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Climate Change Benefits From Good PR

In December world leaders will convene in Copenhagen, Denmark, to discuss the reputed danger we all face from climate change. Interestingly, many environmental activists are angry about the top billing always given to climate change.



These environmentalists argue that it's not that the Earth is threatened more from global warming than from other concerns, it's just that climate change benefits from much better public relations. Specifically, these environmental "chicken littles" warn that governments are anxious to address climate change and ignore the purported "big picture" because it serves the selfish interests of politicians whose first goal is keeping their posts. Mike Hulme, who led the influential UK Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, said, "The characteristics of climate change are quite convenient for politicians to use and to deploy both at a popular level but also at a political level." Basically, Hulme figures that by focusing on a problem whose solution is always hidden behind the diaphanous veil that separates the present from the future.

Another handy implement in the political tool kit is passing the buck. Politicians in Europe blame the United States, American leaders point the finger at China and India, and the governments in the developing world lay the problem at the feet of the West. Nothing is ever really accomplished and the shell game played by leaders worldwide keeps the public satisfied that "something is being done" while buying themselves time and diverting the attention away from other more pressing issues.

Those claiming to seek solutions to the alleged global environmental crisis have produced a roster of other disasters that attract little or no attention from the press or politicians. These concerns are ignored, so the thinking goes, because they are problems in need of specific, fast action — two things anathema to politicians and pundits alike. The list of impending environmental emergencies includes deforestation, unchecked population growth, the exploitation of fisheries, and the rapid extinction of thousands of species. All of these problems are favorites of those rabble rousers known as "watermelons," meaning they are green on the outside, but red on the inside. They will use any supposed threat to the Earth as a springboard for the expansion of government power and control over private commercial interests.

Ironically, environmentalists claim that the harm to the Earth's environmental health is far from an "inconvenient truth," as Al Gore famously claimed. In fact, the fight against global warming is a very convenient topic as the enormous profile enjoyed by climate change endows any politician who gives it even minimal lip service with the mantle of genuine concern without burdening him with any real responsibility.



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