



CO₂ Regulation Is A Fraud

by Arlan DeBlieck

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is a by-product of human respiration and the burning of fossil fuels for energy. It is also the cornerstone of a fraudulent scheme to scare U.S. citizens into giving up personal liberties and freedoms while separating them from their hard-earned income.

During this past budget cycle, Congress broke the 1997 budget caps by roughly \$30 billion. President Clinton heralded the FY 2000 budget as a victory because, among other reasons, he stopped an “irresponsible” tax cut scheme, and was able to defeat attempts to attach “riders” to environmental appropriations. If politicians try to infuse fiscal discipline and accountability into environmental appropriations, these politicians are labeled enemies of the environment and are blackmailed into silence. The end result is the fourth branch of government—unaccountable bureaucracies with “blank checks” to make costly regulations that lack effective oversight. Essential to perpetuating this scam is to convince Americans that without costly regulations, their childrens’ futures are doomed.¹

This scam’s “crown jewel”—the Kyoto Protocol—and resulting costly U.S. governmental regulations subordinate “state sovereignty” to a large, unaccountable, bureaucratic agency—the United Nations.² Two-thirds of all regulations come from the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), yet “half of all EPA rules cost more than \$120 million per life saved. This is 80 times higher than the median for other agencies.”³ Even though authorization for spending money on the Clean Air Act ran out in 1998, Congress keeps appropriating money to the program and EPA keeps expanding it.⁴ Congress has tried unsuccessfully to prevent the President from spending money on “back-door” programs relating to the Kyoto Protocol, but “[e]xpenditures...span 32 programs, nine Cabinet-level departments and five independent agencies. Taken together, these programs account for almost \$11 billion of funding during FY 1998 to FY 2000.”⁵

CO₂ is one of seven gases listed in the proposed Kyoto Protocol as contributing to global warming. Even though global warming is a theory with many unanswered questions, those who tend to oppose free-market capitalism are presenting this theory as fact.⁶ Before scientists and economists have had a chance to answer key scientific questions and analyze the economic impact of these answers, politicians are pressured into creating programs to address alleged harms. As a result, agencies such as the federal EPA are making regulations and spending tax dollars on programs as if this hypothesis were true.

Examples include the use of the Clean Air Act of 1990 to regulate carbon dioxide emissions as a pollutant, particularly the “Oxygenated-Fuels” program. Also, a House Bill is pending to force the purchase of privately held land by the states to battle alleged harms caused by urban sprawl.⁷ Both examples are costly in terms of lost liberties and tax dollars. Both represent the use of assumptions not supported by facts.

The Kyoto Protocol was devised to get the largest users of energy to reduce carbon-based emissions to a percentage of the base year of 1990. The United States is by far the largest emitter.⁸ However, the Kyoto Protocol exempts developing countries from having to comply with the treaty. In less than 25 years developing countries, such as China and India, will out-produce the United States in carbon dioxide. Even if every signer of the treaty complies with its terms, the expected CO₂ emissions from developing countries will prevent total CO₂ levels from falling.⁹ The cost to the United States economy, in terms of lost Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and jobs, will be devastating.¹⁰

Another key component of this fraud is convincing Americans that their standard of living and wealth is the root cause of environmental problems around the world. The promoters want Americans to believe that if they do not act now, it will be too late to save the planet and it will be their fault. By placing this “guilt-trip” on Americans, they label as heretics anyone who dares challenge assumptions in

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the global warming theory. The end result is a “blank check” in the appropriations process.

Another fallacy of this scheme is justifying current expenditures for future benefits. Costs of implementing preventive measures are fairly well known; the costs of doing nothing are not. Current Kyoto Protocol language does not take into account carbon sinks such as forests, farm land, and oceans. When considering the net effect of CO₂ production and sinks, some scientists theorize that the United States and Canada are “net absorbers.”¹¹ If true, the United States and Canada would be wasting valuable resources for no gain.

Attempts to control CO₂ may actually stop potential benefits. CO₂ is “...an essential nutrient for vegetation, an aerial fertilizer...”¹² A Duke University scientist concluded “...that as much as 10 percent of the increased crop yields over the past 100 years is the result of higher concentrations of atmospheric CO₂.”¹³ Another economist has concluded that better nutrition and lower food prices resulting from a temperature increase of 4.5 degrees Fahrenheit would result in 41,000 fewer annual American deaths.¹⁴ Consequently, if the Kyoto Protocol is ever implemented, it is estimated that for every \$9 million loss in GDP, one additional death will occur.

It is time Americans see the global warming theory for what it is: a theory. To accept this theory as fact, and to spend more money on costly programs designed to lower CO₂ emissions that may actually help mankind, is wasteful and irresponsible. The prudent course of action is to allow scientists and economists to collect more complete information before more large sums of money are wasted and more freedoms are lost to large, unaccountable bureaucracies.

Endnotes:

¹Deborah Simpson and Steven Simpson, “The Power To Make Law: Can the EPA Regulate CO₂ Under The Clean Air Act?” Studies In Social Cost, Regulation, and the Environment: No. 2 (Washington D.C.: Institute For Research On The Economics Of Taxation, September 1999) p. 12. Without the states enforcing its rules, the EPA is toothless.

²Angela Antonelli and Brett Schaefer, “Why the Kyoto Signing Signals Disregard For Congress,” Executive Memorandum No. 559, (Washington D.C.: Heritage Foundation, November 23, 1999) p. 3.

³National Center For Policy Analysis, “Cost-Ineffective Regulations,” No. 6, Vol. 13, Executive Alert, (Washington D.C.: National Center For Policy Analysis, November-December 1999) p. 5.

⁴Deborah Simpson and Steven Simpson, p. 11.

⁵Gregg Van Helmond, “Squandering the Surplus: \$11 Billion On The Unratified Kyoto Treaty,” Backgrounder No. 1322, (Washington D.C.: Heritage Foundation, September 17, 1999), p. 5.

⁶Roy E. Cordato, “Global Warming, Kyoto, and Tradeable Emission Permits: The Myth of Efficient Central Planning,” Studies In Social Cost, Regulation, and the Environment: No. 1, (Washington D.C.: Institute For Research On The Economics Of Taxation, September 1999), p. 17.

⁷American Land Rights Association, “\$1 Billion Per Year Land Acquisition Trust Fund Proposed: No Bigger Threat To Private Land Owners,” URL: www.landrights.org/Alert18.htm, November 17, 1999. A series of House and Senate bills would support Vice President Gore’s \$10 billion “Partnership for America’s Resources (PAR)” program.

⁸John J. Flalka, “Flat CO₂ Emissions Give Experts Hope: Compliance With Pollution Curbs Seen More Likely,” The Wall Street Journal, (New York, NY: The Wall Street Journal, Central Edition, August 2, 1999) see chart, p. A2.

⁹Roy E. Cordato, p. 3.

¹⁰Gregg Van Helmond, Appendix A, p. 11; Quotation from Margo Thorning’s Testimony to Congress.

¹¹Roy E. Cordato, pp. 2-3.

¹²*Ibid*, p. 7. This quote originally appeared in an article by Elizabeth Cullota, “Will Plants Profit From CO₂?”, Vol. 268, Science, May 1995, p. 654.

¹³*Ibid*, p. 7.

¹⁴*Ibid*, pp. 7-8.

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