The Looking Glass World of "Climate Change"

Francis J. Menton Jr.
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Francis J. Menton, Jr.†

When Alice went through the looking glass, she found a world where many things are completely the reverse of what they are in the real world. Prison sentences are served before the trial and even before the crime; people live their lives in reverse, but their memory works forward. Lewis Carroll’s masterpiece was intended as a caricature of deceitful politicians of the day.

Today, the phenomenon of deceitful political figures turning reality completely into its reverse lives on in the campaign for what is called “climate justice.” That campaign portrays itself as advocating on behalf of the poor and dispossessed of the world. But in fact the campaign’s main thrust is exactly the opposite: to expand the power and control of the United Nations (U.N.) and national government bureaucracies, while directly and inevitably blocking hundreds of millions of poor people from rising out of poverty. The advocates of so-called “climate justice” seem to be totally unaware of the reprehensible morality of their campaign. Instead, they flaunt their own high levels of energy consumption, and for leaders look to those at the very most extreme levels of high consumption.

Poverty, resulting from deprivation of basic goods and services is in large part a result of insufficient access to energy. Access to energy means everything from everyday devices like cellphones, to the internet, to electricity for our homes and businesses, to transportation, to mechanized agriculture, to functioning hospitals and healthcare facilities. Without access to energy, people are destined to lead a life of basic subsistence, if not periodic hunger and even starvation.

Even today in a world run on electricity there is a sizeable population that goes without. Current World Bank data indicate that over 1.2 billion people lack access to electricity. This includes approximately 400 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa and over

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1 See LEWIS CARROLL, THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS AND WHAT ALICE FOUND THERE, at 15-35 (1871).
2 See id.
3 See generally id.
6 Id.
7 See id.
8 See generally Bastasch, supra note 4.
10 Id.
11 See id.
12 Pedro Olinto & Hiroki Uematsu, The State of the Poor and where are they Poorest?, WORLD BANK POVERTY REDUCTION & ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT 1.
500 million in South Asia living in extreme poverty. The World Bank’s description of what it means to lack access to electricity is as follows:

Without access to energy service, the poor will be deprived of the most basic of human rights and of economic opportunities to improve their standard of living. People cannot access modern hospital services without electricity, or feel relief from sweltering heat. Food cannot be refrigerated and businesses cannot function. Children cannot go to school in rainforests where lighting is required during the day. The list of deprivation goes on.

The World Bank actually projects that the number of people in Sub-Saharan Africa currently living without access to electricity will increase, rather than decrease, between now and 2030!

And electricity is just one piece of the energy access puzzle. The 1.2 billion people who lack access to electricity is far exceeded by those who lack access to modern transportation (automobiles, trains, airplanes), to air conditioning, to heat, to hospitals, to mechanized agricultural equipment, and to the internet.

Given the serious hardship faced by the world’s poor population who lack adequate access to energy, one would think that a top priority of the U.N. would be finding ways to achieve access to energy as quickly, cheaply, and reliably as possible. Instead, under the banner of “climate justice,” the U.N. is doing exactly the opposite. Specifically, the U.N. is doing its best to hobble, hinder, and obstruct development of the cheapest and most reliable sources of energy in third world countries. And while energy infrastructure remains undeveloped and the poor suffer, the U.N. advocates transferring substantial funds to the governing cliques and wealthy elites in less-developed countries, citing as justification some kind of climate reparations.

So what is the U.N. “climate justice” campaign? Officially, it is a payment scheme in which wealthy countries pay money to developing countries as compensation for the alleged harm resulting from the Industrial Revolution, the effects of which fall under the umbrella of “climate change.” The “climate justice” campaign is administered by a U.N.

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15 Id.
17 See Ayoubi, supra note 15.
20 Id.
21 Id.
22 Id.
23 Id.
24 Id.
THE LOOKING GLASS WORLD OF "CLIMATE INJUSTICE"

agency by the name of the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS). The basic idea of the campaign is that climate change, not poverty nor lack of energy access, is the largest problem facing developing countries. Further, the proposed solution to climate change is to have taxpayers in wealthy countries transfer money to the governments of poor countries in the hope that those recipient nations will spend the money on initiatives that offset the effects of climate change. UN-NGLS states the following on its website:

There is little doubt that climate change will lead to unprecedented changes in the natural environment, which will in turn affect the way we live, with potentially dramatic consequences on our health, energy sources and food production systems. There is also increasing recognition that these impacts are being felt disproportionately by poor people who already live under precarious conditions. Climate change, with its many facets, further exacerbates existing inequalities faced by these vulnerable groups.

Another player in the "climate justice" campaign is the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which issued its Fifth Assessment Report in 2014. The IPCC's Report sets forth predictions regarding future natural disasters, including increased droughts, floods, hurricanes and tornadoes, which have yet to occur but allegedly, will be associated with climate change. Armed with this ammunition, worldwide campaigners for "climate justice" continue to make their case for wealth transfers to the poor countries that are supposedly most affected by climate change. For instance, the large organization known as CARE issued a release promptly following the IPCC's report. The following are some excerpts from CARE's release:

From more extreme and intense weather-related disasters, to reduced food security, to rising sea-levels, climate change is fast becoming a scandal of epic proportions for the world's poorest people – and it's unfolding right before our eyes. But overcoming climate poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice...The latest IPCC report, compiled by hundreds of the world's leading climate experts on behalf of the UN, describes how climate change constitutes an additional burden for the rural and urban poor and has the potential to push people into chronic poverty, undermining and reversing development gains made over many years. It also shows that, as global temperatures rise, there is increasing risk of passing critical ‘tipping points’ which may lead to abrupt and irreversible large-scale changes to major ecosystems on which millions of people rely.

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26 Id.
27 Id.
28 Id.
30 Id.
31 Morano, supra note 5.
Describing the IPCC’s latest report as “another clarion call to action,” CARE wants to see: [1.] Governments working harder than ever to keep global warming to as close to 1.5 degrees C as possible to avert extreme climate change. [2.] Developed countries providing far greater financial support to help poor countries address climate impacts, with actions focusing on helping the most vulnerable people and communities to build their resilience to increasing climate disruption, and greater support to help people deal with the loss and damage already occurring.33

Other voices for “climate justice” spoke out at a U.N. conference on climate change held in Warsaw, Poland in November 2013.34 The New York Times reported on the conference in November 2013.35 The article quoted a climate change activist providing:

John Kioli, the chairman of the Kenya Climate Change Working Group, a consortium of nongovernmental organizations, called climate change his country’s “biggest enemy.” Kenya, which straddles the Equator, faces some of the biggest challenges from rising temperatures. Arable land is disappearing and diseases like malaria are appearing in highland areas where they had never been seen before. Developed countries, Mr. Kioli said, have a moral obligation to shoulder the cost, considering the amount of pollution they have emitted since the Industrial Revolution. “If developed countries are reasonable enough, they are able to understand that they have some responsibility,” he said.36

Is there any actual, concrete evidence linking developed countries’ industrial activity to the natural disasters and odd weather events faced by developing countries? The answer is, simply, no.37 Indeed, anyone willing to trudge through the IPCC’s Fifth Assessment Report in its entirety, would find buried deep within the conclusion that no such connection can be established.38 Roger Pielke, Jr., a scientist, compiled several statements from Working Group I, Chapter 2, of the Report, for purposes of testimony given before the Senate39; he also posted many of them in a blog post:

- There is limited evidence of changes in extremes associated with other climate variables since the mid-20th century.
- Current datasets indicate no significant observed trends in global tropical cyclone frequency over the past century...No robust trends in
THE LOOKING GLASS WORLD OF "CLIMATE INJUSTICE"

annual numbers of tropical storms, hurricanes and major hurricanes counts have been identified over the past 100 years in the North Atlantic basin.

- In summary, there continues to be a lack of evidence and thus low confidence regarding the sign of trend in the magnitude and/or frequency of floods on a global scale.
- In summary, there is low confidence in observed trends in small-scale severe weather phenomena such as hail and thunderstorms because of historical data inhomogeneities and inadequacies in monitoring systems.
- In summary, the current assessment concludes that there is not enough evidence at present to suggest more than low confidence in a global-scale observed trend in drought or dryness (lack of rainfall) since the middle of the 20th century due to lack of direct observations, geographical inconsistencies in the trends, and dependencies of inferred trends on the index choice. Based on updated studies, AR4 conclusions regarding global increasing trends in drought since the 1970s were probably overstated. However, it is likely that the frequency and intensity of drought has increased in the Mediterranean and West Africa and decreased in central North America and north-west Australia since 1950.
- In summary, confidence in large scale changes in the intensity of extreme extratropical cyclones since 1900 is low.

Pielke further classifies the attempt to associate natural disasters such as, floods, droughts, hurricanes and tornadoes with climate change “zombie science,” and states that “[c]limate campaigners would do their movement a favor by getting themselves on the right side of the evidence.”

Despite the lack of evidence supporting its claims, the “climate justice” campaign continues and even accelerates, based entirely on “zombie science.” The result of this “zombie science” mentality is the corollary idea that the usage of fossil fuel energy harms the climate, significantly impeding efforts to develop and provide access to energy to poor individuals. Thus, the United States has severely restricted the ability of its international aid agencies to participate in financing of fossil fuel developments, and instead has limited its aid strictly to so-called “renewables” that are more expensive and less reliable sources of energy.

On February 27th 2014, Dr. Todd Moss, speaking on behalf of the Center of Global Developments, stated before the House Energy and Commerce Committee the following assertion:

Just as the U.S. is seeking to expand energy access, other policies are increasing restrictions on financing for natural gas and hydropower. This comes at the exact moment when many African countries are discovering natural gas and want to use part of their reserves to produce electricity at home. Indeed, all six of the Power Africa focus countries are either

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40 Id.
41 Id.
42 Id.
43 Dr. Todd J. Moss, Senior Fellow and Chief Operating Officer, Center for Global Development, Testimony before the House Energy and Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Energy and Power: U.S. Policy and Tradeoffs in Promoting International Access to Energy (Feb. 27, 2014).
44 Id. at 2.
producing, developing, or exploring for oil and gas. Ghana is a good example. The country is a close U.S. ally which recently discovered natural gas and would like to use this resource to expand access and grow its industry. Yet current U.S. policy restricts our ability to assist them in building any new gas plants and many advocacy groups want to prevent Ghana from generating additional power via natural gas out of concern over potential greenhouse gas emissions. As we consider the U.S. position on this, it is worth keeping in mind that we currently have more than 3,400 power plants running on fossil fuels in the United States. Ghana has two.45

Distinctly, Dr. Moss calculates a small piece of the effect on the poor of restricting new power development in poor countries to only renewables in lieu of environmentally-incorrect alternatives like natural gas and hydropower.46 Based on commitments from the U.S. OPIC (Overseas Private Investment Corporation) of $10 billion, Dr. Moss calculated that access to electricity could be provided to 60 million more people if investment in natural gas and hydro were allowed, as opposed to just renewables.47 Conversely, the advocates of “climate justice” look to as their leaders the likes of Al Gore, who preach abstinence for others while living in multiple massive high-carbon-footprint mansions and flying around the world on private jets.48

With investment in coal, oil and natural gas energy resources, as opposed to almost exclusive funding for renewable sources of energy, many of those currently in dire poverty could gain access to energy and thus to a decent life. The U.N. “climate justice” campaign only seeks to keep the poor poor while wealth transfers go to the elites in less developed countries and UN bureaucrats increase their power. In every respect, this is exactly the opposite of the policies the world should be pursuing.

In closing, it is time for the advocates of “climate justice” to recognize the immorality of their campaign to keep the poor poor.

45 Id. at 6.
47 Id.; see also Todd Moss & Benjamin Leo, MAXIMIZING ACCESS TO ENERGY: ESTIMATES OF ACCESS AND GENERATION FOR THE OVERSEAS PRIVATE INVESTMENT CORPORATION’S PORTFOLIO 2 (2014).