

A Problem Solving Approach to Global Warming

By Ann O’Nymous

I teach logic and critical thinking at a major four-year university. I greatly enjoy this, especially around election time when my students and I study the logic of campaign ads. Talk about creating a new generation of cynics—students come into my class believing in the American system of government, and leave it ready to secede from the Union!

Recently we’ve been studying a “critical thinking approach to problem solving,” and so I thought it would be fun to write a column that mirrors what I make my students do: I will pick a “problem” and see if it can be carried to a logical conclusion and solution using critical thinking and logic.

The problem: ~~GLOBAL WARMING~~, excuse me, CLIMATE CHANGE.

Here’s how a logical approach to problem solving works:

- First, I must present to the reader the “situation” (all problems start as situations).
- Second, I must convince the reader that this situation is really a problem.
- Third, I must convince the reader of the causes of this problem.
- Fourth, I must present a solution that addresses the causes and solves the problem.

So let’s give it a try:

FIRST, THE SITUATION: *THE CLIMATE IS CHANGING.* No kidding. The climate is always changing. Didn’t you see the film *Ice Age*? Some who claim that humans are causing climate change (for our purposes here we’ll call these people, “global warming alarmists”) argue that scientists have a pretty firm grasp on what causes climate change (and thus they know that humans are causing the problem now), but this is a load of bunk. Some aspects of climate change are fairly well understood, while others are not understood at all. The fact that scientific computer models set up to predict warming levels have been radically incorrect for the past 20 years is evidence of this. Overall this is still an academic field largely in its infancy.

So let’s be more specific in our description of the situation: ***THE EARTH IS WARMING.*** This is also up for debate at the moment. The UK’s Met Office reported in a couple years ago that there has been no overall warming for the past 16 years. What global warming alarmists once considered a “temporary pause” is looking more and more like something else altogether—like a normal trend.

You may have heard that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recently revised their temperature data for the past 20 years, and that these revised numbers erase the pause. What you may not know is that several whistleblowers within the NOAA have come forward to say that this

revised data is incorrect and was created by NOAA administrators in order to further the cause of the global warming alarmists. Considering these facts:

So we can't even agree for certain on whether or not the situation exists.

SECOND, WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM: THIS CHANGE WILL CAUSE ALL KINDS OF HAVOC. Not very likely. Even if climate change / global warming is occurring, regardless of the causes, the consequences are by no means guaranteed to be negative. Remember, life exists much more successfully in a warmer climate than in a colder one. (Where is there more life, at the equator or at the poles?)

Consider possible advantages and disadvantages of a warmer atmosphere:

Advantages:

- Increased agricultural productivity (more rain, warmth and CO₂)
- Longer growing seasons for all plant life
- Greening of some of the Earth's vast frozen land masses
- Added habitat for wildlife
- More bountiful food for animal life
- Less food/energy requirements for animal life
- Less net global energy requirement for humans
- Less deforestation for heating fuel
- Less cold related severe weather and death
- Greater cushion against future ice ages
- More pleasant temperatures for economic and recreational activities

Disadvantages:

- Higher sea level leading to flooding of low-lying lands.
- Water shortages in already water-scarce areas.
- More extreme weather and an increased frequency of severe and catastrophic storms.
- Increased deaths from heat waves.
- Additional use of energy resources for cooling needs.
- Increased allergy and asthma rates due to earlier blooming of plants.
- Permanent loss of glaciers and ice sheets.
- Cultural or heritage sites destroyed faster due to increased extremes.

Far from causing all kinds of havoc, it appears that warming temperatures would have fairly equal positive and negative effects, and possibly even a net positive outcome, considering the increasing growing seasons and more land being available for agricultural.

So again, we can't even make the case that global warming or climate change, or whatever you want to call it, would be an overall problem, even if it does exist.

THIRD: HUMANS ARE CAUSING THIS WARMING / CHANGE. This is the very core of the debate, and the least well understood part of this process. Although certainly those politicians who would just love to control more of your behavior believe this (or want us to believe that they believe this), there is plenty of evidence that humans are NOT causing this change, or at most are having a minimal effect on climate temperatures.

There are many possible explanations for the changes in global temperature, including the following:

- Natural fluctuations in temperature that have existed throughout earth's history
- Solar activity
- The earth's position in orbit around the sun
- Water vapor and other greenhouse gases that humans are not affecting
- Volcanic eruptions
- A combination of any or all of these

And these are just the tip of the iceberg (pun intended). Despite the lie that there is a "consensus" among climate researchers that holds humans as responsible for causing global warming, consider the following:

- A 2008 international survey of climate scientists conducted by German scientists Dennis Bray and Hans von Storch revealed deep disagreement with regards to the causes of global warming.
- A 2010 survey of media broadcast meteorologists conducted by the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication found that 63% of 571 who responded believe global warming is mostly caused by natural, not human, causes.
- A more recent 2012 survey published by the AMS found that only one in four respondents agreed with UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change claims that humans are primarily responsible for recent warming.
- A March 2008 canvas of 51,000 Canadian scientists with the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta (APEGGA) found that ... only 26% of them attributed global warming to "human activity like burning fossil fuels."

So in following our logical problem-solving exercise here, this is what we know:

THE SITUATION: There is large disagreement that global warming or climate change is even occurring outside historical norms.

WHY IT'S A PROBLEM: There is no guarantee that if it is occurring, it would be a net negative/problem for the world.

WHAT IS CAUSING IT: There is no consensus about what is causing it (if it even exists).

Given these realities, now we come to solutions:

SOLUTIONS: The logical solution at this point is NOTHING, since we can't even determine for certain that there is a problem or the causes of that problem.

But let's keep going here: let's assume that the following is true: global warming is occurring outside historical norms, it's a terrible thing, and human activity is causing it because we're producing so much CO₂. Now, what do we do?

THE FACT IS, THERE IS VERY LITTLE THAT WE CAN DO. Environmentalists suggest things like replacing incandescent light bulbs, adjusting the thermostat, buying energy efficient appliances, taking showers instead of baths, buying hybrid or other fuel-efficient cars, eating less meat, and recycling (among many, many others).

These are all very "feel good" suggestions, but if every American followed every one of these suggestions, it would do nothing to stop global warming. There are nearly 7 billion human beings on this planet, each one breathing out CO₂, and most using internal-combustion-engine-based transportation, requiring energy for homes and offices (largely produced by fossil-fuel fired power plants), and eating meat (HUGE methane producers, those cows). If you and I and every American changed out all of our incandescent light bulbs for more efficient bulbs, it wouldn't come close to offsetting the CO₂ output of a single coal-fired power plant for a year. And China is building these power plants almost as fast as we can count them.

Which brings us to the real fallacy of alarmist global warming policy: we can't control the world. I visited the UK recently, and had an interesting discussion with a gentleman intimately acquainted with the UK's work to stop global warming. First he noted how the UK had decreased its carbon footprint significantly in the past few years. Then with a sad smile he added, "And every CO₂-producing factory we pushed out of the country immediately set up shop in India or China, taking its jobs and CO₂ with it." In other words, the UK did NOTHING to decrease the total world output of CO₂, but it was successful in sending a whole bunch of high-paying jobs to other countries.

Even if the alarmists are 100 percent correct in their analysis of global warming (and given our analysis above, this is laughable), the fact is, if humans really are causing global warming because of CO₂, there is no way to stop it. LIFE creates CO₂. There is no way for living things to NOT create CO₂. Even if we reverted to caveman days: no fossil-fuel burning of any kind (and even cavemen burned wood—which releases, believe it or not, CO₂), no cars, no airplanes, no power plants, etc., we could not stop releasing CO₂ into the atmosphere.

Which leads us with this: *the only way to stop global warming is to stop life*. You ready to do that?