

The Cure for Global Warming

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Once again, the topic of Climate Change is in the news. I suppose the current stimulus is the proposed appointment by Mr. Trump of a climate denier to head the EPA. It doesn't matter. It gave me a reason to prepare something on the topic that has been rattling around in my head for quite a while.

For the sake of this article, allow us to agree, if only momentarily, that climate change is both undesirable and caused by increases to carbon dioxide levels resulting from the activities of people: Homo sapiens.

With that premise, I would first suggest that we look at problem solving in a pragmatic manner.

As an art form, problem solving includes as its first step the identification of an overall strategy. The identified problem is that humans are responsible for producing too much carbon dioxide. The data tells us that there are hundreds, if not thousands of ways in which we do so. Those data, therefore, provide what fighter pilots refer to as a "target rich environment." With that knowledge, we can develop an overall strategy.

There are two possible strategies to reduce our emissions. One is to remove or reduce emissions from the biggest contributors to carbon dioxide levels and the other is to remove or reduce emissions from the sources that are easiest to control. With the acknowledgement that sources easy to control may well be smaller sources, their ease of control would tend to assure success and, cumulatively, these easily controlled sources may quickly amount to a greater reduction in emissions than that attained by controlling only a few large and difficult ones.

For the purposes of this article, I shall select targeting the smaller, easy ones, over the large ones. Why? Because the large corrections are getting much too much push back. Closing all the coalmines affects too many people: too many voters.

As most tactical and strategic planners know, once you have a strategy, the next step is to select tactics, then targets. Fortunately, some of this work has already been done. In many places around the nation there are government-supported and sponsored initiatives to allow people to work at home. The benefits, in terms of carbon dioxide are tangible and easily attained. The employee working from home doesn't have to drive or ride the bus to work. By working at home, emissions from internal combustion engines are reduced. So far, this initiative has been voluntary or supported with certain tax credits. If it were mandatory, we could take about 100 million vehicles a day off of the roads daily. In addition, the office spaces could be smaller. The carbon demand supporting the workplace would be lessened as well.

Working at home, however, is not for everyone. We may need to proceed with a modified program. If we force working at home, it would have to be made palatable: perhaps by having employers put a percentage of employees in the program instead of all of them. Or perhaps an employer would be asked to have employees in the office three days a week and at home for the other two.

Regardless of the details, which can be worked out in Congress, working at home would reduce carbon dioxide output and be beneficial.

But we can go further.

We know that people who work at home won't actually stay at home all day, so we might need to provide incentives there as well. The easiest program would be to ration out miles to be driven to each person in the home. Adults might have a larger portion than children, but by using a system of rationing, government would have a more direct control over the number of miles driven. A side benefit of such a program would be that people who needed to get out would be incentivized to carpool. Of course, the rationing program would need to account for individual mileage to make it fair. Drivers of older pickup trucks might get fewer miles awarded to them than to the drivers of new hybrid cars.

Of course we would also need to implement one of the main tenets of sustainable development and include the carbon demand that results from the manufacture of both the car and the propellant. Cars and trucks that are hard to make or that have parts shipped in from overseas have a greater total lifetime impact on carbon emissions than cars built from parts manufactured out of lighter and cheaper materials in plants next door to each other. Gasoline from Texas, shipped to Indiana would carry a higher product cost in terms of carbon than gas from Oklahoma. Ethanol use in hybrid cars carries a hidden carbon dioxide cost as a result of its production. All these would need to be figured into the rationing formula, meaning that rationing amounts would be different depending on where you lived, what you drove, and how old it was. One drawback to this plan would be that at some point, someone in Washington would decide that we need a cabinet level Department of Rationing. It would most likely be funded by taxing the rationed gasoline.

That tactic sounded pretty complicated, so the next one will be easy. Consider dogs and cats, for instance. They serve no real purpose other than companionship. If we eliminated dogs and cats, then people would seek companionship from other people. The benefits to the community would be tremendous. Savings based on carbon dioxide emissions would be derived from fewer visits to veterinarians, reducing transportation based emissions, but the larger benefit would be the reduction in carbon emissions associated with the manufacture and distribution of pet products. Dog and cat food is derived from organic materials, meaning that someone has to go out and collect the ingredients. These are then cooked, emitting more carbon dioxide as a result of the heat generated for cooking. The food is placed in bags or cans; the manufacture of each carrying its own contribution to emissions. Once bagged or canned, large trucks and rail lines carry these totally unnecessary products all over the nation.

While considering animals, it is also necessary to consider cows, pigs, sheep, goats, and fowl. As these animals are sources of food for humans, it may be too soon to consider eliminating them. But horses fall into the same category as dogs and cats. One of the side effects of eliminating these gratuitous

companions is that the demand on food sources shared by humans, cats, and dogs, such as pork, beef, and fowl, would be reduced allowing for smaller herds and flocks, thereby further reducing the carbon dioxide output associated with agriculture.

I grant that eliminating these otherwise useless creatures might offend some people at first, but we are a strong and adaptive people and a strong and adaptive nation. This program would go a long way towards saving the planet itself and that fact could be used to successfully promote its adoption.

An easier target to aim at is lawn care. The classic American Lawn is mowed as much as once a week in summertime. In the south, summertime can last for 9 to 10 months, but during the cooler months, the frequency is reduced to perhaps twice a month. Considering the 50,000 square miles (yes, I looked it up) of lawns in the United States, the reduction in carbon emissions resulting from the criminalization of mowing would be tremendous. In fact, while dispersed, the savings from a program such as eliminated lawn care would reduce total carbon emissions more than most, if not all, of the larger, impractical projects currently put forth by government administrators and environmental groups. Side benefits include greater rates of carbon absorption and oxygen production by the more heavily vegetated areas that were once lawns.

Even if such a proposal meets with resistance from the urban elite who prefer manicured lawns to saving the planet, there are public options to be pursued. Highway medians and shoulders, amounting to thousands of acres, do not need to be mowed. These areas not only require a mower, but a truck to take the mower to the area to be mowed! Throw government owned properties, like city halls, libraries, and schools into the moratorium on mowing and millions more acres could go un-mowed, creating even more savings.

In both lawns and highways, one of the often-overlooked side effects is the rotting of the cut material. Rotting is conducted by bacteria and insects, both of which emit carbon dioxide. The mowing creates an unnaturally large amount of debris and an unnaturally large amount of rotting. By comparison, leaves occasionally falling off of natural plant stands don't overwhelm the natural rotting and decomposition rates and serve to fertilize the soil.

And then, of course, is the golf course. Hundreds of thousands of acres across the nation have been converted to fairways and greens that are mowed more than once a week. Eliminating the carbon dioxide emissions from this practice alone may well be enough to save the planet. And again, without the golf course, there would be no need to manufacture and distribute golf clubs, spiked shoes, and oddly colored trousers reducing the emissions associated with those practices. Toss in the carbon dioxide emitted during the manufacture, sales, transportation, and operation of golf carts, and real savings can be had. Considering that only 9.5% of Americans actually play golf, the emissions associated with the game seem inordinately high. For our purposes, however, the opposition to the criminalization of golf would be low, making the reduction achievable. And again, golf courses take a lot of fertilizing to keep them green.

Speaking of fertilizer, were lawn, and golf course mowing to be eliminated, the carbon dioxide emitted in the manufacture, production, and delivery of commercial fertilizers would be greatly reduced. Farms

would be the primary consumer of these products - and farms have a purpose beyond the maintenance of property values in middle income to upscale neighborhoods.

Examining America's farms, we can see that all that farm equipment uses a lot of energy. If we went back to plantation style farming, without the slave thing of course, there may be some opportunity to reduce carbon discharges. By requiring farmers to use manual labor when possible, all the emissions from big tractors would be eliminated: along with the emissions and energy consumption required to manufacture and deliver that equipment. Requiring the farmer to put up housing for the farm hands would be the rural version of working at home. Sure, there would be an expense associated with feeding the hands, but since we already eliminated the demand on organic material from cats and dogs, there ought to be plenty left over for the laborers. Hand labor would also reduce or eliminate the need for herbicides. Farm hands could hoe out the weeds. We'd still need pesticides for the bugs, but they could be applied by the farm hands instead of crop dusters, once again reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

Back in the city, it would be fairly simple to require that all roofs be painted white in the south and black in the north. That would reduce heating and cooling costs. The city is also the place where most bakeries are located. Bakery's make bread and bread-like products. All of those products rely on what is known as 'rising dough.' What the EPA hasn't yet learned is that dough rises because of a little microorganism that processes the sugar in the raw dough and emits, yep, carbon-dioxide. That's what makes all the little holes in the bread. Think of all the carbon dioxide that is emitted by all the yeast all around the world. I don't have the exact figures, but I estimate that eliminating all food made with rising dough would reduce emissions of carbon dioxide by a significant amount. The best part of this particular target is that more and more people are becoming gluten intolerant anyway, so criminalizing yeast should carry ancillary health benefits.

Other biologically produced carbon dioxide — produced solely to enhance mankind's earthly pleasures — can be found in another microorganism. The process of fermentation of grains into alcohol for beer, wine, or whiskey releases vast amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Criminalizing the fermentation process would have an effect at least as great as the criminalization of yeast. To be fair, however, if we criminalize spirits, we should also criminalize carbonated soft drinks. Eliminating yeast, soft drinks, and fermentation together would dramatically reduce carbon dioxide production. Of course without soft drinks, pretzels, and beer, there would be no more need for professional sports.

In fact, sports, in general, has an unnecessary and damaging effect on our carbon balance. The players are running hard, working up a sweat, and respiring at an alarming rate. The spectators are jumping up and down, screaming and hollering and respiring at an alarming rate. Respiration, of course, emits carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Eliminating sports, not just professional sports, but all sports would globally reduce the respiration rate resulting in a 200% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions for those involved in the sport whether they be a spectator or a player. A secondary benefit of eliminating sports is the elimination of all the energy (carbon dioxide generation) associated with the construction of the stadiums, travel to and from the stadiums, et cetera and so forth. Without stadiums, we would not have large parking lots at the stadiums, reducing heat absorption by the planet's surface.

But there's no reason to stop there either. Eliminating all forms of exercise, especially the neighborhood gymnasium, would also reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Think of all the sweaty people pumping out carbon dioxide just because they want to look better for their sex partner. Of course sex increases carbon dioxide output as well, but only for short periods of time, so the overall benefit of criminalizing intercourse would be minimal.

But, then again, intercourse can also result in children, and children create a larger demand on each and every one of the tactical targets outlined above. Maybe there's something to be done there after all. We'll wait and see on that.

Next time, we can talk about the billions and billions of totally useless scented candles and incense sticks that are burned every year. We'll leave the votive candles at the church out of it because of that whole separation of church and state thing.