

September 20, 2007

Chill Pill

Combat global warming? There are better things we can do for the Earth.

By Pete du Pont

There is both global warming and global cooling on the planet Earth. There always has been and there always will be, because temperature change is cyclical: The Earth's temperature oscillates up and down, ebbs and flows, over decades and centuries. Sometimes the earth warms, as it did in the Roman Warming period (200 B.C. to A.D. 600), the Medieval Warming period (900 to 1300) and in modern times from 1910 to 1940. And sometimes it cools, as it did in the Dark Ages (600 to 900); the Little Ice Age (1300 to 1850) and from 1940 to the late 1970s.

The National Center for Policy Analysis's new Global Warming Primer (www.ncpa.org/globalwarming/) shows that over the past 400,000 years, "the Earth's temperature has consistently risen and fallen hundreds of years *prior to* increases and declines in CO2 levels" (emphasis added). For example, about half of the global warming increases since the mid-1800s occurred before

greenhouse gas emissions began their significant increases after the 1950s, and then temperatures declined well into the 1970s when CO2 levels were increasing.

During the 20th Century the earth warmed by one degree Fahrenheit, and today the world is about 0.05 degree warmer than it was in 2001. These small increases have led the global-warming establishment to demand that we adopt the international Kyoto policy of stopping the growth of CO2 emissions so that global warming does not destroy us all. Or in Al Gore's words, "At stake is nothing less than the survival of human civilization and the habitability of the earth for our species."

Six years ago Danish scholar Bjorn Lomborg's "The Skeptical Environmentalist" took a look at the global-warming data and found it to be far less threatening than the Gore globalists were claiming. Mr. Lomborg's new book "Cool

It: The Skeptical Environmentalist's Guide To Global Warming," makes the case that while "global warming is real and man-made," the Kyoto approach is the wrong way to improve the lives of the world's people.

First, "Cool It" shows that global warming saves lives rather than killing people.

Second, it shows that the Kyoto approach of spending some \$180 billion each year to end global warming would reduce CO2 by such a small amount that few lives would be saved or improved, even if the United States had signed on and even if every signatory nation met its CO2 targets (which few have). If instead the resources were used for combating malnutrition, HIV/AIDS, indoor and outdoor air pollution, and dirty drinking water, the world would be a far better place for humans.

Finally, he gives a perfect example of why the Kyoto approach is foolish and an

adaptation approach would be far better.

Global warming is supposedly killing people. The 35,000 deaths from the August 2003 European heat wave were, in Al Gore's view, an example of what "will become much more common if global warming is not addressed." But the actual data put things in perspective. Whereas 2,000 people died in the United Kingdom in that heat wave, last year the BBC reported that deaths caused by *cold* weather in England and Wales were about 25,000 each winter, and 47,000 a year, in the winters of 1998 to 2000. Similarly, in Helsinki, Finland, 55 people die each year from heat and 1,655 from cold. In Athens, Greece, a much warmer place, the deaths from excess heat are 1,376 each year and the deaths from cold 7,852. All told, Mr. Lomborg calculates that about 200,000 people die in Europe each year from excessive heat, and 1.5 million from excessive cold.

So global warming will save human lives. "While cutting CO2 will save some people from dying from heat," Mr. Lomborg concludes, "it will simultaneously cause more people to die from cold."

Mr. Lomborg believes that while we must develop low-

carbon technologies, "many other issues are much more important than global warming." Malaria kills more than one million people each year, and some four million die from malnutrition, three million from HIV/AIDS, 2.5 million from various air pollutants, and nearly two million from lack of clean drinking water. Solving these problems would save more lives and do more to improve the human condition than spending money on global CO2 reduction.

The final table in the book dramatically makes the case. Fully implementing Kyoto would cost \$180 billion per year, but for \$52 billion per year we could do much better by tackling the challenges Mr. Lomborg mentions. The world would avoid 28 *billion* malaria infections (and 85 million deaths) over a century, instead of Kyoto's avoidance of 70 million infections (and 140,000 deaths). There would be one billion fewer people in poverty instead of Kyoto's one million fewer, and 229 million fewer people would suffer from starvation rather than Kyoto's two million.

Consider Mr. Lomborg's traffic example. In the U.S. each year, 42,600 people die and 2.8 million are injured from traffic accidents. If we were to lower speed limits to five miles an hour, almost no one would die.

But automobile transportation is important to our economy and our people, so we work on seat belts, speed limits and better highways rather than 5 mph speed limits. Like traffic accidents, "global warming is strongly caused by people, and we have the technology to reduce it to zero," so we could curtail our use of fossil fuels and thus sharply reduce global warming. But Mr. Lomborg points out that "the benefits from moderately using fossil fuels" for "light, heat, food, communication and travel" vastly outweigh the cost to our society.

"Cool It" makes the case for helping the world's individuals rather than the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change goal of reorienting our lifestyles away from consumption and individual ownership and toward free time instead of wealth.

"Our ultimate goal," Mr. Lomborg says, "is not to reduce greenhouse gasses or global warming per se but to improve the quality of life and the environment."

Mr. du Pont, a former governor of Delaware, is chairman of the Dallas-based National Center for Policy Analysis. His column appears once a month.