

AN UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH

Part I

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Since 2005, the subject of climate change in the United States has been brought to the forefront of news media cycles the same way that the Iraq War was sold to the people of the United States. It was labeled a “crisis” and then followed by an incredible “we must do something now” emergency drumbeat, in the United States, led by former Vice-President Al Gore, trumpeting a book, then a movie, along with a massive well-orchestrated media blitz, accompanied by speaking engagements across the United States.

Gore is right when he states in his book, An Inconvenient Truth: “...The relationship between human civilization and the Earth has been utterly transformed by a combination of factors, including the population explosion, the technological revolution, and a willingness to ignore the future consequences of our present actions...” However, Gore deliberately manages our perceptions of climate change, its causes, and possible solutions, in a way that is disingenuous because it obscures some of the real causes while working to allow polluters to buy money market credits under a special corporate driven “cap and trade” scheme that will allow pollution to continue unabated in the future.

In his book Gore states: “...with my partner David Blood, I also started Generation Investment Management, a firm devoted to proving that the environment and other sustainability factors can be fully integrated into the mainstream investment process in a way that enhances profitability for our clients, while encouraging businesses to operate more sustainably...” leading the “...way to use the powerful force of market capitalism...”

There is no doubt that man is accelerating pollution emissions around the world. In the 1970s, the United States marched forward with a newly created Environmental Protection Agency, to clean up our air, reverse the process of polluting our rivers and streams, regulate contaminants in our drinking water, and to reduce air pollution from a wide variety of industrial pollution sources, including but not limited to, pollution from uranium and other types of mining operations, nuclear power plant emissions and the radioactive wastes they produce. Human health improvement was a major factor in this public movement.

Congress passed many rules and regulations that were implemented by the EPA to improve the quality of our lives and health through the regulation of toxic emissions, toxic herbicides and pesticides. These regulations worked. The EPA and many environmental groups pushed the U.S. Congress to implement these changes driven by the American people who were tired of drinking polluted water, watching their trees die from acid rain, and paying for the escalating medical health costs for health problems arising from pollution exposure. Gore does admit in his book: “...Yet another surprise for me was when scientists showed me that near the South Pole, the presence of air pollution in the ice cores visibly declined not long after the passage of the Clean Air Act of 1970...”

Quote from the EPA Website: “In July of 1970, the White House and Congress worked together to establish the EPA in response to the growing public demand for cleaner water, air and land. Prior to the establishment of the EPA, the federal government was not structured to make a coordinated attack on the pollutants that harm human health and degrade the environment. The EPA was assigned the daunting task of repairing the damage already done to the natural environment and to establish new criteria to guide Americans in making a cleaner environment a reality...”

Gore, however, is apparently not advocating that we work within the framework of the EPA, with offices in every State, to once again make this an agency work toward reducing harmful pollutants. And Gore has not allegedly challenged the Bush Administration who has closed almost all, if not all, of the EPA’s libraries built with taxpayer funding. The silence has been deafening as the Bush Administration made appointments to the EPA, who then proceeded to edit and censor official scientific assessments and studies, while making massive budget cuts. And the silence continued for

years giving a pass to the Bush Administration as they made changes to EPA regulations which are now allowing polluters to pollute more in the United States, thus reversing years of progress.

According to a December 12, 2006, article by the Union of Concerned Scientists: “EPA Closing Libraries, Destroying Scientific Documents”, “...the (EPA) maintains a nationwide network of 27 libraries that provide critical scientific information on human health and environmental protection, not only to EPA scientists, but also to other researchers and the general public. But now some of those libraries are being shut down and some of the scientific information they housed is being sequestered or destroyed.”

“The libraries represent an invaluable source of scientific knowledge and research on issues from hazardous waste to pollution control. To make the best scientific determinations, scientists need access to this information. In 2005, EPA’s dedicated library staff fielded more the 134,000 database and reference questions from agency scientists and the public...”

“...In February 2006, under the guise of cutting costs, the Bush Administration proposed cutting \$2 million of the \$2.5 million library services budget for fiscal year 2007...the EPA has already moved with lightning speed to close down several of its libraries to both the public and EPA staff. Five libraries have already been closed, and in Chicago, furniture and library equipment originally purchased for \$40,000 was sold at auction for only \$350. Some books, reports and other resources have been sent to repositories where they remain inaccessible. Other materials have already been recycled or thrown away...” UCS These drastic library cuts, continuing at a time when this scientific information is needed to reduce pollution in the United States, needs to be immediately reversed.

And why wasn’t Gore out in public, speaking, and working toward pollution reduction during the eight years he was Vice-President of the United States? Now he is almost completely ignoring the EPA in order to promote a money market scheme, which he calls “The Carbon Exchange Market”. He expects that everyone, including large, special interest corporations, will automatically pledge to reduce emissions and that these emissions will be automatically “...converted into tradable credits...If participants reduce their emissions below their target, they can sell their carbon credits on the exchange for a profit...if they fail to reduce their emissions, they must buy credits from others...” Why aren’t their calls for rules, regulations, and penalties for non-performance instead?

Thus, it appears that Gore and other corporations intend to make money through this type of investment scheme. There is just one problem. This scheme appears to globalize pollution through trading, buying, and selling. The end result is that polluters will continue to pollute and buy from a long list of those who have real or fake pollution credits to sell. It is a great idea for those special corporate interests that establish this money making market scheme because they will make fantastic profits...but it does not regulate or reduce the pollution that is responsible for climate change and the polluting of our air, rivers, and streams. And it will not make a significant reduction in the pollutants that are causing declining human health and the rise in childhood asthma and other respiratory problems.

The “cap and trade” plan has other huge drawbacks. It fails to finance the technology that will help industry and all of us to reduce pollution. The American people are being sold a bill of goods that isn’t worth the paper it is printed on. What we fail to grasp is a “crisis” has been generated in order to get us to buy into enormous money market schemes called “caps and trades”, questionable experimental geoengineering schemes, experimental weather modification programs, and a questionable plan for carbon sequestration.

Richard Drury, Communities for a Better Environment’s Board President, put it this way in a 2006 article: “Prior to pollution trading programs, there was no “right” to pollute at all...However, to allow companies to buy and sell the “right” to pollute, it was necessary for the first time to create a new property right in pollution itself. The new “right” to pollute jeopardizes the public’s right to govern its own environment, reversing hundreds of years of common law and good government...”

In his book, An Inconvenient Truth, Gore lists what we can do as individuals to “solve the climate crisis”. He fails to mention that all of us complied with these exact same ideas in the 1970s

and 1980s. We started recycling plans, the EPA conducted massive studies, and rules and regulations were implemented that reduced pollution. Companies prospered and new technology was developed that would be less polluting. We changed light bulbs and purchased automobiles and trucks with higher gasoline mileage that was required at that time. With the help of PG&E in California, we created new technologies, we built more energy conserving products, and insulated our homes. We could not always switch to green power because it wasn't available at the time.

The people did change and the corporations did clean up under the EPA rules. The changes we made worked...not always perfectly...but they worked and would have continued to work until being undermined by several U.S. Presidents, with the worst being the Bush Administration. Now many states and candidates running for public office are promoting these money market schemes. Where does your Congressman or Senator stand on these issues?

When Gore was Vice-President where was his drive to have the EPA accomplish so many more goals in this country to reduce pollution and improve public health? There is no real answer to this question unless the Clinton Administration wanted to remain business friendly and continue to let polluters pollute while not making the necessary changes that would benefit all Americans by reducing pollution. Did Clinton and Gore make a deal?

Everyone likes to say that Americans are addicted to oil...however, if there were alternatives we would buy them. If there were cars that were more energy and gas efficient we would buy them. If there were alternatives being developed Americans would use them. Our elected officials tell us to drive less and we ask why they are not implementing high-speed rail transportation which would be less harmful to the environment and reduce pollution. The alternatives are not available because recent past and present administrations did not move forward to give us these choices.

Rail transportation could be faster, more economical, and more reliable than car or jet transportation in many transportation corridors. When our elected officials tell us to buy more fuel-efficient cars the American people are then told that we have to give our tax dollars (corporate welfare) to American automobile manufacturers. These corporations have known, since the 1970s, that we did not have an unending supply of gasoline, and that we should build more efficient vehicles to compete with foreign companies. Where are your calls for greater vehicle efficiency or are you waiting for corporate lobbyists to write Congressional Bills for our elected officials that will stop pollution regulation in its tracks while Congress continues to hand out corporate welfare checks?

When those in power talk about the high cost of gasoline in other countries they forget that Japan and other European countries have a better rail transportation system than we do which many people use, and they are improving it each year. When we have alternatives means of travel and better automobile fuel consumption then we too will conserve much more than we are today. It is up to us to lobby congress on our behalf for improvement in air pollution that will improve human health and clean up more of our rivers and streams, while protecting our trees and oceans from the death knell caused by acid rain and man-made climate change.

In Sacramento, California, new housing tracts are paving over fertile agricultural land once used to grow crops. (Note: The loss of this prime agricultural land is one reason that America is purchasing food from countries like China, most of which are not tested or inspected for food safety by the U.S.D.A; leaving American vulnerable to toxic contamination of our food supply. More land is being taken out of food production, like corn, to make an uneconomical form of bio-fuel.) Thousands of acres of prime agricultural land are being lost as they are converted, as fast as developers buy the land, to massive housing tracts.

This conversion of farmland to tract houses negatively impacts everyone due to the fact that the transportation system needed for travel to work, etc., is being directed onto freeways and clogging local roads causing the use of more gasoline. No public transportation systems, or railroads, are being planned to cut down on American dependence on gasoline. The loss of agricultural land is staggering, the demands on water supplies are staggering, and the increase in demand for gasoline

from these developments is staggering. And yet, these developments are in high gear across our nation.

Instead of positive change we are being railroaded in supporting these market based schemes by climate change “emergencies”. I haven’t seen California Senators Boxer or Feinstein, speak about passing Congressional bills to implement new EPA regulations to reduce pollution emissions. It appears that few from the EPA have been called in front of Senate or House hearings to find out what they have been doing in the past few years to curb pollutants or why the public’s EPA libraries are being closed. The drumbeat is just for unregulated money market schemes involving “caps and trades”, the buying and selling of a corporation’s pollution credit allowance.

While diesel fuel pollutes our air we fail to put rail cars on the line to efficiently transport goods across the United States and within states. Instead the Bush Administration brings in more unregulated trucks and workers from Mexico to drive them and pollute our air along the way. It appears that a new “Superhighway” is to be built, under the North American Union’s Security and Prosperity Partnership from Mexico to Canada, to allow unregulated drivers and highly polluting trucks to long haul within this corridor and throughout the United States. It would cost less to build a railroad system that would be less costly for taxpayers and less polluting to the environment; one that could be more easily regulated under National Security guidelines. Our elected officials are once again silent on these projects. Has even one Congressional bill on this subject been brought forward for consideration of these projects?

Al Gore wants the American people to purchase carbon offsets to neutralize our emissions. Who is going to make money on this scheme? He appears to be purchasing his own offsets so that he can pollute more himself. What kind of message is he sending to all of us? We can continue to pollute as long as we invest in these market schemes and buy credits to pollute more?

These market schemes are just another fake tax on us the American people. The money is not going to those who will advance technology to reduce pollutants at the source. It will go to enrich large corporations and individuals who will go into the “market business” to take your money and enrich themselves. And how do you know in what you are investing or if the credits you purchase are real or faked? Many people are calling this plan another “great American corporate swindle”. According to Richard Drury: “...pollution trading programs have so far largely failed to deliver on their promise of air pollution reductions...” And these new unregulated market schemes will certainly fail without proper pollution control regulations.

One small example is the debate about incandescent light bulbs. There is a movement by many states and localities to ban incandescent light bulbs and convert to total use of fluorescent bulbs to save energy. And yet there are few who have read the small print on the label of fluorescent bulbs or heard about the EPA’s problems with regard to mercury contamination. In addition, where are thousands of these fluorescent bulbs, made from (a polluting industry), going to be recycled in the future? Are there recycling centers that can handle mercury contamination from these types of bulbs and take care of clean up when these bulbs are broken in your home and in landfills where they may be dumped?

Al Gore should be working to fund and find the technological solutions to our pollution problems. He should be asking the U.S. Congress to invest in our future and reduce the impacts of pollution to improve public health, to improve our future pollution control technology, to invent technology that would benefit everyone. He should be asking that corporations invest in research and development of alternatives on a tremendous scale and to implement those solutions already at hand, like a national railroad system that really works and encourage more public transportation.

Why hasn’t Gore asked for a moratorium on the building of more highly polluting coal-fired power plants (many planned to be built in Texas very soon), until we have developed the technology to make them less polluting? Why isn’t he opposing the construction of more nuclear power plants until we can control uranium mining pollution and find a safe way to dispose of nuclear waste?

The American people will support and we will use pollution solutions. Americans are great inventors and these skills should be put to work and funded. There will be no pollution solutions from “money market caps and trade schemes”. This is only about enriching a few and benefiting polluters and polluting corporations. And we need to lead other nations in reducing emissions. Right now corporations believe that they don’t have to change or make pollution reductions because they can hide their pollution in money market schemes and they are banking on a Congress that will not set mandatory pollution reduction goals.

Step back and take another realistic look at what you are all being asked to do and why. If you believe as Al Gore does that one of the “...keys to solving the climate crisis is finding ways to use the powerful force of market capitalism...” then there is little hope of making worldwide reductions in the pollution we create and alleviating some of the stressors that may be the cause of a rise in human health problems. Apparently reducing pollution and improving public health is not as important as selling these money market schemes.

Let us all ask the hard questions about these money market schemes. Make sure that the action you take today really reduces pollutants without causing other pollution problems. We have been almost at a standstill for over two decades in pollution reduction. It is time to ask the hard questions and really study the solutions that are now being presented to us that contain very few hard facts, no standards or regulations, and no penalties. Don’t be railroaded into market schemes that will not benefit us in the end or reduce the pollution that is negatively impacting the health of every American. Ask questions of those in office and those running for office. And then take action, voice your opinion, organize, write letters, and vote.

(Part II – The untold part of this story.)

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