

Eco-Loony Feeding Frenzy In The Press

It's what they have been dreaming about for years now: the most extreme fears about environmental catastrophe being endorsed by an authority so close to the heart of the Establishment that even ~~sane people~~ supporters of the present Administration can't dismiss it as cranky. And so, for instance, **The Guardian** (whose sister publication *The Observer* apparently broke the story) thrashes about in ecstasy, hardly knowing which tasty morsel of doom and Bush-hatred to snap at first:

A secret report, suppressed by US defence chiefs and obtained by The Observer, warns that major European cities will be sunk beneath rising seas as Britain is plunged into a 'Siberian' climate by 2020. Nuclear conflict, mega-droughts, famine and widespread rioting will erupt across the world.

[...]

The findings will prove humiliating to the Bush administration, which has repeatedly denied that climate change even exists. Experts said that they will also make unsettling reading for a President who has insisted national defence is a priority.

Yes, savour that humiliation! Perhaps he'll even have to withdraw from Iraq and reinstate Saddam and apologise to the peace-loving peoples of the world and confiscate Halliburton's assets and [pant, pant...] And **so on**:

By 2007 violent storms smash coastal barriers rendering large parts of the Netherlands inhabitable. [*Er... we think they mean **uninhabitable**. But then, since when has accuracy been an issue when writing loony scare stories? – Editor.*] Cities like The Hague are abandoned. In California the delta island levees in the Sacramento river area are breached, disrupting the aqueduct system transporting water from north to south.

Well, let's get one thing out of the way first: these conclusions are junk. They are false. They are unsupported by science. They are made up. None of them is going to be borne out. You heard it here first, folks. Now, the more interesting question is, precisely what sort of howler has been made here, and by whom? It is perhaps

remotely possible that 'The Pentagon' (whatever that means) really has taken this seriously. After all, part of their job is to investigate ridiculous possibilities *before* they suddenly turn real and bite us. It can happen. More likely, though, is a much simpler explanation: that the scenario described above is the *premise*, not the conclusion, of a report not intended to evaluate the science of climate change but something else, perhaps simply the Pentagon's own preparedness for an unexpected catastrophe. So they could just as well have used the "Martians attack" scenario. Just imagine what sort of reaction *that* would have produced in the gullible if it had been leaked. No, wait – we already know the answer to that one: the media would panic; **ordinary people would not.**

Update: [Elegance Against Ignorance](#) has an **alternative explanation** that seems quite plausible too.

Tue, 02/24/2004 - 14:19 | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [permlink](#)

Heads I win -- tails you lose

So now both high and low temperatures are signs of impending catastrophe inflicted upon us by the wicked George W. Bush, spoiler of the Kyoto protocol.

The "precautionary principle," which counsels panic over claims of danger which are *unproven*, will seem nostalgic in a time of panic over claims of danger which are *unfalsifiable*.

by [Alan Furman](#) on Wed, 02/25/2004 - 10:19 | [reply](#)

Falsifiability and the Precautionary Principle

So now both high and low temperatures are signs of impending catastrophe inflicted upon us by the wicked George W. Bush, spoiler of the Kyoto protocol.

The "precautionary principle," which counsels panic over claims of danger which are unproven, will seem nostalgic in a time of panic over claims of danger which are unfalsifiable.

Claims made under the Precautionary Principle are also unfalsifiable. The PP claims that we should try to refute statements of the form 'X exists' where X is an adverse ecological effect and all such claims are unfalsifiable. If DDT has no bad effects on birds or humans, then it might have a bad effect on shellfish or whatever. As far as I know environmentalists have yet to condemn DDT for its bad effect on malarial mosquitoes, but it's bound to happen eventually.

Environmental organisations deliberately couch their claims in such a way that they can always manufacture new claims that disaster is imminent. I think there are two reasons. The first is that they desperately want to believe that disaster is imminent and thus that they are right to be anticapitalist. The second is that as long as they keep manufacturing new scares there are people who will take

those claims at face value and give them money.

by [Alan Forrester](#) on Wed, 02/25/2004 - 13:57 | [reply](#)

Eye witness report from the Hague

I happen to live in the Hague and I can tell you it really is getting wet here, so this is not something to joke about. I'm glad at least I'm living on the third floor. Must not forget to buy a rubber boat tomorrow.

Also, I want to report one mistake here. In fact all the terrible floods all over the world the last few hundred years have been caused by the Netherlands. So the ~~environmental-apocalypse wishers/economic-apocalypse-makers~~ nice environmentalist have their facts backwards, I'm afraid. The Netherlands is not disappearing because the sea level is rising, but the sea level is rising because the Netherlands is still here.

Without those wicked dikes and dunes 25% of the Netherlands would be permanently below the water and 68% of the Netherlands would have regular floods. And we all know that when you go into a bath tub the water level rises cause your body pushes the water away. Well, that's just what happened here. Cause greedy Dutch capitalists pumped the water out of Holland so as to get more and more land, the water level of all the seas in the world have risen 12 meters, causing millions of deaths and poverty and malaria due to wetlands in the third world.

This is a terrible racist injustice which must be stopped immediately, but the problem is that the world court in the Hague is trying to implement world piece in Israel right now and they're afraid they might get wet if they do the right thing and remove those man made, and hence evil, water blocking objects. Don't they understand that a wall in the water is an even greater obstacle to justice than a wall on the land?

I do hope nobody finds out that the biggest multinational polluter and global warmer is mother nature herself in the form of vulcanos, spontaneous oil releases under the ocean, bush fires, bacteria, radioactivity and clouds - because I'm not sure about the consequences if Kyoto forbids all these things as well.

Oh, by the way, maybe the streets are wet right now because it rained. But the rain may well have been caused by Golf war environmental syndrome or something - the Pentagon should look into this.

Henry Sturman

by [Henry Sturman](#) on Thu, 02/26/2004 - 10:44 | [reply](#)

Even more worrying

Look at [this](#) Guardian report on Mars:

Or did a magnetic field that must once have protected

the planet fade, leaving it at the mercy of pitiless solar and stellar radiation that gradually dismantled molecules and stripped the atmosphere and seas a little at a time?

Imagine the consequences if this were to happen here! And yet the Bush Administration neglects to even consider this possibility, while Americans the world over are misusing precious magnetism to build hard disk drives and to stick notes to fridges. And what do these things have in common? Simple: holding information.

Save the Earth's magnetic field - down with information!

by **Kevin** on Thu, 02/26/2004 - 16:47 | [reply](#)

[Er... we think they mean uninhab...]

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no they meant inhabitable

<http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=inhabitable>

inhabitable

*In*hab"it*a*ble, a. [L. inhabibilis: cf. F. inhabitable. See In- not, and Habitable.] Not habitable; not suitable to be inhabited. [Obs.] The frozen ridges of the Alps Or other ground inhabitable. --Shak.*

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why don't you demand that this document is made public then we'd know wouldn't we and wouldn't have to sepculate

by a reader on Fri, 02/27/2004 - 14:53 | [reply](#)

It is news like this that keeps us from news.

The impending disaster meme combined with conspiracy theory meme combined with the news meme:

Do the power of memes multiply?

Is there a part of the human brain that craves regular doses of Fear and Suspicion?

Likely.

Pentagon Reveals Global Warming Investors Scheme;
Beach Property For Sale at Bargain Prices as Millions Panic over
Rising Tides.
Real News at 11!

by a reader on Fri, 02/27/2004 - 17:59 | [reply](#)

Re: [Er... we think they mean uninhab...]

No, the folks at *The Guardian* do not use Shakespearian English. They have trouble enough with present-day English.

As for the document, it has already been published.

by **Editor** on Fri, 02/27/2004 - 19:34 | [reply](#)

Scientific Integrity in Policymaking

Does anybody here have an opinion on [this report from the Union of Concerned Scientists? Surely it merits discussion at least as much as the Guardian article?](#)

by a reader on Tue, 03/02/2004 - 03:59 | [reply](#)

Re: Scientific Integrity in Policymaking

What is interesting is that now Bush appears to be saying he wants to [improve the scientific objectivity of government.](#)

Henry Sturman

by **Henry Sturman** on Tue, 03/02/2004 - 13:46 | [reply](#)

Yeah, Right

Maybe Bush says he wants to improve the scientific objectivity of government, but what he **does** is something else.

Gil

by **Gil** on Tue, 03/02/2004 - 16:44 | [reply](#)

Union of Concerned Scientists

There's a critique of them here:

http://www.activistcash.com/org_detail.cfm?ORG_ID=145

by **Editor** on Thu, 03/04/2004 - 00:03 | [reply](#)

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'*Save the Earth's magnetic field - down with information!*'

Ah, Kevin, you thought you were joking, but you were **wrong**.

However, this does highlight a serious and potentially devastating shortage, we are running short of ways to mock environmentalists because their views are already so ridiculous that satire is redundant.

by **Alan Forrester** on Tue, 03/09/2004 - 17:41 | [reply](#)

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