



“Climate Change” Believers: It’s Not the End of the World

“How bad will climate change be? Not very.”

While those words could have been penned by any number of climate-change skeptics, they were, in fact, composed by [Will Boisvert](#), a journalist who believes that “human greenhouse gas emissions” will lead to “cataclysmic” consequences but that humans will be able to mitigate those consequences through technology and development.



Harvard psychology professor and popular-science author [Steven Pinker](#), who believes that carbon dioxide emissions will have “unquestionably alarming” effects, thinks that technology will enable mankind to reduce those emissions without sacrificing economic growth.

That two believers in global warming would make such optimistic predictions is noteworthy in itself. Even more noteworthy is the fact that their contentions were highlighted in a [blog post](#) at *Scientific American*, one of the leading proponents of anthropogenic climate change.

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John Horgan, a science author and teacher, contends that, in contrast to environmentalists’ “fear that optimism will foster complacency and hence undermine activism,” he “find[s] the essays of Pinker and Boisvert inspiring” and plans to assign them to his students. Greens’ approach to the alleged problem of global warming, after all, has been to denigrate human progress and demand a halt to it via regulation. Pinker and Boisvert, on the other hand, claim that humans have already made great strides in improving the well-being of both themselves and the planet and, if allowed to continue, will be able not only to weather any upcoming climate change but even to thrive in the midst of it. Which vision is more likely to motivate people?

Unlike radical environmentalists, Pinker explicitly states that “industrialization has been good for humanity” for “it has fed billions, doubled lifespans, slashed extreme poverty, and, by replacing muscle with machinery, made it easier to end slavery, emancipate women, and educate children. It has allowed people to read at night, live where they want, stay warm in winter, see the world, and multiply human contact.”

No one would argue that industrialization, particularly in its early stages, has always been good for the environment; but, says Pinker, “the trade-off that pits human well-being against environmental damage can be renegotiated by technology.”

“Indeed,” he writes, “a naïve faith in stasis has repeatedly led to prophecies of environmental doomsdays that have never happened.” Similarly, while Pinker believes that climate change will have its negative effects, trying to stop it by banning fossil-fuel consumption is impossible and would be disastrous for humanity. Instead, he argues for advancing technology that will enable humans “to get the most energy with the least emission of greenhouse gases.”

Boisvert, meanwhile, is even more optimistic. He doesn’t really believe climate change can be stopped, but he doesn’t think it needs to be, either. “While the climate upheaval will be large,” he maintains, “the



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on March 14, 2018

consequences for human well-being will be small. Looked at in the broader context of economic development, climate change will barely slow our progress in the effort to raise living standards.”

“Throughout history,” he explains, “humans not only weathered climate crises but deliberately flung ourselves into them as we migrated away from our African homeland into deserts, mountains, floodplains and taiga.” The supposedly impending global warming, he argues, “will likewise amount to just another problem in economic and technological development, and a middling-scale one at that.... The means by which we will overcome specific problems posed by climate change look less like the pristine ‘sustainable development’ envisioned by greens and more like the ordinary development that has always sustained us.”

“The effects of climate change on human welfare will be modest in comparison to other economic and social challenges, and they will be more than compensated by ongoing development in water management, agriculture, cooling and infrastructure,” he avers.

Both Pinker and Boisvert place their hope in continued economic growth, which will enable the development of new technologies and give people the incentive to clean up their part of the globe. (Pinker quotes Indira Gandhi: “Poverty is the greatest polluter.”) Therefore, notes Boisvert, “The main threat to economies won’t be global warming, but the age-old problems of bad economic policy and bad governance.”

In other words, the solution to global warming (if it exists), as with myriad other challenges faced by mankind, is freedom.

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