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GLOBAL WARMING AND ETHICS

In the essay *The Capitalist Manifesto: Greed Is Good (To a point)* published in the *Newsweek* (June 22, 2009), Fareed Zakaria reflects on the present financial crisis. He also points at the lack of ethics in the financial world. Excerpts follow:

...Most of what happened over the past decade across the world was legal... But very few people acted responsibly, honourably or nobly (the very word sounds odd today). This might sound like a small point, but it is not. No system—capitalism, socialism, whatever—can work without a sense of ethics and values at its core. No matter what reforms we put in place, without common sense, judgment and an ethical standard, they will prove inadequate.

We are in the midst of a vast crisis, and there is enough blame to go around and many fixes to make, from the international system to national governments and to private firms. But at heart, there needs to be a deeper fix within all of us, a simple gut check. If it doesn't feel right, we shouldn't be doing it. That's not going to restore growth or mend globalization or save capitalism, but it might be a small start to sanity.

A similar statement about the lack of ethics, accountability, can be made about certain scientific disciplines like climatology.

Those who are closely following the debate concerning *global warming* noticed that some scientists and scientific bodies (not to mention politicians, bureaucrats, reporters) are promoting their views without taking into account facts that contradict their theories. Instead of focusing on what is appropriate for the whole system, they think about their own interests: careers, media exposure, money, etc. For instance, the International Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) as part of the United Nations organization (UN) is forcing the theory that human activities (mostly anthropogenic CO₂) are at the origin of the global warming that started at the end of the 19th century. The IPCC is refusing any public discussion on this subject. This should not happen. On the contrary, the UN should act as an arbiter seeking what is most suitable for the world community which it is supposed to represent.

Ex-president Clinton or current USA president Obama proclaim that “the science is settled” in the sense that we must reduce our (human) CO₂ emissions in order to stop global warming. Even if it is not true (that the science is settled), since many scientists worldwide are refusing the theory of men's influence on climate, both are politicians and we know that these people sometimes distort reality as it suits them.

More alarming is when the Secretary of the UN does not take into account a letter (Dec 13, 2007), following the conference on climate in Bali) signed by more than a hundred scientists from all over the world, stating that it is not possible to stop climate change, a natural phenomenon that has affected humanity through the ages. Follows the last paragraph of the above mentioned letter which summarizes their opinion:

The current UN focus on “fighting climate change,” as illustrated in the Nov. 27 UN Development Programme's Human Development Report, is distracting governments from adapting to the threat of inevitable natural climate changes, whatever forms they may take. National and international planning for such changes is needed, with a focus on helping our most vulnerable citizens adapt to conditions that lie ahead. Attempts to prevent global climate change from occurring are ultimately futile, and constitute a tragic misallocation of resources that would be better spent on humanity's real and pressing problems.

Mr Ban Ki-moon should have started a democratic procedure in organizing a public debate on the subject letting both camps (alarmists and sceptics) express and thoroughly document their point of view. Instead, protecting his employees, he took a position typical of dictators – ignore, suppress ideas which do not correspond with theirs. The media happily followed, spreading rumours of climatic catastrophes that we are still awaiting to happen.

Scientists who disagree with IPCC findings formed the Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change (NIPCC). Among other activities they analyze and discuss papers issued by those who are advocating the idea that we, humans, can influence the climate. In the preface of their recently published report "*Climate change reconsidered*", the leading authors Craig Idso and S. Fred Singer write: *We donated our time and best efforts to produce this report out of concern that the IPCC was provoking an irrational fear of anthropogenic global warming based on incomplete and faulty science.* Many cases of data manipulation, deliberate ignorance of former studies and other irregularities have been put forward. The list is long. I will mention only three of these cases:

1. *Hockey stick graph.* In order to underline the present "Modern warm period", the "Medieval warm period" and the "Little ice age" are suppressed in the graph, as if these past climate variations had never existed. Besides, the graph starts at 900AD, thus avoiding other well documented climate changes which occurred during the last 10 000 years.

2. *Melting of glaciers.* Not all of them are melting (in Antarctica, the glaciers are growing). It is correct that, for example, glaciers are retreating in the Alps. Those who use this as proof for an irreversible warming trend are forgetting to mention (intentionally?) what many studies confirm: that in the past glaciers advanced and retreated according to temperature variations. A recent study indicates that during the Bronze Age Optimum, the bottom of the Aletsch Glacier (Swiss Alps) was 1 000m higher than it is now. During that period, the mean temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere were substantially higher than today. Nevertheless, many animal species like polar bears survived.

3. *CO₂.* Many studies stress that the content of CO₂ in the atmosphere has no influence on climate. However, it is recognized that when climate is getting warmer, more CO₂ is released from oceans and vegetation increases. Besides, the 1511 active land-volcanoes emit approximately the double amount of C-equivalent of CO₂ vs. burning of fossil fuels. How come that these findings are not discussed? Instead, some governments are pushing for a cap on man made CO₂ emissions even if this constraint might have a very serious negative impact on their economy and no impact on climate.

Presently, based on what we can read in most newspapers, see or hear on TV or on the radio, we reach the conclusion that there is no democratic debate about climate. Most of the news are dominated by one sided opinion that the "Modern Warm Period" is the result of human activity. All different opinions are brutally dismissed. Nevertheless, most agree that during the last century mean temperature rose by less than 1°C; around 1998 temperature levelled (satellite records), presently it is slightly decreasing and a cool trend is predicted till 2030. Despite these facts, propaganda of global, catastrophic warming is strongly promoted and many people believe in it. In Canada there is a law prohibiting false publicity. Excerpt: ... *The Competition Act contains provisions addressing false or misleading representations and deceptive marketing practices in promoting the supply or use of a product or any business interest....*

There is an urgent need for an international law prohibiting and punishing the spreading of false scientific information. Also, an international court should be set up to enforce it. Scientists, or people acting as, should be held accountable for their acts, sayings, writings. Otherwise, persons like Al Gore will continue to mislead public opinion only to promote their business or political agenda. Unless we start an action in this direction, we will keep getting together in future symposiums, listen to presentations, talk about geoethics but nothing will really change. People will ask "Geoethics, who needs this? What is it good for?" "Oh, it is just a hobby of a group of intellectuals".