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A warm and fuzzy feeling

By Richard W. Rahn

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Yes, the world is getting warmer, but the Earth does this roughly every 1,500 years, and we cannot stop it. The good news is humans and most other species tend to do better during the warm periods.

There is a wonderful new book, "Unstoppable Global Warming: Every 1,500 Years," by distinguished climate physicist Fred Singer and award-winning environmental economist Dennis Avery. The conclusion of their book in a nutshell is that, yes, the world is getting a bit warmer, but this is just the natural cycle. They provide overwhelming evidence this warming would occur with or without mankind increasing CO2 emissions or doing anything else. The good news is that if we realize we cannot stop global warming, and concentrate on constructively dealing with the problems it causes -- which are all manageable at reasonable cost -- and then enjoy the benefits, mankind will do just fine.

We have already had two cycles in recorded history; the Roman warming (200 B.C. to 600 A.D.) which was a very prosperous period, and the medieval warming (900 to 1300) during which farms were created in Greenland and Iceland. The modern warming period began about 1850, well before mankind was producing massive amounts of CO2.

As an economist, I have been a bit of skeptic about the various doomsday scenarios associated with global warming. It has been well known for decades that the Earth's temperature is in a constant flux, and there have been many periods with both lower and higher temperatures. Despite the general warming trend since 1850, we have had cooler periods, notably from 1940 to 1978, when many leading scientists were warning us we were rapidly heading for a new ice age. I can still remember those doomsday scenarios being played out on TV specials at the time.

The reason for skepticism is the very selective use of data presented by the end-of-the world crowd, such as Al Gore and this month by former World Bank economist Nicholas Stern. The common solutions that always come from the crisis-of-the-day gang are for more government spending, higher taxes and more government control, with little or no discussion of the downside of bigger government and higher taxes.

U.S. taxpayers now pay about \$4 billion per year to global change scientists and government bureaucrats associated with global warming. If global warming were found to be not much of a problem, what do you think would happen to the budgets, employment and advancement opportunities of those with a vested interest in global

warming? (We have even had calls for the forcible silencing and imprisonment of global warming skeptics by some global warming doomsayers. Such calls and intimidation of those seeking honest answers can only lead to biased research or worse.)

Mr. Gore causes the emission of several hundred times the CO₂ -- by flying around the world in private jets, riding in limos, etc. -- than the typical person does. Hence you would think if he really believed his scaremongering he would just stay home and give his speeches, etc., through teleconferencing and other electronic media. This would show greater commitment, but it would not be as much fun.

Responsible critics of the global warming scaremongers, such as Patrick Michaels (professor at the University of Virginia and Cato senior fellow), Bjorn Lomborg (director of the Copenhagen Consensus Center) and, of course, Messrs. Singer and Avery and many others, do not deny that global warming is occurring but only advocate that all current and historical data be examined and that there be a review as objective as possible of the costs and benefits of any expenditures to deal with climate change.

The Singer-Avery book is meticulously researched and footnoted (unlike many of the presentations from the scaremongers), and, as they note: "The 1,500-year cycle is not an unproven theory like the model-based predictions for the Greenhouse Theory. The 1,500 year climate cycle is real, based on a wide variety of physical evidence from around the globe." (It comes from ice cores, sediment layers, isotopes, etc.)

The sun has far greater influence on climate than most people understand. The sun does not shine with a constant intensity, the Earth does not rotate around the sun in a constant orbit -- during some periods it is more elliptical than others, and the Earth wobbles about its axis, all of which cause solar heating to vary. These effects swamp anything humans are likely to do to the climate.

During periods of global warming, some areas will become drier and less hospitable for agricultural, but just as many, or more, areas are likely to become wetter and more hospitable for food production (and living), such as Canada and Siberia. There is no evidence of species extinction during previous periods of global warming. Sea levels have slowly risen for hundreds of years, and the evidence is they will continue rising at the same slow and highly manageable rate. And, finally, the evidence is that severe storms are less frequent and intense during the warm than during the colder periods.

So relax and enjoy the few extra days of summer and the milder winters -- like our Roman and Viking ancestors did.

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