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Warming world challenges ideology

Alan Betts (<http://alanbetts.com/writings>)

It was a satisfying end to the gardening season with a warm fall and no killing frost until October 19 in Pittsford. Indeed the fall foliage season also came late, but the colors were vivid. I still have spinach, kale and brussel sprouts as well as butternut squash for Thanksgiving, and the lettuce I planted under glass for next spring has germinated well.

Globally 2014 was the warmest year on record, and this year global temperatures are running so much higher that 2015 will set a new warm temperature record by a large margin. The climate meeting in Paris starts in a week to consider the future of the planet – how much courage will the nations of the world have to face the truth?

Sadly in Washington politics there are many who continue to say ‘global warming has ended’ (or even that it never happened) simply because that is their political doctrine. Rather than look at the evidence, it is easier to pretend that climate scientists are heretics that are challenging the American way! They forget that November 2015 is the fiftieth anniversary of the report titled ‘Restoring the Quality of our Environment’ by the President’s Science Advisory Committee (set up by President Eisenhower), which outlined the negative impacts of rising atmospheric CO₂ on the climate and the oceans.

A couple of months ago, I was one of 20 climate scientists who signed a letter to the United States Attorney General requesting a RICO investigation of the companies who have poured millions into campaigns against climate science. This law, standing for “Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act” was signed by Richard Nixon in 1970, and it was used to expose the way the tobacco industry knowingly deceived the public for decades at the cost of many lives.

But when we suggested that this kind of deliberate fraud should be exposed, since this obstruction of political action for decades will lead to staggering loss of life on Earth this century, in poured the hate-mail: targeting us for challenging the gospel of money and power. Fellow scientists at public universities were attacked with demands for all their emails for the past 5 years, driven by the fantasy that we are a scientific conspiracy, threatening the noble fossil fuel industry with false climate analyses. Really! When there is over \$100 billion in annual profits at stake, it is not hard to guess where the conspiracy lies.

We now know that the Exxon team of research scientists examined the evidence that greenhouse gasses were warming the global climate back in 1978. Their assessment agreed with the 1979 National Academy of Science report that said doubling CO₂ in the atmosphere would warm the planet by 5 to 8 degrees (F). But Exxon management decided they should suppress their own scientific assessment, and instead fund groups to undermine climate science, because they could see that climate science was an obvious threat to oil industry profits. Two weeks ago, the New York attorney general began a RICO investigation of Exxon Mobil to determine whether the company lied to the public and investors about the risks of climate change.

But it is hard to deny reality for ever. Last month the Canadian government that had silenced their own government scientists on climate change to protect the tar-sands industry, was thrown out of office. I recall back in 1980, around the time Exxon decided to suppress their own science, meeting with a group of brilliant young Soviet scientists. We were part of an international science team for an Atlantic Ocean tropical experiment. After hours, they explained that the Soviet Union was on the path to collapse because of the irreconcilable conflict between ideology and reality. They were prophetic.

For two centuries the United States government respected scientific evidence and prospered. Now it faces collapse, because the merge of web technology with the infamous principle of the “big lie” has undermined the integrity of so many politicians.

So we the people must speak up, elect leaders that stand for the truth, start to work with the Earth, and build communities that are sustainable for generations to come.



Figure 1. Last year was the Earth's warmest year on record. This warming, caused by carbon emissions, is melting polar ice and raising the level of the world's oceans.