apprehended but invisible fates. The Prince of Wales, British prime minister Tony Blair, U.S. vice-president Al Gore, and many scientists and commentators, as well as the usual coterie of celebrities from the entertainment industry and the legal fraternity, and concerned figures prominent in international organizations and NGOs, caused the chorus to swell to window-rattling volume in a very short time.

An iron consensus emerged – the whole world was given the bum’s rush toward a pell-mell decarbonization that, if implemented, would disemploy tens of millions of people. The end was nigh and profoundly radical steps had to be taken at once or we were doomed, as if by inexorable collision with a giant intergalactic fireball. We all had to abandon coal, travel in carpools in electric cars, live under thatch, and move to sustainable energy, such as solar- and wind-generated power. Serious people said so, such as Prince Charles, Blair, and Gore (of course they are not above criticism, including from me at times, but they are all sane, altruistic, and intelligent, and so are most of their prominent and ostensibly knowledgeable soulmates in this very popular cause).

My friendly and esteemed one-time debating partner, Tabatha Southey of *The Globe and Mail*, wrote in that newspaper last Saturday a column of knowledgeable guidance on “How to recognize people who don’t recognize reality.” She remarked on

the change in the Associated Press style guide from “climate change deniers” to “climate change doubters,” and objected that “doubters” is almost just “ponderers” and that most people she encounters who dissent from the climate change conventional wisdom “reject overwhelming scientific evidence encroaching on their world,” either because they whimsically refuse to look very far into the matter, or are more extreme zealots of loopy conspiracy theories imputing fantastic motives to the leading climate change advocates.

Tabatha regrets that “deniers” have been replaced, apparently to avoid confusion with Holocaust-deniers, and here she is certainly correct. That is an absurd reason for banishing the word – one might just as well argue that people said to be “in denial” are Nazi sympathizers, or rabid anti-Semites. I am a doubter and a skeptic, but not exactly a denier. But I seem to fit into her category of “Those who reject mainstream climate science (and) are the preeminent magical thinkers of our age.” This is a perfectly civil and bearable, almost a sustainable, charge, and she gives a “Field Guide To People Who Are Really Wrong About Climate Change.” She mocks those who say that “The Earth stopped warming 15 years ago.” But the problem is not just that it hasn’t appreciably warmed in 18 years, but in the 60 years prior to that it only warmed by one centigrade degree, despite all the inflammations of the Second World War and lesser conflicts and decades of nuclear testing, stupefying increases in carbon emissions, through a vast proliferation of automobiles and decades of heavy but in energy terms, crude, economic growth in China and among many other numerous nationalities. So global warming didn’t just “stall,” or even stop, it hasn’t started, at least not in centuries.

The world’s temperature fluctuates, but it has certainly been warmer in a number of epochs in world history than it is now. “Global warming” is an expression that once empurpled the air and debouched from the lips of all of “mainstream science’s

spokespeople” and their crowded echo chamber, but it silently metamorphosed into “climate change.” This is a much less definitive expression, and is much more of an intellectual retreat than that of a denier to a doubter. I am, according to Tabatha, a “Climate-Change Ostrich,” but I am conscientiously trying to find any evidence that the climate is changing and that man is causing it to change, and I am not finding it. The fact that serried ranks of people are impatiently saying that the climate is changing, like Victorian elocution school students repeating the spelling of words (“C-A-T spells cat”), does not mean that it is.

If I am an ostrich, Tabatha is hallucinatory: where is there evidence of climate change, other than the endlessly repeated divinations of professedly clairvoyant people such as Prince Charles and Al Gore (who also told us that he invented the Internet and that the Pacific island country of Tuvalu would be submerged by now – the water level there has actually declined slightly)? The “hockey stick” of sharply increasing temperatures is nonsense. Polar ice is not now melting. Kyoto cap-and-trade was an insane transfer of billions of dollars from advanced countries to the most egregious and backward despotisms. Copenhagen was an unmitigated fiasco.

Tabatha rightly decries the “Climate Loon” who sees Byzantine conspiracies everywhere, the same sort of people who believed fluoridated drinking water was a Communist or Nazi conspiracy in the '50s. Less successful, or at least harder to recognize, are the Climate Cardinal-Sinner type who says that climate change is happening but isn't caused by humans. They are just dolts – since there is no evidence it is happening, other than long-term secular fluctuations in what has become over several millennia a familiar pattern, there is no evidence that man has anything to do with what does not, in any case, appear to be occurring. Even rarer, and I have never knowingly met one, are the Climate Dodo, who says that climate change is happening but all species will evolve to cope with it; and the

Climate-Change Lark, who says it's happening but there's nothing anyone can do about it so the hell with it.

*I am not a climate change denier, I am an unsuccessful climate change evidence-seeker*

I put it to Tabatha and birds of her feather, that the defeated international left gravitated to the environment movement as a way of obstructing the victorious forces of the free enterprise system, gradually, instinctively and opportunistically, not by any plan or prearrangement. They crowded onto the eco-bus and radicalized a positive and very respectable pro-Earth movement and pushed it, as waves of thought are pushed, to extremes from which they are already retreating (i.e. global warming to climate change). This may not be even be the conscious motive of many of them, though it is fairly obvious in the triumphalist Marxist revanchisme of people like Naomi Klein, celebrating by anticipation, the counter humiliation of capitalism by the alarmists of Eco-Horror Inc.

Once an intellectual fad attained such a state of permeation that it was impossible to set foot out of doors without being disparaged for unkindness to vegetables, and for desecration of grass, our politicians rushed head-long to the head of the mob, over-committed themselves to the cultish fad, rivalled each other in their trillings of virtue and shrieks of eco-vengeance. It was a perfect cycle of an apprehended event and the rousing of public opinion to meet an immense existential challenge. Horizons darkened with these absurd and noisy, bird-unfriendly windmills, and energy consumers are saddled with the preposterous costs of solar energy. There is only one fundamental problem: there is still no evidence that the world is getting warmer or that the climate is changing in any identifiable way.

I am not a climate change denier, I am an unsuccessful climate

change evidence-seeker, like Jacques Cartier or Columbus peering into the distance to see a new world. And so far there is nothing there. My late friend Maurice Strong told me my Florida ocean-side home would become a natural aquarium; it hasn't. China and India would rather have economic growth and job creation than dispel the smog of Beijing and Mumbai. They are where we were in 1950, but the climate isn't changing. If it ever does, I will join Tabatha in the anti-denial thought reform counselling service, but the global warmers have already fled into the Forest Primeval.

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