Warming Up To Climate Change

BY ROBERT FERGUSON

The primary conception of carbon dioxide among government officials and the general public has undergone a curious transformation from biological necessity to dangerous pollutant. This journey culminated with the endangerment finding by EPA and subsequent proposed regulation under the Clean Air Act, rendering the substance a legally certified hazard.

Largely due to its association with fossil fuels – the dense and lucrative sources of energy at which the green movement levies its most direct antagonism– the gas that middle school science teachers know as the elixir of life now finds itself in a strange place: as an object of demonization whose elimination is the basis for transformational public policy. However, the foundational scientific role that it plays delivers many real benefits due to its increasing concentration, regardless of the extent to which humans are responsible.

This perspective is lost in this new understanding of the substance as a pollutant, and it merits serious attention at least as a supplement to the orthodox climate change debate, which focuses only on temperature increase and presumed catastrophic consequences. A world without fossil fuels and their positive impact on global standard of living is an odd mandate to impose; if elimination of carbon dioxide emissions is the justification, it requires a comprehensive examination of the scientific basis. A new book by scientist and author Dr. Craig Idso aims to rectify this imbalance.

Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide Enrichment

Nearly all attempts by world governments, non-governmental organizations, international agencies, societal think tanks, and even respectable scientific organizations to understand the phenomenon of increasing carbon dioxide levels have failed by not evaluating, or even acknowledging, the manifold real and measurable benefits of the ongoing rise in the air's carbon dioxide content.

The Many Benefits of Atmospheric CO2 Enrichment by Dr. Idso outlines 55 ways in which the modern rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide is benefiting earth's biosphere, as reported in the peer-reviewed scientific literature. The numerous rewards reaped in a CO2-enriched world of the future range from those directly impacting humanity to those impacting nature in a manner that will greatly improve quality of life, and in some cases address worldwide problems. These effects include cardiovascular and respiratory health improvements, as well as better plant growth and higher crop yields to address food shortages.

A renewed notion that carbon dioxide is not an unnatural threat but a crucial component of life could have profound implications for public policy, challenging the green agenda's offensive attack to radically decrease greenhouse gas emissions.

Ocean Acidification

There is an additional facet of the climate change debate that merits further attention for climate skeptics seeking to answer the claims of environmental alarmists. Some focus in the debate over rising atmospheric CO2 concentrations has been shifting away from the indirect effects on climate toward the direct effects on altering the pH of the world's oceans, a phenomenon known as ocean acidification. To date, many studies have been published examining the concept of ocean acidification and its effects on marine organisms. The experiments have been conducted under a wide range of conditions and circumstances. Not surprisingly, there is a wide range of results: studies that show a positive response, studies that show a negative response, and studies that show little to no change.

A review of the literature allows for a quantitative evaluation on the effects of ocean acidification on the calcification, metabolism, growth, fertility and survival of marine organisms. When such an analysis is conducted, ocean acidification is largely seen to be a non-problem for the range of pH decline projected over the next century and beyond.

The ALEC 2011 Annual Meeting features a workshop on these two topics, including a presentation by Dr. Idso, Chairman of the Center for the Study of Carbon Dioxide and Global Change. Additionally, the workshop will feature Mr. Roger Helmer, Member of the European Parliament and renowned climate skeptic, who will share his insights on the failure of the green agenda in Europe. The workshop will be Thursday, August 4 at 9:30am.

Robert Ferguson is the President of the Science and Public Policy Institute. He has considerable policy experience in climate change science, mercury science, energy and mining, forests and resources, clean air and the environment.