

Can Obama End the “Age of Oil”?

by Dennis T. Avery

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Barack Obama says the U.S. must “end the age of oil in our time,” with “real results by the end of my first term in office.”

Duff Badgley, the Green candidate for governor in Washington State, goes only a bit further: he’d immediately convert the Boeing factory from building jetliners to making solar panels and wind turbines. He’d ration your carbon emissions, right down to your lawn mower. He’d outlaw single-occupancy vehicles, and spend carbon tax money to ensure there would be a bus you could ride—but rural dwellers would mostly have to walk.

Both Obama and Badgley would make perfect sense if the earth was suffering rapid global warming caused by human CO₂ emissions. Fortunately, that isn’t happening.

- The net global warming from 1940 to 1998 was a tiny 0.2 degrees C, during nearly 70 years of the first, and theoretically most powerful, surge of human-emitted CO₂.
- Since 1998, temperatures haven’t risen at all, and over the past 18 months, the thermometers and satellites both report a sharp global cooling. Earth’s temperatures are now about where they were in 1900.
- NASA admits the oceans “stopped warming 4–5 years ago,” and the earth can’t warm if the oceans don’t.
- The Jason satellite confirms the Northern Pacific has entered a cooling phase that is likely to dictate cooler global temperatures over the next 25 years.

How long will it take us to realize that the CO₂ explanation for our warming was wrong? I’d guess another three years.

The planet’s only runaway warming today is inside the global computer models. They’ve consistently predicted far more warming we’ve gotten. Now they’re predicting warming when we’re getting cooling.

What sort of policies does a 25-year cooling recommend for the U.S.? Should we quickly outlaw the coal-burning that provides half of our electricity, as Duff Badgley thinks we should? Should we outlaw nitrogen fertilizer and grow all our food organically, even if this means one-third of the world’s people starve? Should we drill safely along the Pacific Coast as we do the Gulf Coast and the North Sea, to bring down oil prices? Badgley thinks gas prices should be far higher than they are, so no one will be tempted to drive a personal auto and risk the planet’s future.

One of the biggest questions for our energy future is about the trillions of barrels of oil in the “tar sands”—in places like Canada, Venezuela, and eastern Utah. The Environmental Defense group says that the Athabasca tar sands oil production is “the most destructive project on earth.” That’s because mining the tar sands releases three times more CO₂ per gallon than burning conventional oil. But history says the CO₂ doesn’t matter much. Earth has had seven previous global warmings since the last Ice Age, and none of them involved burning fossil fuels.

The problem for voters in 2008 is that John McCain isn’t much more realistic than Obama. McCain now approves of drilling “anywhere but ANWR,” but still believes that more human-emitted CO₂ will mean dangerous global warming—even though CO₂ has never demonstrated any correlation with our temperatures.

Both major candidates seem to have hired the Wizard of Oz as their energy consultant.

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