

The Week That Was: 2013-02-23 (February 23, 2013)
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The Science and Environmental Policy Project

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Quote of the Week: *“Unless we take action on climate change, future generations will be roasted, toasted, fried and grilled.”* Christine Lagarde, the managing director of the IMF, cited by David Runnalls, Globe and Mail. Ms. Lagarde demonstrates the prudent restraint needed for establishing financial policies of the International Monetary Fund? [H/t Tom Nelson]

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Number of the Week: Over \$30 Billion

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THIS WEEK:

By Ken Haapala, Executive Vice President, Science and Environmental Policy Project (SEPP)

Failing Models: In his August testimony before the US Senate Committee on Environmental and Public Works, John Christy, the co-developer of the satellite temperature record, presented a graph showing that the models relied upon by the UN Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) are clearly failing. The graph compares the projections of 34 climate models with actual observations, both at the surface (called surface-air) and the lower troposphere (the atmosphere from the surface to about 10 km (about 33,000 feet). The statistical mean of the projections is well above the observations – with a statistical significance of more than two standard deviations. The difference shows that the models are not useful in estimating future temperatures. Thus, the claims that by emitting greenhouse gases (GHG), particularly carbon dioxide (CO₂), humans are causing unprecedented and dangerous future global warming have no scientific basis. [Note that the projections from a few of the models do not exceed the observations, however, statistically, they are outliers.]

As expected, the graph is causing some consternation in the Climate Establishment, which needs to explain away the divergence for the upcoming IPCC Fifth Assessment Report (AR5), which is due out later this year. On Climate Etc, Judith Curry discusses some of these attempts. One time tested method is to expand the error range for the models. [Expanding the attributed error range was done in an article by Santer, et al, which tried to explain away the inability to find atmospheric hot spot above the tropics in the model projections that was called the distinct human fingerprint. That article included a large number of Climate Establishment co-authors. Please see NIPCC vs. IPCC (2011). NIPCC is the Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change.]

In the efforts presented by Curry, expanding the error range of the models to explain away the divergence between warming from model projections and observations may be a temporary quick-fix but it is far from satisfactory. One issue the method raises is that if the observations continue to show no warming trend, then the error range would have to be increased in the future – to the point of showing a possible global cool?

More significantly, adding to the error range reinforces a question that many skeptics have asked of the modelers for a number of years. How can you be so certain of the results of the climate models? Of course, the certainty cannot be scientifically addressed and the IPCC used opinion polls of the modelers. Now that the uncertainty is becoming more public, it will be more difficult for the Climate Establishment to bury uncertainty in an obscure appendix in a report thousands of

pages long. Please see link under Challenging the Orthodoxy and http://www.sepp.org/science_papers/ICCC_Booklet_2011_FINAL.pdf

More Failing: In a rare, somewhat technical post, John Christy provides additional information on the failing of the models and highlights two areas of confusion. One area of confusion is regarding the difference between surface temperature trends and lower troposphere temperature trends. This is a different issue than the magnitude of the temperature trends for the surface and the magnitude of the temperature trends for the lower troposphere. The greenhouse effect takes place in the atmosphere and the models predict that the warming trend should be more pronounced in the lower troposphere than on the surface. This is a different concept than the temperatures for the atmosphere as compared with the surface. Until recently, the reverse was observed. The measured warming trend on the surface was more pronounced than the measured warming trend of the lower troposphere. Thus, the models were failing. The fact that there is now no measured trend in the surface and the atmospheric measurements indicates that the models are continuing to fail because the models project the warming trend in the atmosphere will be stronger than the trend in on the surface. Please see link under Challenging the Orthodoxy

Tropical Sea Surface Temperatures: On his blog Roy Spencer, the other co-developer of the satellite temperature record, addresses the issue of tropical sea surface temperature trends as measured by the Tropical Rain Measuring Mission (TRMM) Microwave Imager (TMI), which went operation in 1998. Contradicting the models, the measurements show no warming. Even after calculating the effects of El Nino and La Nina activity, the measured trend is one-third of that predicted in the models. The failure of the tropical sea surface to warm as models project may give the Climate Establishment further consternation in preparing the IPCC AR5. Please see link under Challenging the Orthodoxy.

Energy of Hurricanes: The web site of the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) posts a question: how much energy does a hurricane release? The posted answer is provided Chris Landsea who calculates that for the average hurricane the energy released from the condensation of water vapor to form clouds and rain is about equivalent to 200 times to total world-wide electrical generating capacity, for each day. Only about one part in four hundred of this energy release drives the swirling winds that are associated with the hurricane.

Five time IPCC expert reviewer Vincent Gray takes these calculations a bit further. He compares the average energy loss over a year for an average of eleven hurricanes lasting one week with the heat supposedly increase in warming from the enhanced greenhouse effect from GHG emissions since 1750. [His calculations do not include energy release from other cyclones, thunderstorms, etc.] Gray concludes that hurricanes, alone, “conceal any possible much smaller effects of greenhouse gases which could never be identified. **The models are not only wrong. They are irrelevant.**” [Boldface added] See link under Changing Weather.

Feel-Good Legislation: Leaders of several Western European nations are beginning to feel the anger of the general population for requiring wind and solar power in place of traditional sources of electricity. Wind and solar are more costly and unreliable sources of electricity. Thus they require duplication by traditional sources. One example of this feel good legislation is the UK’s Climate Change Act of 2008 which requires reductions in carbon dioxide emissions over a series of five year periods. As coal-fired power plants are being squeezed out, electricity rates are

increasing significantly. For some time, the politicians who advocated for the legislation have acted in typical political fashion – evade and obfuscate any responsibility.

This week Alastair Buchanan, the outgoing head of Britain’s regulator of electricity and natural gas, Ofgen, announced that with the retirement of coal and nuclear plants there may be a significant gap in the in between the ability of the nation to generate electricity as compared with its consumption and that electricity prices may go significantly higher.

Ten years ago John Brignell of Number Watch, articulated the problem in plain English, something one would hope the British politicians could understand. He laid out five principles for electricity generation, which were promptly ignored. The principles are:

1. Energy should be obtained from a variety of sources, lest one should fail.
2. There should be a reliable and continuous source to service the base load.
3. There should be further instantly available sources to accommodate demand surges.
4. Unpredictable and intermittent sources should be avoided.
5. Policy should not be decided by trends, fashions or religious convictions.

Following the fad of dangerous global warming, the politicians have squandered huge sums of money on unpredictable and intermittent sources such as wind and solar. Some have maintained that if the wind farms are geographically separated, then wind could provide base load. As discussed in last week’s TWTW, the study of the Eastern Australian Grid, with wind farms that are geographically separated over broad distances, shows the concept is completely false. The wind farm system frequently failed to meet the extremely low level of performance of two percent of installed capacity. There is no justification to continue to believe that wind power can be reliable, if enough capacity is installed. Given the unreliability of wind, it is doubly false to claim domestic wind is a secure energy source. Please see links under Questioning the Orthodoxy and Questioning European Green.

Washington’s Energy Plan: A number of commentators have expressed their views of the administration’s energy plan, largely from what President Obama stated in his Inauguration Speech. Marita Noon takes an unusual approach. She examines the document prepared for the speech and what appears to be the underlying foundation for the president’s plan. A major failing contained in these documents is the false belief that energy efficiency of doing more work with less energy can be achieved by government mandates. If the simple goal is to reduce energy use, then the simple solution is to do no work. The most effective way of achieving energy efficiency is by people and organizations trying to cut energy costs in imaginative ways.

If one believes that one of the key’s to prosperity is reliable and affordable energy, the future under the energy plan is not promising. The country may be following the bleak future that Western European politicians are laying out for their countries.

A Bold, New, International Plan: The prerelease of an upcoming article by some American scientists contains disturbing elements that claim the need to modify human behavior in order to save humanity. Of course, all this would be done under the auspices of the UN and its enlightened scientists as found in the IPCC and in the New Millennium Project. Since the concepts are not fleshed out, perhaps TWTW is overreacting. But one of the authors of the plan is Paul Ehrlich,

author of the Population Bomb. In a separate article he states that odds of sustaining human civilization under the current conditions are 10% or less. He uses this and similar questionable arguments to try to justify centralized control. In the view of TWTW, if human civilization is to fall, the fall will be brought on the likes of Paul Ehrlich and his appeal for misanthropic, authoritarian organizations.

Amplifications and Corrections: In commenting on the failure of government agencies to assure rigorous science is performed under scientific grants, Stan Young states that one of the big issues is the failure to require all data be provided for public scrutiny if a study uses federal funds. On March 5, the House Science Research Subcommittee will hold a hearing on Scientific Integrity and Data Transparency. It will be interesting to see if many of the nation’s independent scientific institutions will publically support such action.

Number of the Week: Over \$30 Billion. According to estimates by the Wall Street Journal, BP has committed or paid over \$30 Billion in oil spill cleanup, fines, and settlements, thus far. It faces additional billions in liabilities for violations of the Clean Water Act. No wonder the UK’s Daily Mail has called for the administration to stop unnecessary punishment of this British company, calling it a brutal vendetta against Britain.

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ARTICLES:

For the numbered articles below please see this week’s TWTW at: www.sepp.org. The articles are at the end of the pdf.

1. BP Faces New Bout of Spill Liability

By Tom Fowler, WSJ, Feb 19, 2013

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323764804578312363372704012.html?mod=WSJ_hp_LEFTWhatsNewsCollection

2. The Search Is on for Meteorite

By Gautam Naik and Alan Cullison, WSJ, Feb 19, 2013

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323764804578312264130040432.html?mod=WSJ_hp_EditorsPicks

3. A Spectator's Stake in the Tesla Test-Drive Spat

Oh, for the day when electric-car enthusiasts didn't expect the rest of us to subsidize their hobby.

By Holman Jenkins, WSJ, Feb 16, 2013

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324162304578306150070640438.html?mod=IT_P_opinion_0

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NEWS YOU CAN USE:

Challenging the Orthodoxy

Spinning the climate model – observation comparison

By Judith Curry, Climate Etc, Feb 22, 2013

<http://judithcurry.com/2013/02/22/spinning-the-climate-model-observation-comparison/#more-11191>

Klotzbach et al revisited, a reply by John Christy

By Anthony Watts, WUWT, Feb 22, 2013

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2013/02/22/klotzbach-et-al-revisited-a-reply-by-john-christy/>

Tropical SSTs Since 1998: Latest Climate Models Warm 3x Too fast

By Roy Spencer, His Blog, Feb 21, 2013

<http://www.drroyspencer.com/2013/02/tropical-ssts-since-1998-latest-climate-models-warm-3x-too-fast/>

Apparent Reason for January 2013 Tropospheric Warmth

By Roy Spencer, His Blog, Feb 20, 2013

<http://www.drroyspencer.com/2013/02/apparent-reason-for-january-2013-tropospheric-warmth/>

The Need for Using Geoengineering to Avoid a New Ice Age Starting in the Next Few Millennia

By Alan Carlin, Carlin Economics, Feb 22, 2013

<http://www.carlineconomics.com/archives/1547>

German Scientists Vahrenholt and Lüning: PIK Greenland Meltdown Scenario Handily Refuted

By P. Gosselin, No Tricks Zone, Feb 18, 2013

<http://notrickszone.com/2013/02/18/german-scientists-vahrenholt-and-luning-pik-greenland-meltdown-scenario-handily-refuted/>

Defending the Orthodoxy

German Climate Movement, Catholic University Paper Warns Of Growing Climate Skepticism In Germany

By P. Gosselin, No Tricks Zone, Feb 22, 2013

<http://notrickszone.com/2013/02/22/german-climate-movement-catholic-university-paper-warns-of-growing-climate-skepticism-in-germany/>

Expertise based on ignorance.

Forecast is for more snow in polar regions, less for the rest of us (Journal of Climate)

By Catherine Zandonella, Princeton University, Feb 22, 2013 [H/t WUWT]

<http://blogs.princeton.edu/research/2013/02/22/forecast-is-for-more-snow-in-polar-regions-less-for-the-rest-of-us-journal-of-climate/>

Link to article: Controls of Global Snow Under a Changed Climate

By Sarah B. Kapnick and Thomas L. Delworth, Journal of Climate, No Date

<http://journals.ametsoc.org/doi/abs/10.1175/JCLI-D-12-00528.1>

[SEPP Comment: The article covers the percentage of snow to total moisture. It does not indicate a decline in total moisture. In many arid areas, snow pack is only a measurement of future runoff that will be captured by dams and which distributed as needed. In these areas less snow is meaningless as long as the total moisture does not change. Before the dams existed, in arid areas the snow pack and water was largely gone before the water was needed.]

Questioning the Orthodoxy

A doleful anniversary

By John Brignell, Number Watch, Feb 20, 2013 [H/t WUWT]
<http://www.numberwatch.co.uk/2013%20February.htm#doleful>

Energy security should be a high priority

By Martin Livermore, Scientific Alliance, Feb 21, 2013
<http://www.scientific-alliance.org/scientific-alliance-newsletter/energy-security-should-be-high-priority>

Climate fear-mongers' blind faith in suspect and shoddy science

Energy policies can't 'fix' the weather
By Tom Harris, Washington Times, Feb 20, 2013 [H/t Cooler Heads]
<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/feb/20/climate-fear-mongers-blind-faith-in-suspect-and-sh/>

Problems in the Orthodoxy

Global Temperature Standstill Gains IPCC Support

By Staff Writers, GWPF, Feb 22, 2013
<http://www.thegwpf.org/global-temperature-standstill-gains-ipcc-support/>

Questioning European Green

Cheaper energy is more important than going green

IMAGINE a different future. We are now so used to rising energy prices – they've gone up 159 per cent since 2004 – that they have come to seem an inevitable part of life
By Stephen Pollard, Express, UK, Feb 20, 2013 [H/t GWPF]
<http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/378835/Cheaper-energy-is-more-important-than-going-green>

Warning bills could hit £3,500 a year because of windfarm costs

By Kieran Andrews, Courier, UK, Feb 22, 2013 [H/t GWPF]
<http://www.thecourier.co.uk/news/scotland/warning-bills-could-hit-3-500-a-year-because-of-windfarm-costs-1.70427>

Politicians posture as the lights go out

Editorial, Daily Mail, Feb 19, 2013 [H/t Carbon Brief]
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2281437/DAILY-MAIL-COMMENT-Politicians-posture-lights-out.html?ito=feeds-newsxml>
[SEPP Comment: Calls on the US administration to stop punishing BP, which it deems to be brutal, politically-motivated vendetta against Britain by America.]

Energy prices: a political power play

Would-be investors in gas, green power and nuclear look on with no confidence at what return they can expect, and walk away
Editorial, Guardian, UK, Feb 19, 2013
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/feb/19/energy-prices-political-power>

German 'green revolution' may cost 1 trillion euros – minister

By Alexandra Hudson and Markus Wacket, Reuters, Feb 20, 2013 [H/t GWPF]

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/20/us-germany-energy-idUSBRE91J0AV20130220>

European Institute For Climate And Energy Warns Germany's Feed-In Act "Will Lead Country To Economic Ruin"

By P. Gosselin, No Tricks Zone, Feb 19, 2013

<http://notrickszone.com/2013/02/19/european-institute-for-climate-and-energy-warns-germanys-feed-in-act-will-lead-country-to-economic-ruin/>

"The result: a cost [for wind] that is 6 times higher for a lower quality product. Only the state is capable of making such a ridiculous economic decision."

Questioning Green Elsewhere

Green Energy Push Harmful to the Economy

By Staff Writers, NCPA, Feb 19, 2013

http://www.ncpa.org/sub/dpd/index.php?Article_ID=22863&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EnvPD

The BLS Green Jobs Definition

By Staff Writers, BLS, Jan 25, 2013

http://www.bls.gov/green/green_definition.htm

[SEPP Comment: A green job is whatever the BLS claims benefits the environment. As with the Brookings study most green jobs are existing jobs and the greatest numbers are in sanitation and public transportation.]

Expanding the Orthodoxy

Prominent American Scientists Call For Eco-Dictatorship Under UN Rule

By Jurriaan Maessen, Explosive Reports, Feb 19, 2013

<http://explosivereports.com/2013/02/19/prominent-american-scientists-call-for-eco-dictatorship-under-un-rule/>

Link to article, Uncorrected version

Social Norms and Global Environmental Challenges: The Complex Interaction of Behaviors, Values, and Policy

By Kinzig, Ehrlich, et al, Prerelease, Bio-Science, Mar 2013

<http://www.aibs.org/bioscience-press-releases/resources/Kinzig%20et%20al.pdf>

The Food Threat to Human Civilization

By Paul and Anne Ehrlich, Project Syndicate, Feb 23, 2013

<http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/human-population-growth-has-become-unsustainable-by-paul-r--ehrllich-and-anne-h--ehrllich>

The Gleick Affair

The Case Against Peter Gleick

By Scott Johnson, Power News, Feb 17, 2013

<http://www.powerlineblog.com/archives/2013/02/the-case-against-peter-gleick.php>

Decline of Scientific Institutions

Nursing prejudice: how climate change activists are prisoners of their own politics

By Andrew Montford, Spectator, Feb 19, 2013 [H/t GWPF]

<http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/coffeehouse/2013/02/nursing-prejudice-how-climate-change-activists-are-prisoners-of-their-own-politics/>

Seeking a Common Ground

Interesting Timing to be Removed from GEC Editorial Board

By Roger Pielke, Jr, His Blog, Feb 20, 2013 [H/t Roger Cohen]

<http://rogerpielkejr.blogspot.com/2013/02/interesting-timing-to-be-removed-from.html>

A Balanced Approach to Climate Change

By Staff Writers, NCPA, Feb 22, 2013

http://www.ncpa.org/sub/dpd/index.php?Article_ID=22877&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=DPD

Link to full article provided

Communicating Better to the Public – Exaggerate, or be Vague?

Who's muzzling whom over what?

By Peter Foster, Financial Post, Feb 21, 2013

<http://opinion.financialpost.com/2013/02/21/peter-foster-whos-muzzling-whom-over-what/>

Climate change is not an all-or-nothing proposition

By Pam Frost Gorder for OSY News, Boston MA (SPX), Feb 22, 2013

http://www.terraily.com/reports/Climate_change_is_not_an_all_or_nothing_proposition_999.html

"One of the criticisms of climate change research is that different computer models give different answers," Berliner said. "But the key is not to pick the right climate model, but to pick the right elements out of each of the models."

[SEPP Comment: How does one determine the right elements out of failing climate models other than be empirical research on each element?]

Communicating Better to the Public – Make things up.

NOAA Inverts Reality

By Steven Goddard, Real Science, Feb 22, 2013 [H/t ICECAP]

<http://stevengoddard.wordpress.com/2013/02/22/noaa-inverts-reality/>

Climate change's costly wild weather consequences

By Staff Writers, Champaign IL (SPX), Feb 22, 2013

http://www.terraily.com/reports/Climate_changes_costly_wild_weather_consequences_999.html

[SEPP Comment: The 1950s was a period of cooling. Comparing cold and warm records of the 1950s with those of today is extremely misleading.]

Changing Weather

The Energy of Hurricanes

By Vincent Gray, NZ Climate Truth Letter, Feb 19, 2013

<http://theclimatescepticsparty.blogspot.com.au/2013/02/the-energy-of-hurricanes.html>

Kansas drought part of natural cycle, say farmers

By Simon Carswell, Irish Times, Feb 23, 2013 with comments from ICECAP
http://icecap.us/index.php/go/new-and-cool/kansas_drought_part_of_natural_cycle_say_farmers/
[SEPP Comment: ICECAP presents evidence contradicting statements by the local climate change expert.]

Changing Seas

Modeling sea level rise is an ‘uneven’ proposition

By Anthony Watts, WUWT, Feb 21, 2013

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2013/02/21/modeling-sea-level-rise-is-an-uneven-proposition/>
[SEPP Comment: All based on projections from models that are failing.]

Changing Cryosphere – Land / Sea Ice

Will less ice be good or bad for Arctic ecosystems? Scientists discuss.

By Roz Pidcock, Carbon Brief, Feb 18, 2013

<http://www.carbonbrief.org/blog/2013/02/will-less-ice-be-good-or-bad-for-arctic-ecosystems-scientists-discuss>

Reduced sea ice disturbs balance of greenhouse gases

By Staff Writers

Lund, Sweden (SPX) Feb 22, 2013

http://www.terraily.com/reports/Reduced_sea_ice_disturbs_balance_of_greenhouse_gases_999.html

Link to article: The impact of lower sea-ice extent on Arctic greenhouse-gas exchange

By Parmentier, et al, Nature Climate Change, Feb 17, 2013

<http://www.nature.com/nclimate/journal/vaop/ncurrent/full/nclimate1784.html>

[SEPP Comment: According to the abstract, the reduction in Arctic sea ice results in a thawing of subsea permafrost. Yet, the Arctic ice floats on the sea below. Why would the summer ice melt thaw subsea permafrost?]

Agriculture Issues & Fear of Famine

Food science expert: Genetically modified crops are overregulated

By Staff Writers. Champaign IL (SPX), Feb 21, 2013

http://www.seeddaily.com/reports/Food_science_expert_Genetically_modified_crops_are_overregulated_999.html

Beyond Locavorism: Food Diversity for Food Security (carbon-fuel transport remains essential)

By Pierre Desrochers and Hiroko Shimizu, Master Resource, Feb 22, 2013

<http://www.masterresource.org/2013/02/beyond-locavorism-food-diversity-for-food-security-carbon-fuel-transport-remains-essential/#more-24397>

[SEPP Comment: The use of fossil fuels has given us reliable transportation and refrigeration, permitting humanity to overcome localized famine resulting from variable weather.]

Review of Recent Scientific Articles by NIPCC

For a full list of articles see www.NIPCCreport.org

A Two-Millennia Record of the South American Summer Monsoon

Reference: Vuille, M., Burns, S.J., Taylor, B.L., Cruz, F.W., Bird, B.W., Abbott, M.B., Kanner, L.C., Cheng, H. and Novello, V.F. 2012. A review of the South American monsoon history as recorded in stable isotopic proxies over the past two millennia. *Climate of the Past* 8: 1309-1321. <http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2013/feb/19feb2013a1.html>

Field-Scale Impacts of Elevated CO₂ on the World's Major Crops

Reference: Vanuytrecht, E., Raes, D., Willems, P. and Geerts, S. 2012. Quantifying field-scale effects of elevated carbon dioxide concentration on crops. *Climate Research* 54: 35-47. <http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2013/feb/19feb2013a2.html>

The Little Ice Age in Antarctica: Conditions in the Ross Sea

Reference: Rhodes, R.H., Bertler, N.A.N., Baker, J.A., Steen-Larsen, H.C., Sneed, S.B., Morgenstern, U. and Johnsen, S.J. 2012. Little Ice Age climate and oceanic conditions of the Ross Sea, Antarctica from a coastal ice core record. *Climate of the Past* 8: 1223-1238. <http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2013/feb/19feb2013a4.html>

Fifteen Millennia of Climate Change in the Middle Reaches of China's Yangtze River

Reference: Gu, Y., Wang, H., Huang, X., Peng, H. and Huang, J. 2012. Phytolith records of the climate change since the past 15000 years in the middle reach of the Yangtze River in China. *Frontiers of Earth Science* 6: 10-17.

<http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2013/feb/20feb2013a3.html>

Such findings led Gu et al. to state, in no uncertain terms, in the concluding sentence of their paper, that the good correlation that exists between their climate history of the middle reaches of China's Yangtze River and the Bond events of the North Atlantic Ocean "reveals that solar activity controls the Earth surface climate system at the centennial and millennial scales."

Cap-and-Trade and Carbon Taxes

Climate scientist proposes steep energy tax to help curb global warming

By Tom Sharpe, New Mexican, Feb 21, 2013 [H/t Tom Nelson]

<http://www.santafenewmexican.com/Local%20News/022213hansen#.USfQHldS7wF>

[SEPP Comment: James Hansen selling his tax plan where all the revenues will be returned to individuals or households without the government taking a cut.]

Emissions trading scheme: EU committee passes 'rescue' reforms

Approval of 'backloading' puts troubled system back on track – but reforms could still be watered down before parliament votes

By Fiona Harvey, Guardian, UK, Feb 19, 2013 [H/t Carbon Bried]

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2013/feb/19/emissions-trading-scheme-eu-rescue-reforms>

[SEPP Comment: We are experiencing great losses. Let's redouble our efforts to possibly redouble our losses. Great propaganda photo of black smoke arising from unidentified chimneys.]

EU Carbon Plunges After German Permit Auction Fails Second Time

By Mathew Carr & Alessandro Vitelli, Bloomberg, Feb 22, 2013

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-02-22/eu-carbon-plunges-after-german-permit-auction-fails-second-time.html>

Fight jihad, stop carbon taxes

Shale oil boom means security

By Lawrence Solomon, Financial Post, Feb 21, 2013

<http://opinion.financialpost.com/2013/02/21/lawrence-solomon-shale-means-security/>

EPA and other Regulators on the March

What EPA Transparency Looks Like in Most Open, Honest Administration Ever

By William Yeatman, Global Warming.org, Feb 22, 2013

<http://www.globalwarming.org/2013/02/22/what-epa-transparency-looks-like-in-most-open-honest-administration-ever/>

EPA Official Resigns

Another snared in secret email probe, says GOP senator

By CH Ciaramella, Free Beacon, Feb 19, 2013 [H/t Timothy Wise]

<http://freebeacon.com/epa-official-resigns/>

Petition seeks new EPA pathway to require greenhouse gas curbs

By Ben Geman, The Hill, Feb 19, 2013

<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/283689-petition-seeks-new-epa-pathway-to-require-greenhouse-gas-curbs>

[SEPP Comment: Will this become sue and settle – a friendly lawsuit that EPA agrees to because it expands its powers?]

Land Grabs and Buffalo Visions

Enviros team up with the feds to drive out ranchers and create a vast eco-theme park.

By Bradley Anderson, American Spectator, Feb 22, 2013

<http://spectator.org/archives/2013/02/22/land-grabs-and-buffalo-visions>

Energy Issues – Non-US

Who -monitors the oil sands monitors?

Energy firms have performed -woefully in defending oil sands

By Peter Foster, Financial Post, Feb 19, 2013

<http://opinion.financialpost.com/2013/02/19/peter-foster-who-%C2%ADmonitors-the-oil-sands-%C2%ADmonitors/>

Energy Issues -- US

Obama's Energy Plans Not a Triumph But a Tragedy

By Marita Noon, Energy Tribune, Feb 19, 2013

<http://www.energytribune.com/73553/obamas-energy-plans-not-a-triumph-but-a-tragedy>

Supporting Document: The President's plan for a Strong Middle Class & a Strong America, The White House, Feb 12, 2013

https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/files/2013/02/sotu_2013_blueprint_embargo.pdf&chrome=true

Background Document: Energy 2030 Research Reports,

By Nicole Steele, ASE, No Date

<http://ase.org/resources/ee-commission-report-summaries>

Climate Change Madness

By Donn Dears, Power for USA, Feb 22, 2013

<http://dddusmma.wordpress.com/2013/02/22/climate-change-madness/>

Obama Must Drop Green For Real Energy

By Diana Furchtgott-Roth, Real Clear Markets, Feb 12, 2013

http://www.realclearmarkets.com/articles/2013/02/12/obama_must_drop_green_for_real_energy_100141.html

[SEPP Comment: It is important to realize that very few of the jobs the Labor Department counts as green jobs are jobs in green energy.]

Steven Chu's legacy of waste and failure

Why scientists make poor politicians

By Terrence Scanlon, Washington Times, Feb 20, 2013

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/feb/20/steven-chus-legacy-of-waste-and-failure/>

[SEPP Comment: It is easy to blame Steven Chu for the failures of Department of Energy, and he is responsible. But it is doubtful that few, if any, in the department understood the rigorous of financial due diligence necessary when dollars Congress dumped billions of dollars onto the department with the so-called stimulus bill.]

Examiner Editorial: Obama's anti-stimulus energy policies take money out of economy

Editorial, Washington Examiner, Feb 18, 2013

http://washingtonexaminer.com/obamas-anti-stimulus-his-energy-policies-take-money-out-of-economy/article/2521834?utm_source=Washington%20Examiner:%20Opinion%20Digest%20-%2002/19/2013&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Washington%20Examiner:%20Opinion%20Digest

No winners in Obama's green-energy trade war

By Tim Carney, Washington Examiner, Feb 18, 2013

<http://washingtonexaminer.com/no-winners-in-obamas-green-energy-trade-war/article/2521803>

[SEPP Comment: Now unreliable solar and wind power is a civil right?]

Washington's Control of Energy

Why we'll have to keep waiting for Obama's decision on the Keystone XL pipeline

Rob Wile, Financial Post, Feb 22, 2013

<http://business.financialpost.com/2013/02/22/why-well-have-to-keep-waiting-for-obamas-decision-on-the-keystone-xl-pipeline/>

Obama Faces Risks in Pipeline Decision

By John Broder, Clifford Krauss and Ian Austin, NYT, Feb 17, 2013

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/18/business/energy-environment/obamas-keystone-pipeline-decision-risks-new-problems-either-way.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit_th_20130218&r=0

Obama's \$50B infrastructure plan calls for speedy approval of pipelines

By Yadullah Hussain, Financial Post, Feb 21, 2013

http://business.financialpost.com/2013/02/21/obamas-50b-infrastructure-plan-calls-for-speedy-approval-of-pipelines/?_isa=d3ed-f0da

[SEPP Comment: Perhaps overly optimistic.]

Oil and Natural Gas – the Future or the Past?

Memories of Peak Oil

Is it too much to hope that even some catastrophists and peak-oil cultists will find it impossible to ignore the latest numbers?

By Vaclav Smil, The American, Feb 21, 2013 [H/t GWPF]

<http://american.com/archive/2013/february/memories-of-peak-oil>

No Brainer: White Stallion was a Dark Horse

By Michael Economides, Energy Tribune, Feb 20, 2013

<http://www.energytribune.com/73625/no-brainer-white-stallion-was-a-dark-horse>

[SEPP Comment: Brings up the water consumption of coal compared with natural gas, but does not completely address it.]

Now for the downside of fracking

Local people are unhappy with the risks they feel are associated with the gas rush in rural Pennsylvania

By Peter Foster, Telegraph, UK, Feb 20, 2013 [H/t Malcolm Ross]

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/energy/9883362/Now-for-the-downside-of-fracking.html>

[SEPP Comment: Not everyone benefits from an energy boom. But is that sufficient reason to stop it?]

Return of King Coal?

New Coal Technology Harnesses Energy Without Burning, Nears Pilot-Scale Development

By Pam Frost Gorder, Ohio State Univ, Press Release, Feb 5, 2013 [H/t WUWT]

<http://researchnews.osu.edu/archive/looping203.htm>

[SEPP Comment: More technology for the alarmists to oppose. Cost and efficiency will be interesting.]

The Impending Decline of Coal

By Staff Writers, NCPA, Feb 19, 2013

http://www.ncpa.org/sub/dpd/index.php?Article_ID=22859&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=DPD

Link to Study: Carl Johnston, Lewis Warne and H. Sterling Burnett, "[Coal: Beginning the Long Goodbye?](#)" National Center for Policy Analysis, Feb. 19, 2013.

<http://www.ncpa.org/pub/ib117>

Oil Spills, Gas Leaks & Consequences

EPA offices rely on outdated information to respond to spills, watchdog warns

Agency promises to fix problem by fall after second warning in two years

By Edward Felker, Washington Guardian, Feb 20, 2013

<http://www.washingtonguardian.com/ill-prepared-spills>

Nuclear Energy and Fears

Reactor makers must share accident costs: Greenpeace

By Staff Writers, Tokyo (AFP), Feb 19, 2013

http://www.nuclearpowerdaily.com/reports/Reactor_makers_must_share_accident_costs_Greenpeace_999.html

[SEPP Comment: The manufacturers of automobiles should share in the costs of accident in icy weather?]

Alternative, Green (“Clean”) Solar and Wind

Tiny Denmark Bans Oil And Gas Furnaces in New Homes In A Bid To Rescue The Planet

By P. Gosselin, No Tricks Zone, Feb 21, 2013

<http://notrickszone.com/2013/02/21/tiny-denmark-bans-oil-and-gas-furnaces-in-new-homes-in-a-bid-to-rescue-the-planet/>

Denmark puts the brakes on heating costs with new legislation

By Anna Leidreiter, Renewable Energy World, Feb 15, 2013 [H/t No Tricks Zone]

<http://www.renewableenergyworld.com/rea/blog/post/2013/02/denmark-puts-the-brakes-on-heating-costs-with-new-legislation>

[SEPP Comment: Bold, new leadership – banning oil-fired boilers and natural gas heating in new buildings and replacement of oil-fired boilers in existing buildings where district heating or natural gas is available will reduce heating cost? No doubt it will as people become more dependent on unreliable wind. Why not just ban heating?]

Renewable energy's big secret

By Steve Goreham, Washington Times, Feb 20, 2013

<http://communities.washingtontimes.com/neighborhood/climatism-watching-climate-science/2013/feb/20/renewable-energys-big-secret/>

Ambri’s Better Battery

A tiny startup called Ambri wants to transform our energy system with massive liquid-metal batteries.

By Martin LaMonica, MIT Technology Review, Feb 18, 2013

http://www.technologyreview.com/featuredstory/511081/ambri-better-grid-battery/?utm_campaign=newsletters&utm_source=newsletter-daily-all&utm_medium=email&utm_content=20130218

[SEPP Comment: Many people hope that batteries may address the failure of wind and solar as reliable sources of electricity. But it is economically foolish to deploy these sources until the battery system is demonstrated to be commercially viable.]

Alternative, Green (“Clean”) Energy -- Other

BC Hydro’s Billion Dollar Climate Bill

By Mark Walker, Master Resource, Feb 19, 2013

<http://www.masterresource.org/2013/02/bc-hydro-billion-climate-bill/#more-24273>

[SEPP Comment: How to destroy a reliable electricity generation system that emits no CO2.]

U.S. grasslands losing to biofuel crops

By Staff Writers, Brookings, S.D. (UPI) Feb, 20, 2013

http://www.biofueldaily.com/reports/US_grasslands_losing_to_biofuel_crops_999.html

Alternative, Green (“Clean”) Vehicles

NYC looks at electric vehicle charging

By Staff Writers, New York (UPI), Feb 17, 2013

[http://www.spacemart.com/reports/NYC looks at electric vehicle charging 999.html](http://www.spacemart.com/reports/NYC_looks_at_electric_vehicle_charging_999.html)

Carbon Schemes

Stanford scientists explore new technologies that remove atmospheric CO2

By Mark Schwartz for Precourt Institute for Energy, Stanford CA (SPX), Feb 22, 2013

[http://www.spacedaily.com/reports/Going negative Stanford scientists explore new technologies that remove atmospheric CO2 999.html](http://www.spacedaily.com/reports/Going_negative_Stanford_scientists_explore_new_technologies_that_remove_atmospheric_CO2_999.html)

[SEPP Comment: Exploiting weather events to justify expensive, questionable projects to remove beneficial CO2.]

Health, Energy, and Climate

Smog causes surge in heart deaths: study

By Staff Writers, Paris (AFP), Feb 20, 2013

[http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Smog causes surge in heart deaths study 999.html](http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Smog_causes_surge_in_heart_deaths_study_999.html)

[SEPP Comment: There is no question that serious air pollution affects human health. But if the British study applies, then inhabitants of the extremely polluted cities in Asia should be experiencing extremely high mortality rates.]

Bad, bad chemicals disrupt your endocrinals: WHO/UN report

By Staff Writers, ACSH, Feb 20, 2013

<http://www.acsh.org/bad-bad-chemicals-disrupt-your-endocrinals-whoun-report/>

[SEPP Comment: Another example of UN political science: We are ignorant, therefore we blame whatever is the fear of the day. The concept of a testable hypothesis is unknown to these UN political scientists.]

Environmental Industry

Shameless

By Andrew Montford, Bishop Hill, Feb 22, 2013

<http://bishophill.squarespace.com/blog/2013/2/22/shameless.html>

[SEPP Comment: Organizations using high energy costs as the argument for stopping development of natural gas and more subsidizing of costly and unreliable wind.]

Other Scientific News

NASA scrambles for better asteroid detection

By Staff Writers, Washington (AFP), Feb 18, 2013

[http://www.spacedaily.com/reports/NASA scrambles for better asteroid detection 999.html](http://www.spacedaily.com/reports/NASA_scrambles_for_better_asteroid_detection_999.html)

Pollution Doesn't Change the Rate of Droplet Formation

Original story by John Toon, Georgia Tech, Feb 18, 2013

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/02/130218164124.htm>

Unable to locate link to article.

Other News that May Be of Interest

Can Commercial Space Rescue NASA From Deadly Public Indifference?

By Larry Bell, Forbes, Feb 19, 2013

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/larrybell/2013/02/19/can-commercial-space-rescue-nasa-from-deadly-public-indifference/>

Peer-Reviewed Survey Finds Majority Of Scientists Skeptical Of Global Warming Crisis

By James Taylor, Forbes, Feb 13, 2013 [H/t Catherine French]

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jamestaylor/2013/02/13/peer-reviewed-survey-finds-majority-of-scientists-skeptical-of-global-warming-crisis/>

Global Warming believers March in D.C.

By Norman Rogers, American Thinker, Feb 19, 2013

http://www.americanthinker.com/2013/02/global_warming_believers_march_in_dc.html

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BELOW THE BOTTOM LINE:

ABC, Dr Helen Caldicott sinks to mocking the unwell, Monckton calls for her to be deregistered

By Jo Nova, Her Blog, Feb 23, 2013

<http://joannenova.com.au/2013/02/abc-helen-caldicott-sinks-to-mocking-the-unwell-monckton-responds/>

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ARTICLES:

1. BP Faces New Bout of Spill Liability

By Tom Fowler, WSJ, Feb 19, 2013

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323764804578312363372704012.html?mod=W_SJ_hp_LEFTWhatsNewsCollection

BP PLC already has agreed to pay more than \$30 billion in fines, settlements and cleanup costs for the 2010 Deepwater Horizon explosion and oil spill. Now it is placing a big bet that by going to trial next week, it can hold down the cost of one of its last major potential liabilities for the disaster.

The London-based oil company says both the law and the facts of the case make facing a federal judge in a trial a safer bet than reaching a settlement with Gulf Coast states, businesses, individuals and the federal government for environmental-related claims.

"There seems to be a bit of conventional wisdom that the Clean Water Act penalties are going to be either a \$5 billion outcome or a \$22 billion outcome," Rupert Bondy, BP's general counsel, said in a phone interview. "In fact it's a range that starts very well below \$5 billion."

The trial, one of the last major pieces of unresolved litigation from the Gulf disaster, is the first of two that will be heard by U.S. District Judge Carl Barbier. It wraps together hundreds of civil claims and cross-claims made against BP, Transocean Ltd., Halliburton Co. and other companies. The trial will determine what degree of culpability BP and the other companies have for the blowout on the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig, which killed 11 workers and triggered the largest offshore oil spill in U.S. history.

The second trial, which is scheduled for the fall, will determine how much oil leaked into Gulf waters.

Both trials will help shape the size of fines under the Clean Water Act. For example, if the judge determines BP was "grossly negligent" instead of simply negligent it could be subject to fines as high as \$4,300 per barrel of oil spilled, although other factors will also be considered. The trials will also help determine the companies' exposure to other claims from the states and private businesses.

BP has already paid more than \$14 billion in spill cleanup, and committed to pay almost \$10 billion to people, businesses and governments, \$4 billion in a criminal settlement, and more than \$2 billion in environmental restoration and research.

Few Clean Water Act cases go to trial, Mr. Bondy noted, and those that have often end with per-barrel penalties that are significantly less than the maximum allowed. BP argues that it wasn't grossly negligent for the spill. It also argues that the spill was significantly smaller than the 4.9 million barrels estimated by the U.S. government. The company said it plans to argue in the fall trial that at most 3.2 million barrels of oil was spilled.

"Facing demands that we believe are excessive, not anchored in reality or the merits of the case, we are preparing ourselves to start the trial in one week's time," Mr. Bondy said Monday.

A spokesman for the Justice Department said the government was fully prepared for trial. "We intend to prove that BP was grossly negligent and engaged in willful misconduct in causing the oil spill," Justice Department spokesman Wyn Hornbuckle said in an email.

An 11th hour settlement remains possible before the trial, or once it is under way. The trial was initially supposed to take place a year ago, but was delayed after BP and some of the original plaintiffs reached a settlement the night before it was to begin.

One impediment to a settlement appears to be disagreements between the Justice Department and the U.S. states along the Gulf Coast, which have made claims against the company of more than \$30 billion, according to an official familiar with the case. State officials met with the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., last Thursday and Friday to craft terms of a combined civil settlement offer, this person said. It wasn't clear if an agreement was reached, however.

A pretrial seating chart for the courtroom reflects the scale and complexity of the trial, scheduled to begin Feb. 25 in the New Orleans federal courthouse. More than 46 lawyers for state and federal governments and the private parties will be seated before the judge, while an additional 20 seats in the audience are reserved for the parties. About 20 spaces are for media, leaving some 60 seats for spectators. Fifteen flat screen monitors will be scattered throughout the courtroom while a large screen projector fills most of one wall of the courtroom.

While BP has already settled with thousands of businesses, other companies including financial-services firms, oil-field-services firms—and even BP-branded gas stations—maintain the spill hurt their business in some way and are seeking redress through the trial. These businesses are

represented by the same group of lawyers, known as the Plaintiffs Steering Committee, which represents the parties that settled.

"The Plaintiffs Steering Committee is going to put on its case of negligence and gross negligence against BP, Transocean, Halliburton and Cameron virtually exactly as it would have a year ago," said Jim Roy, a lead attorney for the remaining plaintiffs. "I would say that the evidence that is going to come out at this trial is going to expose significant corporate mismanagement of safety for BP, Transocean, and Halliburton."

BP previously sued Transocean and Halliburton to cover costs associated with spill cleanup. The judge has already ruled that contracts the companies had with BP indemnified them against most spill-related costs, even if the judge determines the companies were grossly negligent. In that event, they could be subject to punitive damages, however.

"Transocean is confident in its position heading into trial and is fully prepared to present its case," Transocean said in a statement.

Halliburton Co. declined to comment and Cameron International Corp. officials didn't reply to requests for comment.

2. The Search Is on for Meteorite

By Gautam Naik and Alan Cullison, WSJ, Feb 19, 2013

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323764804578312264130040432.html?mod=WJ_hp_EditorsPicks

The meteor that crashed to earth in Russia was about 55 feet in diameter, weighed around 10,000 tons and was made from a stony material, scientists said, making it the largest such object to hit the Earth in more than a century.

Large pieces of it have yet to be found. However, a team from Ural Federal University, which is based in Yekaterinburg, collected 53 fragments, the largest of which was 7 millimeters, according to Viktor Grokhovsky, a scientist at the university.

Data from a global network of sensors indicated that the meteor's fiery disintegration as it neared earth near Chelyabinsk, Russia, unleashed nearly 500 kilotons of energy, more than 30 times the energy of the Hiroshima atomic bomb.

It is the largest reported meteor since the one that hit Tunguska, Siberia, in 1908, according to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The U.S. agency's new estimate of the meteor's size was a marked increase from its initial one.

"We would expect an event of this magnitude to occur once every 100 years," said Paul Chodas of NASA's Near-Earth Object Program Office. "When you have a fireball of this size we would expect a large number of meteorites to reach the surface and in this case there were probably some large ones."

A meteor is what is seen burning up flying through the atmosphere. A meteorite is what survives the plunge and lands on the earth's surface.

When a meteor lands, researchers can get a better fix about its size and composition by studying isotopes found in the fragments. But the pieces need to be found quickly because the isotopes last for only days or weeks.

The search was hampered, Dr. Grokhovsky said, by officials of Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry, which sealed off the area around an 25-foot-wide hole in the ice of Lake Chebarkul, near Chelyabinsk, where a chunk was believed to have fallen. Ministry divers didn't find anything in the lake.

A top regional official told Russia's Interfax news agency that the hole appeared there for another reason and wasn't caused by the meteor. "They just don't know what they are looking for," said Dr. Grokhovsky.

Dr. Grokhovsky said that although the meteorite exploded, there are certainly chunks larger than those so far recovered. The black and brown fragments have been fairly easy to spot because they stand out against the snow.

As space visitors go, the meteor wasn't especially exotic. It was of a variety known as ordinary chondrites, which make up most meteorites found on Earth. But it is still of scientific interest.

"Each meteorite is a time capsule and space probe recording the history of our solar system from 4.5 billion years ago," said Caroline Smith, curator of meteorites at London's Natural History Museum. "Whenever you get a new meteorite, you never know what you'll find."

Some of the more intriguing meteorites are partly composed of carbon-based materials, including amino acids and sugars. "The early Earth could well have been seeded with the chemical building blocks you need for life to start," said Dr. Smith.

In addition, scientists have found about 100 meteorites that originated on the moon, and an additional 100 that originated on Mars.

These were formed when an asteroid or comet smacked into the lunar or Martian surface and threw out debris that fell into Earth's gravitational grasp.

By comparison, meteors of the type that hit Russia originate at the earliest reaches of time in the disk of gas and dust that swirled around the early sun. They become denizens of the asteroid belt found between Mars and Jupiter until they fall out of orbit, possibly after a collision.

Some fly near Earth, get pulled in by gravity and meet their end in a blaze of heat and light as they fall toward the ground.

3. A Spectator's Stake in the Tesla Test-Drive Spat

Oh, for the day when electric-car enthusiasts didn't expect the rest of us to subsidize their hobby. By Holman Jenkins, WSJ, Feb 16, 2013

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324162304578306150070640438.html?mod=IT_P_opinion_0

Somebody once asked the late, great British motorcycle journalist Kevin Ash about the electric motorcycles then arriving on the market. After noting that most electricity comes from coal, casting doubt on any eco-benefit, he dug in: "The silly small range and long recharge times make them impractical. . . . An entirely new method of storing electricity is needed to transform practicality, and it must be invented (and then refined in labs) first. Developing electric road vehicles using existing technology is a waste and a deception."

Ash, who was killed last month testing a new BMW bike in South Africa, naturally comes to mind amid this week's spat between the New York Times and Tesla over a road trip from Washington to Boston attempted by a Times reporter in one of the company's electric cars. The car ran out of juice. Recriminations flew.

Ecumenically, let's dispense blame to all involved. Tesla certainly has a point that, on such an extended journey, Priorities A through F should be attending to the battery, not keeping up with traffic or enjoying the ride. The New York Times has a point if the purpose of the Tesla-designed exercise was to show the Tesla S can be a worry-free substitute for a gas-powered car on a long trip. It can't.

The best point, though, is had by those green-car advocates who say Tesla was nuts to concoct such a PR stunt in the first place. "If an average driver needs such hand-holding from an automaker to make the trip, it's the wrong car for the trip," writes GM's former in-house electric-car enthusiast Chelsea Sexton at Wired.com.

The ensuing furor undoubtedly owes much to the fact that Tesla and its affluent fans are heavily subsidized by the U.S. taxpayer. More power to Tesla founder Elon Musk and his customers if, with entirely their own money, they wish to indulge an interest in electrical vehicles. But that's not the case here, and the delusions of U.S. government policy seem to have filtered into Tesla's public relations.

Kevin Ash was right. To subsidize the take-up of immature technologies that can't meet ordinary expectations of the marketplace is a formula for embarrassment, scandal and discrediting the very technology being promoted. We like to imagine coherent government planning. We like to think policy actions are predicated on careful and intelligent anticipation of consequences. But the nature of the beast is otherwise. Any rational coordination of means and ends goes out the window as soon as the political scramble for subsidies begins.

Tesla, let's recall, set out to market an electric car before Washington entered the business with its vast and distorting subsidies. Most troubling, to Tesla at least, ought to be the new Obama fuel-economy rules that virtually require the big auto makers to build electric cars and bribe consumers to drive them off the lot in order to create headroom for the cars that auto makers really want to sell. Hard to devise would be a better strategy for discouraging the profitable emergence of a niche maker of electric vehicles.

The Ash rule applies not just to electric cars, but to wind farms, solar power and other renewable energy projects, all of which may have potential, all of which would be better served if government limited itself to funding basic research until a technology emerges that the marketplace can support on its merits.

Consider the spectacle Germany has been making of itself in this regard. German politicians decided it would be nice if 35% of the country's electricity came from renewables by 2020. German politicians, after Fukushima, decided it would be nice to phase out the country's nuclear plants. German politicians decided factories should be protected from any increase in electricity prices. In their home districts, politicians thought "factory" should be extended to cover any large and influential employer.

Now the green future has arrived and German voters are in revolt over rising power prices. "Fuel poverty" has become a buzz term as thousands have been shut off for nonpayment of bills. Politicians have begun trying to claw back subsidies from companies that say the subsidies are the only reason they're in business. A scandal seems to emerge weekly over some big-name company illicitly benefiting from subsidized electricity rates.

Though Germany is burning more coal than ever, though carbon-dioxide emissions are higher than ever, its fossil-fuel plants are going broke while waiting for the wind to die down or the sun to disappear behind a cloud. Operators at one point were receiving negative prices (i.e., paying) to get customers to accept power created by coal- and gas-fired generators that must be kept spinning in order to support the heavily subsidized renewables.

Yet somehow Germany continues to feature as a role model in the rhetoric of U.S. policy makers. One hopes the news will catch up with them before the U.S. economy is stuck on the roadside needing a tow.

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