

A Future Less Tense: An Essay In Wishful Thinking

Posted by

Wednesday, 06 July 2005 09:37 - Last Updated Wednesday, 06 July 2005 09:37

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F.H. Knelman, Ph.D.: The year was 2055. The world was at last at peace. The oil age had ended, but not without huge social costs. But the costs were so great that the net benefit might be questioned. While a nuclear war had been averted, the global environmental disaster that had occurred was, if anything, more costly. The source was global warming, fueled by greenhouse gases, just as the vast majority of climate experts had predicted thirty years earlier.

A FUTURE LESS TENSE: AN ESSAY IN WISHFUL THINKING

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The year was 2055. The world was at last at peace. The oil age had ended, but not without huge social costs. But the costs were so great that the net benefit might be questioned. While a nuclear war had been averted, the global environmental disaster that had occurred was, if anything, more costly. The source was global warming, fueled by greenhouse gases, just as the vast majority of climate experts had predicted thirty years earlier. But the peak effect had occurred much earlier and with far greater catastrophic consequences. The unprecedented melting of the huge Ward Hunt Ice Shelf, as well as the significant shrinking of the polar ice caps, followed by the permanent ice cover of the entire polar regions becoming virtually ice-free, led to a huge rise in the oceans. In addition, a massive melting of glaciers and land-based ice sheets also contributed to the major consequence - the flooding of all low-lying areas all over the planet, including the total inundation of entire islands, many of them populated. All coastal regions over the entire planet suffered huge consequences. Island nations, like the Maldives, were wiped out. Even major low-lying cities, such as Shanghai and Lagos, were completely swamped. Some one-quarter of a million square miles of coastal United States were inundated. In addition there was a massive destruction of food crops, leading to very high levels of starvation. The bottom line was three hundred million deaths and two hundred million refugees world-wide.

The oil age had entered the world with a bang and left with a whimper. The huge profits it had generated were more than cancelled out by the social and environmental costs of global warming, a direct result of the excessive release of greenhouse gases. Even when oil reached \$100.00 a barrel, the SUVs hung on. But the real bottom line was a near complete devastation for the world. Global warming withstood global warning and resulted in a terrible cost for the world. The major villain in this terrible disaster was the United States under the resident idiot of the White House, George W. Bush, 2000-2008. Not satisfied with trashing the nuclear weapons control regime and committing an illegal invasion of Iraq, he flaunted the Kyoto Protocol. He was at least correct in his short-term analysis - that it wasn't good for America. To be fair, the rapid industrialization of India and China also made a major contribution to the disaster. Under the control of his neoCon puppeteers. Bush opposed Kyoto while he developed a thick lip in the service of alternative energy sources. He was both 'born again' and unbearable. Bush was the first world leader to declare grammatical war, i.e. against a 'noun-terror'. He had converted the U.S. to the ultimate terrorist state and he used his war against Iraq to trash key elements of his country's Constitution. After 2005, not only was the world opposed to him, but so were the polls.

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In 2018 the reorganized International Criminal Court, after concluding two years of trial, found him guilty of multiple crimes against humanity. He was incarcerated in the rebuilt prison, Abu Graib, in Baghdad, along with Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Condoleezza Rice, Paul Wolfowitz, John Bolton, Karl Rove and a further group of neoCons, all given life sentences without parole. By that time Iraq had a stable democratic government with a major representation of former insurgents.

In 2008 the U.S. had its first woman president, Hillary Clinton. While she never strayed beyond a mildly liberal Democratic position, she did appoint Ralph Nader as head of the Environment Protection Agency (EPA). More radical Democrats became presidents in the next few decades. Meanwhile, all of Europe had Social Democrat or Democratic Socialist governments. The United Nations was reformed and made effective through a great harmony in the Security Council. At the same time, in the above period, hunger and AIDS in Africa were brought under control, Canada had escaped the unfair trade agreements with the U.S. and strengthened trade and diplomatic ties with a democratic socialist Russia.

In the Middle East, Palestine had become a thriving independent state. There were now all types of constructive exchanges with Israel. Believe it or not, there was even an increasing number of inter-marriages. The entire Middle East was transformed. The ruling dynasty of Saudi Arabia, robbed of its major source of wealth, had been replaced by a democratic regime. Their current Prime Minister is a woman. And the U.S. had its second woman president, this time a black woman.

The abrupt end of the oil age radically altered transportation. World-wide agro-fuels, such as ethanol and methanol, were in wide use as were solar and battery power. Light rapid transit based on these technologies was becoming dominant. All nuclear power plants world-wide had been shut down. Agreements were in place to totally free the world of the threat of nuclear war. Space was restored as an environment of peace. In effect, the world had become a global cooperative. Threat had been transformed to promise. Pax Americana had self-destructed and with that came profound cultural changes. The multinationals, unmasked, had been dismantled. Global cooperatives began to abound. The liberation of the poor and disenfranchised had become complete. And the world shift in the sex of leaders was towards women. Venus had triumphed over Mars.

In New York City, a unique museum of redundant technology had been built. In it were housed the largest of the old SUVs, models of oil refineries and nuclear power plants. A centerpiece was an old Hummer. There was also an inventory of drugs, products of the hydrocarbons in petroleum. As well, there were ICBMs and other nuclear missiles. Also included were key historical documents representative of the age of oil dominance.

The world had survived the multiple threats to its existence - nuclear war and global warming being the most significant, although the ascendancy of neoCons could rightfully be included. In fact they were responsible for these threats, lessons had been learned that would never be forgotten for the rest of history.