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Climate Change Hysteria and the Madness of Crowds

By [Charles Battig](#)

Shakespeare's [Hamlet](#) pondered the eternal conundrum of competing choices. His "Aye, there's the rub" nicely summarizes the conflicts inherent in the present socio/political/scientific arena of climate discussions.

Years of relentless doomsday prognostications by a variety of public voices spanning the political-scientific spectrum have found their mark in a gullible and guilt-prone public. There is a Medusa-like quality in the serpentine web of doomsday prophets, including members of the [Club of Rome](#), Paul Ehrlich's "Population Bomb," and the current White House science advisor, [John Holdren](#). In the U.S., [Rachel Carson](#) proclaimed DDT to be environmental enemy number one, and inspired Al Gore to discover "Inconvenient Truths," later found to be [not so truthful](#). Al Gore's [contribution](#) to making climate change a co-equal amongst the four horsemen of the apocalypse is matched by M. Mann's [reinterpretation](#) of global temperature history. Repeated refutations of "faulty" science and failed predictions of climate calamities have not deterred these marketers of doom. Cut the head off, yet it lives on.

Sustainability, population control, and redistributive-based social justice were offered as moral justifications for the one-world governance needed to solve one-world problems, as posited by the UK's [Barbara Ward](#). Answering this "*cri de coeur*," the U.N. global bureaucrats crafted the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as the instrument by which life-sustaining carbon dioxide would be reinvented as the most dangerous threat to the world. Our current Federal government is more certain than ever that "the science is settled," and that the global climate bears the human stain of excessive consumption of fossil fuels. An unelected Federal agency, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), has assumed the role of guardian of public health via arbitrary edicts regulating all things [atmospheric](#), in addition to [all surface waters](#). Those wishing to pursue independent traditional scientific inquiry and reproducibility of EPA claimed findings have noted an [adamant shyness](#) by the EPA in producing the requested original data.

"[Fear and loathing](#)" is no longer confined to Las Vegas, but has been turned into a self-hate/guilt propaganda tool by doomsday prophets and fear profiteers. Humans are carbon -- based life forms intertwined in the biological interdependence upon green plant production of oxygen and consumption of carbon dioxide. Thus the guilt stage is set for humans to be declared a living source of this newly-defined carbon pollution, and therefore enemies of mother Earth. According to the Club of Rome: "The common enemy of humanity is man. In searching for a new enemy to unite us, we came up with the idea that pollution, the threat of global warming, water shortages, famine and the like would fit the bill. All these dangers are caused by human intervention, and it is only through changed attitudes and behavior that they can be overcome. The real enemy then, is humanity itself." Population control is the implied remedy.

More recently, a trio of financial market heavyweights has entered the climate change propaganda fray with their "[Risky Business](#)" media blitz. Perhaps somewhat jealous of the huge financial profits that Al Gore's

Generation Investment Management (GIM) made from his doomsday climate predictions and inconvenient truth campaign, these risk experts have their own updated scare story. [Business will lead the way](#), they say: “We believe that American businesses should play an active role in helping the public sector determine how best to react to the risks and costs posed by climate change, and how to set the rules that move the country forward in a new, more sustainable direction.” Trust us, we are from the government has been usurped by a “trust us, we are from business.” These risk experts and their companies have reaped huge financial rewards by profitably defining and pricing risk, and then getting the public to pay insurance premiums to protect itself from the hypothetical risk. The greater the hyped risk, the greater the corporate insurance profit.

Countering this climate doomsday propaganda has been a number of [scientists](#) and independent [organizations](#). Manipulation of the historical temperature record by our own government agencies has been documented. Such revisions serve to make the historical record conform to the political aims and views of our Federal government, that global warming is occurring and is linked to fossil fuel use. Proliferation of internet access has provided the new open public soap box, independent of traditional media, itself fully in the climate panic mode. Web sites maintained by [Anthony Watts](#), [Marc Morano](#), and [Steve Milloy](#) are just a few of many striving to get the unpoliticized science before the public.

In this admittedly truncated history of climate change propaganda and counterargument, there is contained the conundrum originally mentioned. Incomplete climate science, unsubstantiated claims in place of traditional scientific proof, political policy dogma, social equity objectives, and businesses feeding off the largess of government and public fear continue to receive scant criticism in the general media. The public has [downgraded its concern](#) with “climate change” when polled, yet it continues to elect politicians dedicated to enacting a governmental cure for climate change. Businesses profit from proclaiming that they are “green.” Renewable is the key word for obtaining government largesse.

For the public at large, scientific truth alone does not trump feelings of environmental guilt and demands that politicians take care of the presumptive problem. Scientific validity in these matters is an essential, but not adequate response to change the public’s emotional concerns for “clean air,” “clean energy,” and a “healthy environment for themselves and their children.”

Economist Julian Simon reflected upon the failure of the news media to report his debunking of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s “vanishing farmland scam” in his 1999 book, [Hoodwinking the Nation](#). Most of the rest of the book deals with the conundrum of the public’s propensity to accept “false bad news.” In the intervening 15 years there is little evidence that this peculiar human trait has changed; bad news still sells; bad news still drives charitable public donations.

Even earlier, Charles Mackay provided historical evidence for the peculiar behavior and beliefs of large crowds in his 1841 book, [Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds](#). It contains an insightful account of the “Tulipomania” craze of the mid-1600s. When considering the current climate change craze, reflect upon Mackay’s observation that: “We find that whole communities suddenly fix their minds upon one object and go mad in its pursuit; that millions of people become simultaneously impressed with one delusion, and run after it, till their attention is caught by some new folly more captivating than the first.”

So perhaps climate change hysteria may yet have to burn itself out much like a disease pandemic. Meanwhile traditional science-backed climate studies will continue to have an uphill fight against the propensities of human nature and the madness of crowds.

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