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**Beat the devil** by Alexander Cockburn

## Who Are the Merchants of Fear?

[from the May 28, 2007 issue]

No response is more predictable than the reflexive squawk of the greenhouse fearmongers that anyone questioning their claims is in the pay of the energy companies. A second, equally predictable retort contrasts the ever-diminishing number of agnostics with the growing legions of scientists now born again to the "truth" that anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> is responsible for the earth's warming trend.

Actually, the energy companies have long since adapted to prevailing fantasies, dutifully reciting the whole catechism about carbon neutrality, repositioning themselves as eager pioneers in the search for alternative fuels, settling comfortably into new homes, such as British Petroleum's Energy Biosciences Institute at UC, Berkeley.

In fact, when it comes to corporate sponsorship of crackpot theories about why the world is getting warmer, the best documented conspiracy of interest is between the fearmongers and the nuclear industry, now largely owned by oil companies, whose prospects twenty years ago looked dark. The apex fearmongers are well aware that the only exit from the imaginary crisis they have been sponsoring is through a big door marked "nuclear power," with a servants' side door labeled "clean coal."

The world's best-known hysteric and self-promoter on the topic of man's physical and moral responsibility for global warming is Al Gore, a shill for the nuclear and coal barons from the first day he stepped into Congress entrusted with the sacred duty to protect the budgetary and regulatory interests of the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Oak Ridge National Lab. White House advisory bodies on climate change in the Clinton/Gore years were well freighted with nukers like Larry Papay of Bechtel.

As a denizen of Washington since his diaper years, Gore has always understood that threat inflation is the surest tool to plump budgets and rouse voters. By the mid-'90s he'd positioned himself at the head of a strategic alliance formed around "the challenge of climate change," which stepped forward to take Communism's place in the threatosphere essential to political life.

The foot soldiers in this alliance have been the grant-guzzling climate modelers and their Internationale, the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, whose collective scientific expertise is reverently invoked by devotees of the fearmongers' catechism. The IPCC has the usual army of functionaries

and grant farmers and the merest sprinkling of actual scientists with the prime qualification of being climatologists or atmospheric physicists.

To identify either government-funded climate modelers or their political shock troops at the IPCC with scientific objectivity is as unrealistic as detecting the same in a craniologist financed by Lombroso studying a murderer's head in a nineteenth-century prison. The craniologist's calipers were adjusted by the usual incentives of stipends and professional ego to find in the skull of that murderer ridges, bumps and depressions, each meticulously equated with an ungovernable passion or a mental derangement.

At least Lombroso and his retinue measured heads. All Al Gore has ever needed is a hot day or some heavy rain as opportunity to promote the unassailable theory of man-made global warming. Come a rainy summer (1995) or a routine El Niño (1997) and Gore is there for the photo op, his uplifted finger warning of worse to come.

Man-made-global-warming theory is fed by pseudo-quantitative predictions from climate careerists working primarily off the megacomputer General Circulation Models, whose home ports include the National Center for Atmospheric Research, NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies and the Department of Commerce's Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Lab.

These are multibillion-dollar computer modeling bureaucracies as intent on self-preservation and budgetary enhancement as cognate nuclear bureaucracies at Oak Ridge and Los Alamos. They are as unlikely to develop models refuting the hypothesis of human-induced global warming as is the IPCC to say the weather is getting a little bit warmer but there's no great cause for alarm. Threat inflation is their business. Think of the culture that engendered the nonexistent missile gap of the late 1950s and you'll get some sense of the political, economic and bureaucratic forces at work today stoking panic at the specter of man-made global warming and the nuclear plants needed to fight it.

By the late 1980s the UN high brass clearly perceived the "challenge" of climate change to be the horse to ride to build up the organization's increasingly threadbare moral authority and to claim a role beyond that of being an obvious American errand boy. In 1988 it gave us the IPCC.

The cycle of alarmist predictions is now well established. Not long before some new UN moot, a prominent fearmonger like James Hansen or Michael Mann will make a tremulous statement about the accelerating tempo of the warming crisis. The cry is taken up by the IPCC and headlined by the *New York Times*, with exactly the same lack of critical evaluation as that newspaper's recycling of the government's lies about Saddam's WMDs.

When measured reality doesn't cooperate with the lurid model predictions, new compensating factors are "discovered," such as the sulfate aerosols popular in the 1990s, recruited to cool off the obviously excessive heat predicted by the models. Or inconvenient data are waterboarded into submission, as happened with ice-core samples that failed to confirm the modelers' need for record temperatures today. As Richard Kerr, *Science's* man on global warming, remarked, "Climate modelers have been 'cheating' for so long it's almost become respectable."

The consequence? As with the arms-spending spiral powered by the cold war fearmongers, vast sums of money will be uselessly spent on programs that won't work against an enemy that doesn't exist. Meanwhile, real and curbable environmental perils are scanted. Hysteria rules the day, drowning useful initiatives such as environmental cleanup, while smoothing the way for the nuclear industry to reap its global rewards.

*Next: Are things really that bad?*