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Climate McCarthyism and eco-Inquisitions

Censoring news and views to advance ideologies and legislation

by Paul K. Driessen

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Two centuries years ago, Voltaire reportedly proclaimed, "I disapprove of what you say, but will defend to the death your right to say it." Today, our free speech traditions are under assault.

Colleges prohibit "offensive" and "politically incorrect" speech. Radical Islamists threaten to kill scholars, artists and even popes who "disrespect" the Prophet. And when we desperately need unfettered scientific debate, intolerant eco-activists have ushered in an era of climate McCarthyism and eco-Inquisitions.

Al Gore seeks to muzzle anyone who raises inconvenient truths about climate alarmism. Greenpeace castigates us as "climate criminals." Others call us climate holocaust deniers. *Grist* magazine wants "Nuremberg-style war crimes trials" for climate disaster skeptics, followed by hanging, one assumes, since burning at the stake would release greenhouse gases.

Climate catastrophist Ross Gelbspan told a DC audience: "Not only do journalists not have a responsibility to report what skeptical scientists have to say about global warming. They have a responsibility NOT to report what those scientists say." Their one-sided treatment of the issue suggests that Reuters, *Time*, CBS, ABC, CNN, 60 Minutes and the Discovery Channel have taken Gelbspan's censorship philosophy to heart. So have others.

US Senator Barbara Boxer shamefully treated physician-scientist-author Michael Crichton like a child molester during a congressional hearing, for suggesting that climate change theories should be reviewed by double-blind studies and evidentiary standards akin to what the Food and Drug Administration uses for new drugs. And two other US Senators, Olympia Snowe and Jay Rockefeller, wrote a letter that the *Wall Street Journal* aptly described as a "gag order" against ExxonMobil. "Its message: Start toeing the Senators' line on climate change, or else," said the *Journal*.

Earth-centered-universe dogmas have been replaced by a far more intolerant Church of Gaia catechism of cataclysm. Even worse, the restraints on free speech and debate presage an unprecedented power grab by activists, politicians and bureaucrats who seek status as the final arbiters of energy and economic decisions – so as to curb energy use and economic growth.

Yes, Earth's climate is changing – again, though far less than it has repeatedly throughout our planet's history. Yes, people are influencing our weather and climate – to some degree. But few scientists have joined astronomer James Hansen in claiming that humans have replaced the sun and other natural forces as the primary cause, Climate Armageddon is nigh, and drastic action must be taken immediately.

In short: Consensus that there is again a slight warming trend, and that human actions have a measurable effect on our climate, does not equal consensus that humans have brought us to the brink of climate catastrophe – or that proposed energy restrictions will forestall climate change, even if carbon dioxide plays a major role.

Cataclysm theorists point to computer models. But models are not evidence. Neither are headlines, hype or Hollywood special effects – nor incessant claims that every storm, drought, heat wave or cold snap is due to fossil fuels. Moreover, even perfect compliance with the Kyoto Protocol would do virtually nothing to stop hypothetical human-induced climate change. And the true costs of imposing Draconian emission control measures would be astronomical.

Politicians have already created artificial energy shortages and driven prices skyward, with their bans on oil and natural gas production in Alaska, the Lower 48 States and off our coasts. Carbon taxes, carbon caps, and greenhouse gas targets and timetables would send energy prices even higher, raise the cost of every consumer product and service, reduce profits, impair productivity, stifle innovation – and drive jobs overseas, to countries where energy is still available and priced lower. Simply put, no juice – no jobs.

In the coming decade, say energy analysts, Colorado alone will need 5,000 megawatts of new electrical generation; Texas, over 25,000; the USA, more than a hundred thousand. Most will have to come from fossil fuels. Will policy makers enable or prevent us from meeting these needs?

How many wind turbines on how many once-scenic acres will it take to produce 50,000 MW? How many birds and bats will they kill? If we emphasize intermittent, unreliable wind and solar, will brownouts and outages become routine for offices, factories, schools and operating rooms?

(One 500-MW gas-fired power plant on 20 acres generates the electrical output of 13,000 of California's older wind turbines – on 105,000 acres. Even with the newer wind turbines, which can generate 1.5 MW under ideal conditions, states would need at least 105,000 turbines on some 850,000 acres to generate 50,000 MW. For comparison, Rhode Island is 670,000 acres. And they'd still need gas-fired generators, sitting idle most of the time, to provide immediate backup energy every time the wind stops blowing.)

If utilities have to sequester CO₂ at \$40-50 a ton, will they follow Britain's lead, and tell parents who can no longer afford to heat their homes adequately: just send your children to bed with hats, mittens, socks – and bags of rice warmed in microwaves?

What will bureaucrats tell families of elderly folks who die in summer heat waves, because they can't afford air conditioning – or AC has been banned as "polluting and unnecessary"? Thank you for making the ultimate sacrifice to prevent hypothetical climate change?

To reduce electricity demand, will alarmists tell kids they can't have computers or Sony PlayStations? Will they try to ban plasma televisions, which use five times more electricity than conventional TVs?

How much will California really preserve our environment by carrying through on its plan to build new power plants in Montana, Idaho, Utah and the Dakotas – and send the electricity to LA via 2000-mile-long transmission lines – so legislators can claim to have reduced carbon emissions within the Golden State?

How many Third World families will die from lung and intestinal diseases, because agitators, politicians and bureaucrats continue to pressure banks and companies not to build fossil-fuel power plants in poor countries? Will global warming alarmists cease flying all over the planet, to attend UN climate scare-fests and lecture lesser mortals about climate apocalypse?

Will congressional Inquisitors – and climate alarm organizations – now heed their own propaganda, turn off their air-conditioning, and run their offices solely on wind and solar power?

These are just a few of the inconvenient questions and truths that alarmists want muzzled. Raising them – through open, robust debate – is the essence of social responsibility, good citizenship and sound science. Even at the risk of being browbeaten by congressional neo-McCarthyites, people must continue to speak out, to prevent enactment of economically and ethically ruinous state and federal laws.

We do not face looming climate chaos. We have time to respond rationally and responsibly, evaluate competing claims, demand real science and evidence, devise sensible laws and policies, and develop new

energy generation technologies that will meet growing demand for abundant, reliable, affordable electricity – while improving efficiency, reducing pollution, and protecting the health and economic vitality of families, companies and communities.

Our energy generation and pollution control technologies changed dramatically between 1900 and 2000. We can do it again – if we have faith in our creative genius, technological innovation, and ability to engage in robust but civil debate over complex energy, climate, economic and environmental issues.

Paul Driessen is senior policy advisor for the Congress of Racial Equality and Committee For A Constructive Tomorrow, and author of *Eco-Imperialism: Green power · Black death* (www.Eco-Imperialism.com). He is one of 16 “climate criminals” singled out by Greenpeace at the 2005 climate conference in Montreal.

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