

The IPCC isn't quite as apocalyptic as Greta Thunberg

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by Conrad Black



The Green Terror grips Canada. Everyone can agree that environmental pollution should be combated and everyone can agree that maximum vigilance should be exercised to deduce what climate changes are occurring and to determine the appropriate response. But in enunciating these unexceptionable points and stopping there, I lay myself open to immense obloquy as a climate denier, though I am not denying anything for which there is evidence. Historians of the future will wring their hands in wonderment that we have succumbed to a cultic madness, and elevated its most strident or spectacular espousers to a position of totalitarian intellectual

authority. Greta Thunberg, a 16-year-old Swedish schoolgirl, tours the world like an atheistic St. Joan of Arc, high priestess of the evangelizing religion of climatism, transmitting her Revelations. She is actually preaching from the latest report of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a group that has had serious intermittent problems of credibility, with dire predictions that have simply not come to pass.

Ms. Thunberg's message is that we, the adults of the world, have betrayed the youth by destroying their future through climate negligence. The image of the innocent child is powerful, and she carries it off very professionally. And the Apocalypse is the time-honoured climax of terror. The crusade includes elements of repentance and sacrifice, and the ideal standard is the pristine Earth, before any human spoliation. It is quick to identify and scourge heretics. And like most such movements, it becomes more thunderously prophetic and vengeful, adding the moral terror of damnation to the conjured threat of the Apocalypse, especially as the apocalypse doesn't seem to be getting closer. The ineffable former U.S. vice-president Al Gore, who became a centimillionaire and Nobel Prize winner with his eco-schtick, told the readers of The New York Times in September that we would be doomed within 12 years if we don't pull up our ecological socks.

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In fact, the current IPCC report invoked by Ms. Thunberg, and written by scientists chastened by past embarrassments, (especially the infamous "hockey stick" graph purporting to show a rapid rise in the world's temperature), incites horrible fears but does not predict their occurrence. It "estimates" that human activities have caused a one centigrade degree rise in world temperatures, that is to say that if there were no humans the temperature would be one degree

cooler; this isn't a one-degree increase traceable exclusively to people in a measured time. And while it is "estimated" that the one degree is "likely" to reach 1.5 degrees by 2052, that is only "if it continues to increase," not a startling forecast. But anthropogenic emissions (caused by humans) "alone are unlikely to cause global warming of 1.5 degrees." I emphasize that I am not trying to twist the IPCC's meaning. It clearly acknowledges that an acceleration (and a slight acceleration at that) in global warming is not certain and if it occurs at all, it will not be solely due to human activities. The IPCC devotes a good deal of its attention to "attribution studies," which it states are not conclusive and after the serious predictive errors of the past, it is commendably cautious in signalling a possible source of concern. It is clear that if these risks exist, they depend on a great variety of factors, including "rate of warming, geographic location, levels of development, and vulnerability."

It is clear from this report that we don't know whether any warming that may be occurring is the result of anthropogenic factors or is just a function of long-term meteorological cycles. And it is clear that there is no reason to believe, if warming is anthropogenic, it will increase if anthropogenic emissions do not increase. Nor is it necessary that any such warming is or would be harmful. Let us accept the tenor and content of the report Ms. Thunberg cites as she reproaches us for destroying the world's future, and apply its lessons to Canada. Canada is responsible for less than two per cent of the world's anthropogenic emissions and so we should, as good citizens of the world, try not to increase them, even though we don't know if doing so is harmful. This does not require capital punishment of the oil and gas industries, abolition of the internal combustion engine and of jet airliners, and of the consumption of beef. But the great majority of the world's anthropogenic emissions are from China and India, with more than a third of the world's population, and it is not Canada's

duty to penalize ourselves to mitigate the aggravation of this condition by those countries, especially as we salute the rapid economic growth in China and India that is lifting tens of millions of people out of poverty every year. This is benign economic development in furtherance of which we extensively export our energy, agriculture, forest products and precious and base metals.



Even if the world resumes a very gradual warming trend, few people in Canada would dispute that that would be a good thing for this country. What has, at a practical level, occurred, is that the United Nations, an organization dominated by under-developed countries, stumbled upon global warming as an excuse to demand reparations from, and posture as morally superior to, the West. This movement was greatly enhanced when the international left, defeated in the Cold War and abandoned by a China that underwent the grace of conversion to economic growth, clambered aboard the climatist bandwagon as the best way to harass capitalism. They weaponized all the bird-watchers, butterfly-collectors, promoters of wetlands and conservationists and followed Lenin's dictum: "If you can't get in the door, try the window." And they are confirming his dictum that "The capitalists are so stupid they will sell us the rope we hang them with." Indicative of this is the Canadian governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, using his position to harangue the British public and eminent international groups with climatist demands. That is not within the remit of his office; he should stick to interest rates, money supply, and the integrity of the financial system.

Another such symptom was the comment piece in the Globe and Mail's Report on Business on Nov. 19 by Jim Leech, former president of the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, and Sean Cleary, a professor of finance at Queen's University. The piece was headed "We can't delay climate-proofing our country." Of course, no large territory can be climate-

proofed, and if the climate is changing at all and not just from normal cyclic patterns, and whether that is good or bad, Canada will have no impact on it no matter what it does. In the election last month the country chose an alignment of political parties that endorses the prime minister's nonsensical view that "Climate change is the number one issue." But at least the political realities of people not wishing to be disemployed, otherwise financially penalized, or strangled by inane regulations will provide some check on the enactment of that misconception.

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But Messrs. Leech and Cleary have apparently founded, this week, The Institute For Sustainable Finance, that wishes to bring academia and finance together to promote clean energy investment. That is innocuous enough if people want to fund and listen to them, but their claim in the ROB article that Nobel Prize-winning research had anything to do with the expansion of equity markets is bunk. And where the brave new world of these authors becomes seriously disturbing is their call for "a redefinition of fiduciary duty to incorporate the effects of climate change," which appears to urge that moral suasion be escalated to regulatory imposition. There is no fiduciary or even intellectual duty to pay the slightest attention to climate change.

A call to awareness, action, shaming, and regulation by Canadian investors in response to climatist suppositions is not altogether sane. Fortunately, no one will pay any attention to it, though we should all don our lifebelts to withstand a deluge of climatist lip service.

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