



The Care for All Things

EODDING

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## The Cure for All Things

It's only been twenty-four hours since the news became public, but already the discovery is being hailed as "the greatest scientific advance since Einstein's Theory of Relativity" and "the scientific finding that will save the world." We are referring, of course, to the revelation yesterday morning that the primary source of global warming has been identified, and that, more importantly, its energy can be harnessed for the salvation of humankind. The announcement came from a coalition of researchers from two prestigious organizations: the International Network of Energy Proficient Technologists and the Scientists Collaborating to Avoid Misinformation and Mismanagement of Energy Resources by Simpletons. The coalition is comprised entirely of volunteers with expertise in the realm of climate change and natural resource consumption and replenishment. It was formed at the behest of the British, American, and—naturally—French governments and had worked tirelessly for months to find a response to anthropogenic warming that would permit all three governments to impose as many new regulations and collect as much tax revenue as humanly possible. At last they have the solution they were seeking. And it is one that will benefit them mightily.

"It was right under our noses all the time," mused British proctologist Devin Analprober of the extraordinary finding. "Why we didn't smell it a little sooner is beyond me. I'm an expert at sniffing these things out, but this one escaped my detection for the longest time. I'm puzzled. I guess I'd better have my sinuses checked."

Team leader Raquel Carson, an American, was less concerned about the time elapsed in making the earthshaking (and potentially earth saving) discovery than about its significance for those it will serve—namely, big governments

that struggle with money management and are always looking for new sources of funds, the better to hire friends, relatives, and other special interests to assist in their eternal quest for even more funds. “This is monumental,” said Carson. “It could lead almost immediately to the creation of as many as a dozen new government agencies in the U. S. alone and a thousand times that many environmental laws. It will give scores of PhDs grant money that will forestall their queries about why graduate programs granted them advanced degrees when there are no jobs to be had in their fields. It will, in short, keep them preoccupied the way only a cozy government sinecure can. This is truly a great day for science!”

Carson is a renown environmental activist and something of a “sustainability guru,” described by one of her colleagues as “the world’s foremost expert on environmental affairs and probably its most trustworthy commentator on anthropogenic anything.” It is indeed unlikely that anybody in the world knows as much about environmental activism as she does, or that anybody is more capable of understanding the implications or the import of this enormous discovery for the cause of environmentalist propaganda and fundraising. It was her seminal literary achievement, *Noiseless Spring*, whose unanticipated success whipped up a frenzy of panic, especially among young people and—it should go without saying—teachers by predicting the planet would be dead by now from abuse by humans. The crisis generated by the book actually *created* life in abundance as a half-dozen new government agencies and myriad environmental regulations sprang up in its wake and have grown like freakish organisms—or, that is to say, like typical bureaucracies. Sympathetic fellow scientist Job Offmyhider once casually remarked that Carson’s book had fostered more hysteria than his own contributions to science and thus produced far more future grant money for taxpayer-funded research. He was jealous, he said. And she should be proud.

She is. “As you probably know,” Carson continued at her press conference yesterday morning, “we have already been largely responsible for persuading the current presidential administration and Congress of the need for new agencies to oversee the implementation of strict new environmental regulations. These regulations serve Mother Earth by taxing the bejesus out of her most invidious tormenters: those bourgeois middle-class Americans who have the nerve to consume more energy than they’re entitled to. The more we tax them, the less discretionary income they’ll have to spend, and the harder it will

be for them to go around enjoying themselves at our planet's expense. Let's leave the enjoyment to the elites and their supporters, who are *entitled* to it. .

“This new finding will have broader implications than any that have preceded it. The federal government will now be able to swell its ranks even further and perhaps construct a new office building—maybe even a whole battery of office buildings!—inside the Beltway. And by adding even further to its bureaucratic mass, the government will also contribute to the solution to environmental problems. This is a ‘win-win’ situation if ever there was one. The government wins; the scientists win. Even the suckers who have to pay for it all win because we’re saving Mother Earth for them. They’re winning even when they think they’re losing! What would they do with all that money anyway besides waste it on stuff they really don’t need? Ingrates.

“Naturally, select members of our coalition will serve as consultants to the government—for entirely reasonable fees, of course. We already have our first Environmental Emergency Conference scheduled for Monaco next spring. We know it will be well attended by environmental experts and government officials from around the world. They’re lining up for those beachfront hotels even as we speak.”

Carson isn’t the only one who’s optimistic about the number of taxpayer-funded jobs this new discovery will create. The American president’s eyes also flashed like the Northern Lights when he heard the great news. His number crunchers got straight to work, and they have estimated that as many as a million new jobs will be added by the federal government and the myriad special-interest groups it supports. As many as *ten* million construction jobs will be added once the project gets underway. “This is a bonanza,” he gushed. “It may even be a godsend.” Asked if he was excited because this new development might enhance his miserable public approval rating, he lashed out at his questioner: “This is about votes—er, I mean jobs. It’s about jobs for the American people. Our goal is to provide jobs for the entire voting public—if we have to bankrupt every middle-class taxpayer in this country to provide them.”

The discovery that has prompted all this optimism is that Washington, DC, itself is the primary source of anthropogenic global warming. The details of that discovery have just become available in the coalition’s forty-six-thousand page forest-clearing report, *The Federal Government’s Role in Anthropogenic*

*Global Warming and Its Implications for the Future of Humankind*. Of course, nobody's going to read such a massive bureaucratic tome, but Senate Majority Leader Hardly Reads had one of his special assistant's page's intern's cousins, a law student at BYU, glance through it—for a fee, of course—and he found, quite astonishingly, that this discovery of such massive import was arrived at quite by accident. It seems an Air China jet was on its final approach to Washington National last winter when its engines abruptly stalled. The frightened central planners on board immediately formed a committee to call a meeting to convene a commission to compile a research subcommittee to investigate the incident, but by that time, to their dismay (and delight) the giant airliner was already safely on the ground. Apparently it had wafted down to the runway like a leaf on a gentle autumn breeze. The astonished pilots, in fact, found themselves wrestling with the airliner's controls to force the aircraft downward instead of upward. One of them later remarked that he felt as though they were riding in a helium-filled balloon at the mercy of an updraft. Only the flight crew's courage and technical skill prevented the large airliner from simply drifting off into the stratosphere and perhaps into tragedy.

The cause of this remarkable phenomenon, it turns out, is simple: "Heat island," explained Raquel Carson. "We now know beyond the shadow of a doubt that our nation's capital is far and away the most enormous and persistent source of hot air on our entire planet. Our estimates are still crude, and we still need the arch professionals at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to confirm them, but we believe that Washington alone may be responsible for as much as two full degrees Celsius of temperature change *per year*, and its contribution to the global temperature increase seems to be steadily growing. It appears, in fact, to have been steadily on the rise throughout the current presidential administration and its predecessor. We have not determined why this growth has occurred, but one member of our team claims to discern a connection between global temperature and the government's share of Gross Domestic Product. When the latter rises, the former rises with it. Obviously, this sounds on the surface like a clear-cut case of correlation without causation, and yet the data our colleague provided us displayed a rather mystifying relationship between the two phenomena. At any rate, we saw enough of a relationship to test his hypothesis, and if it is confirmed we will have additional validation for our speculation

so far. We'll have even more reason to believe that the connection we perceive between Washington and global warming is real, and that the implications we have extrapolated are quite real as well. Hence my willingness to label this discovery 'monumental,' as I have done. I believe it absolutely merits that assessment."

And what does that mean for the rest of us? Quite simply, it means we are saved. "If we can harness that energy, Carson continued, "we can use it to power the machinery of the world. We'll be siphoning it out of the atmosphere and into productive use, providing a sustainable energy source for the entire world. All we have to do is keep those politicians yakking and we'll be saving the planet from suffocation and giving it the means to maintain its extravagant modern lifestyle at the same time. That is, to employ a cruel and distasteful metaphor, we'll be killing two birds with one stone."

At this stage of discovery, it is impossible to know for sure what kind of apparatus will have to be constructed to harness all that hot air for the world's consumption. But it is believed that a dome can be built over the city and its suburbs to trap the air so that it can be channeled into giant turbines capable of producing a vast quantity of electricity. "We believe," Raquel Carson said, "it may suffice to power our entire country, perhaps even the entire Western Hemisphere."

As with any new discovery, the skeptics have stepped forward to wag their heads and stroke their chins at this one. "It seems dubious," remarked physicist Stephen Howling, leading proponent of the Bim Bam Boom theory to explain the origin of our universe. "All that energy harnessed in one relatively small geographic area. I worry about the possibility of an explosion, or perhaps a meltdown. Currently the hot air is released above the city into the enormous greenhouse that surrounds our planet, but if we try to contain it, to prevent it from escaping of its own accord, I don't know. . ."

NASA engineer Bartholomew Shuttlebuilder was less equivocal and far more emphatic. "It's preposterous," he fumed. "The nation's capital will melt like a popsicle exposed to the dry desert heat. All that hot air wasted. It's just too much energy to try to force into captivity in one concentrated area. You're talking about reining in an energy output equivalent to that produced by hundreds of nuclear power plants. It won't work."

Most of the really important people in the world, however—those who stand to gain the most not only from the

discovery itself but from the chain of developments it is almost certain to trigger—leapt on the news like a pack of rabid dogs on a rack of ribs. We're referring, naturally, to the world's political leaders, who were far less critical than some silly scientists and engineers of a new scientific development of such vast importance, not to mention its potential benefit to their careers.

The folks down at the Nations United, for instance, hurried into full emergency session just as fast as their diplomatically immune conveyances could get them there. Addressing the General Assembly this morning, Secretary-General Bun Ki-Sun urged his fellow diplomats to seize the moment, to embrace it as a golden opportunity to enhance the organization's flagging status in the world. "Among all the world's political organizations, this one is in the best position to exploit this new discovery. We are the collected diplomats of the world's leading nations. It is arguable, in fact—and it may even soon be measurable—that we produce more hot air than any other political organization—yes, even the federal government of the United States of America."

This last provocative comment, issued in the tenor of a challenge, inspired an immediate and ardent international response. A rabid debate grew from the Secretary's insinuation that the federal government of the United States is *not* the legitimate leading contributor to global warming or, by extension, to energy production. From as far away as the Kremlin in Moscow and the State Council in Beijing, and even from offended and contentious representatives of Israel and the Arab Emirates, the objections resounded as political leaders chimed in with a fury. Vladimir Puddn' grumbled by way of a televised interview that the history and character of the Russian people speak for themselves. Clearly, their political mouthpieces produce the most impassioned rhetoric and therefore the most hot air. Premier Leg Kicking countered that a country's claim to passion is no accurate indicator of the quantity of noxious gas it can produce. The sheer mass of China's government-controlled system of production, he claimed, would ensure that it surpass all others in the manufacture of hot air. A bureaucracy that can keep a billion people in line, with relatively rare occasion to "correct" those who stray from the true path of eternal fraternity, must be doing an awful lot of regulating indeed—and to regulate one must have regulators. He proclaimed his country the world's leading hot-air producer by virtue of its number of bureaucrats, more of them than any other country can claim.



But the debate was far from over; in fact it had just begun. Sorely affronted, complainants in the Middle East—on both sides of the religious divide there—retaliated with a rhetorical force that reverberated throughout the giant chamber, squawking that their contributions to hot-air production were as substantial as any other region's. For no other region of the world produces more turmoil, and surely ample quantities of hot air are required to foment such perpetual disarray.

Now it was the Africans' turn to leap into the fray. Did the rest of the world not feel the angry energy issuing from their massive continent? Could it not see the seething desecration of the memory of Nelson Mandela in South Africa, the renewed struggle for political control instigating wave after wave of violent unrest? Could it not perceive the thuggery in Zimbabwe? Had it, for the love of all things politically useful, forgotten Rwanda? The Lost Boys? How could the assembled representatives of the world's governments pretend to ignore the febrile clouds of energy perpetually hovering over that enormous land mass? Racism was insinuated as the reason for the rest of the world's failure to recognize Africa's value as a hot-air producer.

Other countries, from the Bahamas to Bahrain, from Australia to Argentina, from Canada to Kazakhstan, joined the rhetorical ruckus, the war of words, the conflagration of compromisers, raising the noise level to a full-fledged din, and before long the whole group had generated enough new hot air to melt another hundred feet of ice at each tip of the globe and drown a dozen polar bears.

And still no consensus was achieved, and none appeared to be on the horizon, as the world's leading diplomats ranted and raved and wrangled through the rest of the day's session, still without achieving any kind of hopeful resolution. They may have hiked the global temperature another notch or two, but they did nothing to solve the world's energy crisis. Nonetheless, in true diplomatic fashion, they remained resolute, their faith in themselves as a diplomatic body unshaken. They remained as confident as ever that they were the solution, not the problem, and that their concerted effort could (apparently with sufficient expenditure of energy) produce desirable results. "We'll be back at it tomorrow," Secretary-General Sun promised, "and we'll keep coming back until get something accomplished. That is our pledge to the world. If we have to turn the whole planet into a sweltering hothouse, if we have to roast every last human being with the heat we produce, by god we'll get *something* done."

The American president, meanwhile, informed of the uproar at the NU, applauded the diplomats' willingness to throw themselves full bore into the effort to generate enough hot air to free the world from fossil fuel dependence. But he also expressed his wish that they would wait until all that energy can be harnessed for good before loosing it on the world. Otherwise, he fears, all that hot air might be wasted, or, worse, it might have a negative rather than a positive effect.

Ironically, some of the federal government's generally most vocal detractors now count themselves among its most ardent supporters, ready and willing to put the political class to work in the service of humankind (instead of accomplishing whatever it is the political class usually accomplishes). Asked about the revolutionary discovery that the hot-air producers might actually supply the world with abundant and perhaps even endless energy, John Talisman, chief executive officer of a libertarian thinktank well known for its antagonism toward the federal government, no matter which major political party is in power, said, "Yes, we've discussed it at length, and we're all for it. It's about time we found a genuinely productive use for the political class. If we can put them to work doing something that's actually useful, why shouldn't we? I confess our whole building, and many of our adjunct scholars, are in a pickle right now. We're faced with a dilemma we never thought we'd face, and it's placed us in the uncomfortable position of questioning our most cherished assumptions—and right now those assumptions aren't holding up too well. In fact, we're thinking of changing our name to the Plato Institute to reflect our ideological shift. Why not make our mission commensurate with our new beliefs? Our entire existence has been dedicated to the proposition that individuals working to serve their own interests foster genuine cooperation with other individuals who are working to serve *their* own interests, and their separate but mutually dependent efforts produce both innovations and efficiencies unimaginable in a centrally planned economy. We used to chortle at anecdotes about that clattering sardine can on wheels, the Soviet Moskvich, or the pristine blue skies over Beijing. But not anymore. Not since we heard the momentous news. We have seen the error of our ways! We now recognize the virtue in central planning. Hayek was wrong. Let's have no more blather about invisible hands or fatal conceits or spontaneous orders. Poppycock! We hereby announce our support for the effort to expand the political class not just here in the U. S. but worldwide. You can never have enough

politicians and their lackeys, including those of you in the media—and let's not forget those marvelous special-interest groups that make life, shall we say, more rewarding for our politicians. It is our sincere belief, based on the remarkable evidence we've seen in the last twenty-four hours, that expanding government is not merely the best but the *only* way to save our planet from destruction. Indeed, it has become our moral and political imperative. We can control global warming, power the world, end world hunger, and probably find Carmen San Diego all in one fell swoop. Let it forthwith be recognized that we here at the Plato Institute proclaim Big Government the cure for all things. Surely the collected intelligence of a few supercilious assholes is vastly superior to the motivation and ingenuity of millions of mere mortals, all in it for themselves. Bring on the gasbags! That's what we here at the Plato Institute say. Let's form a committee and get the world's problems solved posthaste. Wait a minute—I've got a Powerpoint presentation right here somewhere. Let me see if I can find it. Or should we do lunch first?"