

community, but with the new developments from once-political-gurus leading us further from fact and deeper into fiction one has to ask: does anyone watch the Discovery Channel anymore? Global warming is a real thing, and can have real effects on the earth – some of which we’re feeling now. But while watching the Academy Awards two nights ago my jaw dropped to the floor when I heard Al Gore’s name called to receive an Oscar for his now major motion picture, “An Inconvenient Truth.”

Al Gore, a name once known for his outrageous claims to being the inventor of Internet, has fully researched, written, published and now produced a tale of floods that reach the Rushmore summit, and bury Boston and New York City under a sea of sand and ice. Yes, dear readers, Al Gore has now not only created a global network that has truly revolutionized modern life as we know it, but he’s also discovered a global phenomenon known only as “Global Warming.” (How does he do it?) He’s also spent millions in advertising to get this movie to the forefront of American minds, performed countless speeches, and claims to know ways to stop global warming and it’s terrible effects dead in their tracks.

But why would anyone who knows how global warming truly works ever want to stop it?

Global warming – defined as a rising of the earth’s temperatures by a few degrees each year until finally creating a paradox effect of ice age – is not only a natural occurrence, but it’s happened before! Historic geologists, archeologists, and meteorologists have all published data that suggests global warming happens fairly often (in geological terms, at least). Not only does it occur naturally, but it is a vital part to the health and balance of the earth itself.

We hear some reference to the government’s ploy to end global warming by cutting down on fossil fuel usage, and implementing green energy technology which is a fantastic step forward technologically speaking, but (and I hate to decompress Gore’s ego here) will do nothing to stop the effects of global warming. In fact, has anyone considered what the reverse effects of stopping global warming could be? Haven’t we already done enough altering of nature by releasing countless engineered plants and animals into the global ecosystem, and changing the very way some rivers and tides flow? If it were possible for humans to stop global warming, has anyone considered what havoc this would wreak for future generations? In my opinion it would be far more devastating than what we may face at this moment.

So Al Gore, and everyone else trying to find ways to stop global warming in its tracks, I beg you – please turn over to the National Geographic sometime and catch on of their well researched specials on global warming, “the natural cycle,” and spare us anymore heart tugging

commercials exploiting children to make us feel guilty about the world the earth itself is trying to change. I recently read where Al Gore has been nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize. Now that is an inconvenient truth.

Another inconvenient truth

Dear Editor:

Global warming is a natural and necessary part of the climatic cycle as Kyle Rose states. It has happened many times in the past and will happen many times again in the future. What Kyle fails to appreciate is that it’s not the change that is the problem here but, as is clearly demonstrated in “An Inconvenient Truth,” it is the rate of change that is alarming.

We are pushing the planet to a dramatic climatic change at a rate far faster than is natural by our excessive burning of fossil fuels. Fossil fuels represent organically stored fossil sunlight that radiated down on Earth, some of it hundreds of millions of years ago. Upon deep burial, the organics became coal and petroleum. Continued release of that stored solar energy and the accompanying pollutants into the atmosphere is a folly we will soon regret.

Earth has been in an Ice Age for about 3 million years. Roughly every 200,000 years the Ice Age is interrupted by an interglacial period that lasts from 18,000 to 35,000 years or so. Our current interglacial period started about 15,000 years ago. The planet has been warming ever since. What is alarming is the dramatic rate at which the planet is warming today. It’s true that there have been a few returns to colder climates such as the Little Ice Age between about 1200-1850 A.D. but all of what we call “History” has taken place since the last “Ice Age” ended. Humans living under Ice Age conditions only occurred in prehistory.

Because of the warmer climate, human agriculture, society, and technology have flourished: slowly at first but at an exponentially increasing rate since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Because of our ability to exploit the energy from fossil fuels, we have been able to stretch the natural carrying capacity of the planet, in terms of human population, well beyond its natural limit. The return of Ice Age conditions is not something we should look forward to seeing.

The problem with global warming is that, I believe, it will bring the next “Ice Age” upon us thousands of years before it is due. Our diminished agricultural production due to cooler climatic conditions would not be sufficient to sustain our overextended, and still expanding, population. The result would be that many millions, if not billions, of people would die of starvation and the ensuing social unrest. My reasons for believing that global warming is bringing us precariously close to triggering a new “Ice Age” can be found on my website (www2.brevard.edu/reynoljh/) by clicking the **Climate Change Model** link and viewing the presentation of *Global Warming and the Coming Ice Age*. It takes about 45 minutes to view.

In a nutshell, the site shows how melting the Arctic Ocean will dramatically increase snowfall in northern North America and Eurasia. Recently, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) revised its long-term climatic model to predict this will happen in less than 100 years. I suspect it will happen much faster than that. The ice cap is already 25% smaller than it was in 1980. When total melting occurs, it will be like having a continuous *lake effect* snowstorm similar, but much more severe, to those that hit New York State a couple of weeks ago. This will cause the North Atlantic current to cease warming Western Europe and *Voilà!* the ice man cometh.

The most often quoted estimate for when the Arctic Ocean will be completely melted is in about 20 years; more optimistic estimates put it at 100 years. If left to nature, this wouldn’t happen until somewhere between 3,000 and 20,000 years from now. The change will happen; it’s the rate of change that is scary. By cutting back our greenhouse gas emissions, as “An Inconvenient Truth” urges us to do, we can try to delay a dramatic climate shift for as long as possible because when it happens, the party will be over. When it happens, it will happen FAST! It won’t be over a weekend, as in the movie “The Day After Tomorrow,” but it would happen over a year’s time.

Kyle is right that we cannot stop global warming but we’d better make an effort to slow it down to its natural levels or we will find ourselves living in a world of diminished food resources. Unfortunately, I suspect that the damage we have already caused through excess fossil fuel consumption is too great to reverse the melting of the Arctic Ocean in less than 20 years. I’m going to go out and by some sweaters.

—JR

Associate Professor of Geology