



Written by [Gary Benoit](#) on April 22, 2019

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End of the World?

Claims ring saying that human-caused climate change will soon make the Earth unlivable, but other similar claims have been made in the recent past that have turned out to be false. The photo at right, from AP, shows a 1970 Earth Day event in Philadelphia.



“Millennials and people and you know Gen Z and all these folks that come after us are looking up, and we’re like, ‘The world is going to end in 12 years if we don’t address climate change, and your biggest issue is — your biggest issue is how are we gonna pay for it?’” This rhetorical — some would say hysterical — question was posed by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) during an interview at a January 21 event in New York City honoring Martin Luther King, Jr.

Taking her at her word, the 29-year-old lawmaker *really* believes that anthropogenic (man-made) global warming will destroy our planet by the time she reaches middle age, unless drastic measures are immediately undertaken to head off the impending disaster. That, of course, is why she is frantically imploring America to buy into her “Green New Deal” without fretting about the cost. AOC’s “deal” calls for a “10-year national mobilization” effort to (among other drastic actions) meet “100 percent of the power demand in the United States through clean, renewable, and zero-emission energy sources” — meaning *zero* percent from oil or natural gas. It also requires “upgrading all existing buildings in the United States” to maximize their energy efficiency.

No one could credibly accuse AOC of not thinking big. “Like this is the war,” she said in her January 21 interview. “This is our World War II.”

AOC believes that she and her fellow “millennials ... and you know Gen Z” understand the urgency of launching an all-out mobilization effort to combat climate change. *They* get it — but the older generations, not so much. After all, *they* will inherit the mess older Americans leave behind. “I’m 29 and I know that this is going to be the world that we’re going to have to deal with — that we’re going to have to live in,” the esteemed representative said at a New York Hall of Science event on February 22. “And with all due respect to my colleagues, but especially in like the Republican Party, it’s like you’re not going to have to live with this problem. You’re just, I’m sorry.”

There is no doubt that millions of millennials and Generation Z-ers honestly believe that an



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environmental doomsday is fast approaching. Yet how many of them realize that dire “end of the world” predictions have been around for a long time, and have been given a lot of credibility and widely circulated, long before the millennials, let alone post-millennials, were even born? Very few, to be sure. In fact, it is reasonable to ask if AOC knows this herself. AOC may feel “sorry” for pointing out that aging Republicans are “not going to have to live with” what she perceives to be catastrophic climate-change, but she should feel sorry for her lacking the understanding that both witnessing and studying the past can bring.

An Earth Day in the Life

This writer was in high school during the original Earth Day, which was held on April 22, 1970, more than 19 years prior to Ocasio-Cortez’ birth. During the buildup to that big event, I received from my biology teacher a copy of *The Environmental Handbook: Prepared for the First National Environmental Teach-in*, as “Earth Day” was then called. Published by Ballantine Books and edited by Garrett de Bell, the *Handbook* was comprised of a collection of essays warning against environmental devastation and served as an Earth Day manifesto. “1970’s — THE LAST CHANCE FOR A FUTURE THAT MAKES ECOLOGICAL SENSE,” the *Handbook* blasted on its back cover. Inside, a prologue claimed: “At most we have a decade to deal with some of the problems. In many cases we have already damaged the environment beyond repair.”

The book foretold the fall of man because of man’s devastating effect on the environment through deforestation, overgrazing, pesticide use, land overuse, air and water pollution, overpopulation, and more.

“At most ... a decade”? Those words were published in January of 1970. But a decade is two years less than we now have left according to AOC and her fellow alarmists as of the beginning of 2019, almost half a century later.

Nor was this warning unique for the time period. In 1969, Dr. Paul Ehrlich, a biology professor at prestigious Stanford University, wrote an article in the September issue of *Ramparts* entitled “ECO-CATASTROPHE!” In this article, an editor’s note explains, Ehrlich “predicts what our world will be like in ten years if the present course of environmental destruction is allowed to continue.” In his scary scenario, Ehrlich forecast “the end of the ocean.” “By September, 1979,” he wrote, “all important animal life in the sea was extinct. Large areas of coastline had to be evacuated, as windrows of dead fish created a monumental stench.”

“But,” Ehrlich added in what may now be recognized by all as a fanciful story, “stench was the least of man’s problems. Japan and China were faced with almost instant starvation from a total loss of seafood on which they were so dependent. Both blamed Russia for their situation and demanded immediate mass shipments of food. Russia had none to send.”

Ehrlich completed his 1969 essay by claiming: “Man is not only running out of food, he is also destroying the life support systems of the Spaceship Earth. The situation was recently summarized very succinctly: ‘It is the top of the ninth inning. Man, always a threat at the plate, has been hitting Nature hard. It is important to remember, however, that NATURE BATS LAST.’” (Emphasis in original.) Ehrlich’s scenario got plenty of game time during the buildup to Earth Day 1970, since it was one of the articles included in *The Environmental Handbook*.



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Doom Dished Up

Before and after the first Earth Day, as is the case today, doomsayers warned about the perils of climate change, though back then the fear was that man's pollution would usher in a new ice age as opposed to global warming. They also warned about other environmental threats, including overpopulation and the depletion of natural resources. Let's take a look at some of the alarmist predictions "experts" have made about these three concerns in particular at various points in time.

Overpopulation: We begin our brief survey with the issue of overpopulation, since Ehrlich and other eco-alarmists reason that the Earth is a "spaceship" with limited resources, and more people means more depletion of resources, as well as more environmental devastation. As Paul Ehrlich put it in his 1968 book *The Population Bomb*: "Too many cars, too many factories, too much detergent, too much pesticide, multiplying contrails, inadequate sewage treatment plants, too little water, too much carbon dioxide — all can be traced easily to *too many people*." (Emphasis in original.) Ehrlich's *Population Bomb* turned out to be a bestseller so far as sales were concerned, but a bust regarding his failed forecasting. In his 1968 book, he wrote: "The battle to feed all of humanity is over. In the 1970's the world will undergo famines — hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now. At this late date nothing can prevent a substantial increase in the world death rate, although many lives could be saved through dramatic programs to 'stretch' the carrying capacity of the earth by increasing food production. But these programs will only provide a stay of execution unless they are accompanied by determined and successful efforts at population control."

Ehrlich defined population control as "the conscious regulation of the numbers of human beings to meet the needs, not just of individual families, but of society as a whole." He called abortion "a highly effective weapon in the armory of population control."

Another biologist, Garrett Hardin of the University of California at Santa Barbara, warned in an article published in the December 13, 1968 issue of *Science* and later incorporated into *The Environmental Handbook*, "No technical solution can rescue us from the misery of overpopulation. Freedom to breed will bring ruin to all." *Handbook* editor de Bell recommended not merely halting population growth but reducing the Earth's "current three and a half billion people to something less than one billion people."

Climate change: *Newsweek* warned in its April 28, 1975 edition: "There are ominous signs that the earth's weather patterns have begun to change dramatically and that these changes may portend a drastic decline in food production.... The drop in food output could begin quite soon, perhaps only ten years from now." But the "ominous signs" *Newsweek* was reporting were supposedly early effects of global cooling, not global warming. In an article entitled "The Cooling World," *Newsweek* noted: "After three quarters of a century of extraordinarily mild conditions, the earth's climate seems to be cooling down," adding that meteorologists "are almost unanimous in the view that the trend will reduce agricultural productivity for the rest of the century. If the climate change is as profound as some of the pessimists fear, the resulting famines could be catastrophic."

The global-cooling scare of the 1970s has long since been replaced by the global-warming scare. On June 29, 1989, just a few months before AOC's birth on October 13 of that year, the Associated Press reported in a story entitled "U.N. Predicts Disaster if Global Warming Not Checked":



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A senior U.N. environmental official says entire nations could be wiped off the face of the Earth by rising sea levels if the global warming trend is not reversed by the year 2000.

Coastal flooding and crop failures would create an exodus of “eco-refugees,” threatening political chaos, said Noel Brown, director of the New York office of the U.N. Environment Program, or UNEP. He said governments have a 10-year window of opportunity to solve the greenhouse effect before it goes beyond human control.

Depletion of resources: On April 18, 1977, President Jimmy Carter gave a major energy address in which he claimed that “we are now running out of gas and oil” and that “we could use up all the proven reserves of oil in the entire world by the end of the next decade” — that is, the end of the 1980s.

At the time, many “experts” believed that the United States had passed “peak oil” production in 1970. But after a decades-long decline, U.S. oil production has rebounded spectacularly. In fact, as *The New American* recently reported, the United States is expected to “surpass Saudi Arabia later this year in exports of oil, natural gas liquids, and other petroleum products, such as gasoline” — a dramatic turn of events that few could have imagined in the 1970s when our country was dangerously dependent on foreign oil for our energy needs.

Oil was not the only resource that would supposedly be depleted long before today as a consequence of consumption combined with growing population. Meteorologist Anthony Watts, founder and editor of the popular climate website [WattsUpWithThat.com](#), assembled a large number of embarrassing forecasts in his 2013 article “Great Moments in Failed Predictions.” Regarding “exhaustion of resources,” Watts noted:

- In 1865, Stanley Jevons (one of the most recognized 19th century economists) predicted that England would run out of coal by 1900, and that England’s factories would grind to a standstill....
- In 1939 the US Department of the Interior said that American oil supplies would last only another 13 years.
- [A] 1944 federal government review predicted that by now the US would have exhausted its reserves of 21 of 41 commodities it examined. Among them were tin, nickel, zinc, lead and manganese.

Watts also pointed to the Club of Rome’s 1972 *Limits to Growth* report, which used computer simulation to project when finite resources would be depleted as a result of growing population and consumption. As summarized by Watts, the study “projected the world would run out of gold by 1981, mercury and silver by 1985, tin by 1987, zinc by 1990, petroleum by 1992, and copper, lead and natural gas by 1993. It also stated that the world had only 33-49 years of aluminum resources left, which means we should run out sometime between 2005-2021.”

* * *

Admittedly, the failure of past predictions of eco-catastrophe does not necessarily mean that current or future predictions will fail as badly. But knowledge of these failures should at least cause AOC and her fellow Chicken Littles to take a deep breath and ask themselves: “Should we really radically transform America via the ‘Green New Deal,’ regardless of the cost, based on the assumption that the world will end in 12 years if we don’t?” There is plenty of evidence showing that man-made climate change is a non-problem, and we encourage anyone concerned about climate change to take a hard look before proclaiming the end is near.



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