

The Really Inconvenient Truths By Iain Murray

In The Australian July 18, scientist David Evans – a self-described, former global warming alarmist who previously developed Australia’s carbon accounting model – admitted that evidence is shaky on how carbon affects global warming. In fact, Evans wrote, the current global warming trend actually ended in 2001. He cited ice core data from six previous global warming cycles over the last 500,000 years. The data revealed that temperatures rose 800 years before any significant increases occurred in atmospheric carbon levels. A former recipient of political support, generous funding and professional satisfaction for his advocacy of global-warming intervention, Evans essentially blew the whistle on what he now believes is a fraud perpetrated on the public by many of the world’s governments.

Similarly, in The Really Inconvenient Truths, author Iain Murray, a Competitive Enterprise Institute environmental analyst and senior fellow, critically examines many of the broad, environmental notions now accepted as fact. He explores how these false notions have led to questionable regulations and policies to “save” the environment which have actually endangered more species, caused more human fatalities and squandered more energy. He reveals how environmentalism, used as an anti-capitalism tool, has employed faulty data and politically engineered studies to restrict personal freedom, increase government control and spending, reduce or limit economic growth and curtail free enterprise. The liberal, environmental movement is thus masquerading as a benevolent protector of natural resources, Murray writes, with a quasi-religious moral superiority toward environmental sacred cows and view of man as a guilty interloper who disrupts nature.

The book’s subtitle, Seven Environmental Catastrophes Liberals Don’t Want You to Know About Because They Helped Cause Them, provides a framework for a detailed examination of the effects of sacred-cow environmental projects such as the ban on DDT and the promotion of ethanol. He also explores the cover-up of the polluting effect of contraceptives and abortion drugs, the failure of ill-advised forestry management policies and the bankruptcy of the endangered species act.

Ethanol

According to Murray, environmentalists tout the benefits of bio-fuels, but in reality bio-fuel production pulls land out of food crop production, increases food prices, threatens wildlife and ultimately increases greenhouse gas emissions. Bio-fuels do not offer any of the purported benefits touted by environmentalists, he says, who, at bottom, have contempt for the internal combustion engine itself.

Because of substantial resources used in its manufacture and carbon dioxide produced during operation, environmentalists have unleashed their fury against the engine’s fuel source, oil. They link American bellicosity with the quest for energy resources and accuse Republicans of obscenely lining their pockets with oil revenues.

Environmentalists, joining forces with anti-war activists to reduce oil consumption, now promote the reduced, carbon-emissions solution proffered by agribusiness lobbyists: corn ethanol.

But, in his book, Murray counters that ethanol provides only two-thirds the energy content of gasoline, is expensive to produce and releases more harmful emission amounts than gasoline. Its real costs are hidden by government support, including \$5 billion in subsidies, a federal excise forgiveness tax of \$.51 per gallon, and an ethanol tariff protection from imports of 2.5%, plus \$.54 per gallon. The government requires gasoline producers to buy four billion gallons of ethanol yearly, purchasing support that will increase to 7.5 billion gallons by 2012. Further, ethanol emissions are actually double those of gasoline when its emissions are counted and combined with emissions arising from its transportation via truck rather than pipeline systems and its intensive production requirements – planting, growing, weeding, reaping, fermentation and distribution. Further, diverting corn production from food production increases the acreage devoted to corn; squeezes out cultivation of soybeans, cotton and barley; and causes upward price pressures on other grains, dairy products, poultry and meat. Ethanol production incentives could also prompt farmers to clear forests which could eliminate animal habitats and lessen air quality with fewer trees to absorb carbon dioxide.

The rush toward bio-fuels has also had global consequences, Murray writes. The European demand for palm oil which can be mixed with diesel to reduce greenhouse gas emissions has led to land buys in Indonesia, threatening the habitats and survival of orangutans, Asian elephants and Sumatra tigers.

The Gaia Movement

Environmentalists have not limited themselves to energy and food issues. Murray also links the quasi-religious Gaia Movement to environmentalist tendencies to view the Earth animistically, imbue it with the spiritual status of a higher being and conceptualize it as a singular-organism, self-regulating life support system. Called “The Gaia Hypothesis,” it’s an anti-human ideology that views human interference in nature in catastrophic proportions. Strict regulations are required to rein in mankind’s destructive tendencies lest the Earth strike back with natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, pestilence or other forms of punishment.

The Gaia Movement has proposed alterations to the King James Bible. In Genesis, where God’s commandments for man to utilize and benefit from the Earth’s resources exist, a Gaia-syntonic meaning has been sought that revokes man’s dominion over the Earth and diminishes his importance and stature relative to the other inhabitants of the planet. This has achieved currency in some Christian circles. Some Gaia adherents have called into question the moral character of Christians who disagree with them. They deny the biblical recognition of the supreme worth of human beings in relation to all of creation, believe the Earth’s human population is double that of optimal levels and allude to corrective geo-engineering measures and government regulations that would enforce their views.

Population Control

In 1968, *The Population Bomb*, by entomologist Paul Ehrlich prompted calls for population control, another environmental sacred cow explored by Murray. The population control movement promoted smaller families, simpler agrarian lifestyles, vegetarian diets, reductions in energy consumption, rationing and consumption-reducing taxation on resources, he writes. Such ideas have their current-day proponents who have called for a “baby tax” to penalize couples for adding to the deterioration of the environment, as well as an annual carbon tax per child.

Yet, the theory of world population growth resulting in world hunger did not factor in future resource availability and new food production technology, Murray says. Because of this, the true consequences of population control would be fewer people, fewer goods and services, and fewer technological innovations, the route to a lower standard of living, he argues.

Because of their advocacy of population control, liberal environmentalists have had to remain silent on the greatest pollutant of all: synthetic estrogen found in the birth control pill, the morning after pill and abortion pills. Synthetic estrogen, more potent than natural estrogen, has significantly harmed fish populations, inducing feminization, alterations in DNA integrity and even deaths at levels approaching extinction. Whereas environmentalists have railed against the isolated and less widespread effects of industrial chemicals and pesticide use, they remain silent on estrogen pollution because contraceptives are viewed as a “basic human right” and a tool in population control.

National Parks

Liberal environmentalists have also wrecked havoc at the nation’s national parks with fire policies. Despite myriad examples of bureaucratic inefficiencies, waste and lack of any long-term, asset accountability, liberal environmentalists placed great faith in government control of national parks, distrusting the ability of free enterprise and private ownership to operate for the common good. Environmental opposition to man’s interference with nature led to a number of disasters, including massive fires at Yellowstone National Park and Bandelier National Monument, as detailed by Murray. Ill-advised “let it burn” policies and “controlled burns” proved to be policies initiated by environmentalists that wrecked havoc for these two national treasures, Murray says.

Prior to 1972, national park policy was to suppress all fires. This contradicted age-old Native American practices to regularly set low-intensity fires to eliminate accumulations of undergrowth, debris and dying trees. These fires had no impact on large trees needed to maintain forest health. As American pioneers used more and more wooden construction, they naturally concluded that all fire was destructive and must be stopped. Where private logging firms operated, forests remained healthy as proper clearing and maintenance procedures protected business interests, Murray says. In non-logged areas, dry brush, deadwood and undergrowth accumulated, along with the proliferation of small trees which serve as tinder next to mature trees. Thus, the fire suppression policy of the National Park Service allowed for a fuel build-up.

When the environmental movement, which opposed man's interference in nature, took hold in the 1970's, only natural fires were allowed to burn. Thus, a century's worth of fuel accumulation was burned out in forests.

This "natural burn" policy proved to be a disaster for Yellowstone National Park in 1988 when several natural fires tallied losses of over a million acres and \$120 million. When the fires began, Park Service officials followed established policy and did nothing. Eventually, firefighters were called to intervene but were not allowed to use proven fire-fighting techniques. Instead, they were directed to extinguish the fire but with minimal impact on park lands. The fires spread with disastrous results. Ultimately, what was considered to be the superior "natural" way to manage the forests without contaminating human intervention, proved to be far more damaging. Ultimately, a policy of controlled burns replaced the "let it burn" policy.

But controlled burns, following years of logging restrictions, spelled disaster for another national park. By the 1990's, the Forest Service had reduced logging in national forests by 80% thus reducing revenue for fire control and park lands maintenance. This led to a significant reduction in the amount of forest thinning and debris removal at national parks and made controlled burns a dangerous proposition. At New Mexico's Bandalier National Monument in 2000, a controlled burn charred 48,000 acres and threatened Los Alamos National Laboratory after unanticipated wind strength and direction changes caused an unmanageable, highly destructive fire.

In the end, policies designed by environmentalists to protect the sacred, natural state of the environment proved the most injurious. Environmental dogma further prohibited rational strategies for forest health and fire safety management.

Air Quality

Environmentalists credit the Clean Air Act of 1970 (CAA) with improved U.S. air quality. Yet, Murray cites experts and studies that debunk CAA benefits for the environment. Air pollution, in particular soot levels, have not been at dangerous levels for years, long before Environmental Protection Agency standards existed. According to MIT economist Michael Greenstone, EPA standards have not reduced pollution-caused deaths. In fact, Greenstone found that the CAA caused the loss of 500,000 jobs, failed to improve overall health and has not reduced emissions.

Endangered Species Act (ESA)

In his section on the Endangered Species Act, Murray illustrates how questionable legislation, designed to protect species, actually led to their misrepresentation and destruction. The ESA, enacted in 1973, is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with a mandate to protect dangerously imperiled species from extinction as a "consequence of economic growth and development untended by adequate concern and conservation." But the ESA has come at the expense of traditional American concepts of private property and personal liberty and has created economic loss.

That's because, at the start, animals in no danger of extinction were placed on the list, including three species of kangaroos that exist only in Australia, certainly outside ESA

jurisdiction. Animals plentiful in their native habitats were identified as endangered in locations where they habitually had sparse populations. For example, the bald eagle, with an ample population of 50,000 to 75,000 birds in Alaska and British Columbia, had small numbers in the 48 contiguous states, which placed it on the endangered list. Murray cites other examples of improper listings, such as the arbitrary creation of small subsets of species or sub-species of an abundant species. This misrepresentation took place with plentiful populations of grey wolves which were subdivided into multiple classifications because of their slight, geographic distinctions, thus giving the impression of endangerment.

The enactment and enforcement of the ESA has had other serious, unintended consequences. The existence of an endangered species on private property can lower property values and ban activities such as logging, cultivating, grazing cattle, irrigating fields, farm clearing and building. The value of the land cannot increase when it is defined as a habitat for an endangered species. Not surprisingly, far from protecting animals, these ESA rules have caused landowners to clandestinely “sterilize” their properties upon specific wildlife sightings. Thus, Murray maintains that overall the ESA has been deleterious for animals and humans and not helped species recovery.

Polar Bears

The recent campaign to save polar bears is another example of wildlife preservation run amuck by environmentalists that Murray details in his book. Saving polar bears has gained widespread attention due to Al Gore’s movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*. But research scientist Marlo Lewis, a colleague of Murray’s, has found that polar bear endangerment is a myth created by misrepresentation and exaggeration. For example, discovery of drowned polar bears was strategically employed to support theories of global warming. Yet, scientists had attributed the deaths to “an abrupt wind storm.” In a blatant case of “fauxtography,” healthy polar bears frolicking on a floating mass of ice became photos of “polar bears stranded on a rapidly melting iceberg.” Although little is known of the natural climatic variability of the Arctic and polar bear responses to changing conditions, serious discussions are underway to include the polar bear on the endangered species list. NASA has advanced the theory that wind pattern changes, not global warming, have caused Arctic ice melting. Murray points out that in the 1930’s with very warm temperatures in the region, no build-up of greenhouse gases occurred. Meanwhile, a 110-million-year-old polar bear bones discovered by a University of Iceland professor demonstrates that polar bears survived an interglacial period, when ice covered only a small portion of the earth.

Communism’s Environmental Record

As liberal environmentalists clamor for greater environmental regulations, central management and control of resources, characteristics of non-free, market economies, a review of the “tragedy of the commons” is particularly instructive, Murray says. Such a review demonstrates that the condition of common ownership leads to overuse, depletion and destruction of a resource held in common because that resource is subject to the whimsy of changing governmental administrations and the exploitation of non-

owners. When no personal stake exists in conserving an asset, little motivation to protect and develop it judiciously exists.

Murray details USSR efforts in the mid-1960s to divert the Aral Sea for cotton cultivation, which led to the sea's virtual disappearance off the coast of Uzbekistan. Under central planning and the Soviet government's decision to become a major exporter of water-thirsty cotton, traditional farms were replaced with collectives as massive irrigation of the Aral Sea began. The resulting dramatic rise in salt content in water, air and land degraded cotton quality, increased respiratory illnesses among the local population, led to significant climate changes and brought deaths of myriad fish species and vegetation. Now, with cotton as the region's primary crop for the past 50 years, farmers subsist in a feudal state of enslavement to cotton farming, unable to obtain visas to move and change their livelihood and with their children are forced to work the crops. Other examples of government controls and resulting catastrophe cited by Murray include the shrinking of Lake Chad in Africa that led to its desertification and Saddam Hussein's revengeful draining of the land of the Marsh Arabs that resulted in massive population migration, loss of fish for consumption and animal species extinction.

Conclusion

Murray credits Silent Spring author Rachel Carson as the architect of environmental alarmism and the alarmist strategy in use today. Despite the loss of human life and environmental damage that arose after governments implemented Carson's proposed DDT ban, she is still esteemed as an environmental movement founder. Her strategy for pursuing a liberal environmental agenda consisted of several key components. First, she was instrumental in initially framing the issue and, at the same time, proposed corrective legislation while blocking dissent. Secondly, she argued for immediate action, creating a doomsday scenario that would threaten children and all future generations and stressing the urgency of immediate action with an emotional hyperbole that precluded rational debate. Finally, she obtained legitimacy by claiming to represent the scientific community and attacking opponents directly, rather than debating the issues or scientific data.

If this sounds familiar, it's because it bears a striking resemblance to the tactics Al Gore mobilized against global warming. His movie, *The Inconvenient Truth* presented an apocalyptic future for the planet if immediate intervention and alteration of human consumption did not occur. This crisis scenario was followed by a series of vituperative condemnations and irrational assault on non-believers, best characterized by an op-ed by Boston Globe columnist Ellen Goodman who equated global warming skeptics with Holocaust deniers.

Thus, Murray warns that the goal of the environmental movement is to use doomsday scenarios to increase government regulation of individuals and corporations whose endeavors ultimately do a superior job of preserving, developing and adding value to natural assets. The most serious threat to our environment is state action and coercive control in the name of environmental preservation, he asserts.

Common ownership is problematic because it lacks incentives for good management. It fosters short-term planning of a transitory asset that is subject to changing political whims. Contrary to the beliefs of environmentalists about preservation and inactivity, environmental quality is best achieved through prudent use of environmental resources, including economic development, Murray states.

As an alternative to counterproductive, contradictory, anti-human and anti-free enterprise policies promoted by liberal environmentalists, Murray suggests an ideology that embraces conservationism and stewardship. It's the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation that views humans as "the most valuable resource on earth" and as "producers and stewards," rather than "consumers and polluters."

While liberal environmentalists resort to legislation, regulation and guilt to advance policies that have degraded environmental quality and decreased productivity, stewardship promotes private ownership as a more effective tool to preserve and protect the environment and further develop it for generations to come.

"U.S. oil shale deposits likely hold 1.5 trillion barrels of oil, according to Jack Dyni, a geologist emeritus at the U.S. Geological Survey. All 12 OPEC countries combined have proved crude oil reserves of about 911 billion barrels, led by Saudi Arabia, with 264.2 billion barrels according to statistics compiled by BP Plc."

and

"There's a lot of testing to be done," O'Connor said in a May 24 interview. "We're proceeding cautiously."

O'Connor declined to say how much oil Shell expects it could produce from shale. Stark at IHS and other analysts said Shell expects to get 500,000 barrels a day from its project, 25 percent more than comes from Alaska's Prudhoe Bay, the largest U.S. oil field."

and

"This is an amazing resource," said James Bartis, an oil analyst at Rand, based in Santa Monica, Calif. Bartis says that success in the Rockies could cut crude prices by 5 percent, saving American consumers \$20 billion a year" and that was when oil was \$66 per barrel.

I don't know anyone (with at least the brains God gave a goose) that doesn't keep the tires inflated and the vehicle serviced. I've been doing it for 60 years--sometimes myself--and I'm a woman!! Alternative energy has it's problems. It takes more energy to make the electricity than electric cars would save. It takes more fuel to grow the corn and process it for vehicle fuel than it saves--in addition to using ground presently used for grain that feeds the world. Personally, I want to send Al Gore to the Bering Sea to trap the methane bubbling up--or to the Great Rift of Africa to trap the marvelous gases escaping there. It would keep him out of the luxury planes and limos he presently uses and perhaps give him a new focus on saving the environment. I like my idea better than Kim and Bryce's. If you want to see beauty take a good look at Oregon and Washington's wind farms. Teddy Kennedy should be so lucky.