



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on February 17, 2015

## Enforced Energy Poverty: Coal, Oil, Gas Must Stay in Ground Say Alarmists

“Canada’s tar sands need to stay in the ground, the oil beneath the Arctic has to remain under the sea, and most of the world’s coal must be left untouched in order to prevent global temperatures from rising more than 2°C.” So declared National Geographic in a January 15 article entitled, [“Climate Mission Impossible: Scientists Say Fossil Fuels Must Go Untapped.”](#)



*National Geographic*, like other choristers in the anthropogenic global warming (AGW) alarmist choir, is hyping the latest “climate research,” in this case, the new computer modeling program of a team at the University College of London’s (UCL) Institute for Sustainable Resources. The scientist-activists at UCL claim that their computer model provides overwhelming proof that the plentiful hydrocarbon fuels the developing countries are expecting will lift them out of poverty and that the developed countries are looking to for assistance for struggling economies must be put off limits.

Yep, lock up that coal, oil, and natural gas, and forget about ever getting clean, running water for your village ... or electricity ... or sewers ... or basic industry, infrastructure, hospitals, housing, schools, etc. For a couple billion of the world’s poorest citizens, the UCL proposals mean condemnation to perpetual poverty, ignorance, hunger, disease, and suffering. For billions more of our planet’s inhabitants who qualify as working poor or middle class, it means a downward economic spiral toward lower and lower living standards, less opportunity, and less job security. But, hey, your misery, suffering, and privation today just *may* stave off the theoretical catastrophe of theoretical AGW *fifty years from now* — or not.

Never mind that even many of the top alarmist individuals, institutions, and media organs now admit there has been [no measurable global warming for more than 18 years](#).

The *National Geographic* article notes that the UCL study, “unlike other bleak assessments of the world’s climate predicament, zeroes in on which regions should halt their production of coal, oil, and gas—and by how much.”

“These emissions,” says *National Geographic*, “must remain within a ‘carbon budget’ of about 1,100 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide by 2050 to meet the internationally accepted goal of limiting the rise in temperatures to 2°C (3.6°F) above preindustrial levels, according to the United Nations-led



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Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. To do that, countries must slash their use of fossil fuels.”

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“In addition to abandoning more than 80 percent of current global coal reserves, the researchers say, the world should forego extracting a third of its oil and half of its gas reserves before 2050,” *National Geographic* reported, with apparent approval.

But benign-sounding terms such as “carbon budget,” “carbon neutrality,” “zero carbon,” “carbon tax” and “carbon footprint” carry a deadly price tag when they become policy. “If the United Nations and fellow climate alarmists get their way on restricting carbon dioxide, the poor will soon be getting poorer — much, much poorer — especially in places such as Africa, Latin America, and large swaths of Asia,” *The New American’s* Alex Newman reported in a 2013 article entitled [UN Carbon Regime Would Devastate Humanity](#),

“It is hardly an exaggeration,” he continued, “to suggest that millions could die of starvation, cold, and more.”

### **Auspicious (and suspicious) timing**

The publication of the UCL study in the journal *Nature* and the trumpeting of its supposed authoritative evidence is transparently part of a well-coordinated campaign aimed at winning support for the UN’s upcoming [global warming summit in Paris](#).

As the *National Geographic* article notes: “It comes ahead of climate talks in Paris later this year that aim to broker a new global accord to cut greenhouse gas emissions.”

The magazine also puts in a plug for another favorite nostrum of the AGW alarmists: the [carbon tax](#). “Absent a dramatic global policy shift, such as a universal tax on carbon emissions, the study seems to suggest that the 2°C goal is far out of reach,” *National Geographic* reported.

In a press release from the University College of London, the UCL study’s lead author, Dr. Christophe McGlade, [proclaims](#): “We’ve now got tangible figures of the quantities and locations of fossil fuels that should remain unused in trying to keep within the 2°C temperature limit.”

“Policy makers must realize,” McGlade continues, “that their instincts to completely use the fossil fuels within their countries are wholly incompatible with their commitments to the 2°C goal. If they go ahead with developing their own resources, they must be asked which reserves elsewhere should remain unburnt in order for the carbon budget not to be exceeded.”

McGlade’s co-author, Professor Paul Ekins, revealed another target of the UN-led “decarbonization” campaign: investors. “Companies spent over \$670 billion (£430 billion) last year searching for and developing new fossil fuel resources. They will need to rethink such substantial budgets if policies are implemented to support the 2°C limit, especially as new discoveries cannot lead to increased aggregate production.”

“Investors in these companies should also question spending such budgets,” said Ekins. “The greater global attention to climate policy also means that fossil fuel companies are becoming increasingly risky for investors in terms of the delivery of long-term returns. I would expect prudent investors in energy to shift increasingly towards low-carbon energy sources.”

This not-so-veiled threat is sending a message to investors that the would-be world saviors are planning to tax and regulate the “immoral” fossil fuels into oblivion, or at least into a status where they will no



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longer be profitable.

### **Coordinated divestment campaign**

The UCL study was also propitiously timed to assist the February 13-14 “Global Divestment Day” campaign, which aims to pressure institutions and investment funds to divest from fossil-fuel companies. Led primarily by professor/activist Bill McKibben and his anti-carbon 350.org, the movement is largely centered on college campuses. The Rockefeller Family Fund, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Tides Foundation, and the (Barbra) Streisand Foundation are among the principal supporters of 350.org, according to the group’s [financials](#).

At Swarthmore College, Professor Lee Smithey penned a typical anti-carbon op-ed for the divestment campaign in the school’s *Daily Gazette*.

“We face a threat that is nearly unique in its scope and danger (setting aside for the moment the threat of nuclear holocaust),” Professor Smithey [wrote](#), quoting the McGlade-Ekins study. “Meeting the conditions established by climate science requires serious intervention for which our political leaders have not yet mustered the necessary political will,” Smithey averred. “A mass movement is necessary to reshape the political landscape in ways that will both allow and compel a radical course shift.”

### **Fossil Fuels: Boon, Not Bane, to Both Man and Nature**

Unfortunately, professors such as McKibben, Smithey, Ekins, and McGlade hold sway in most of our colleges and universities, and provide much of the commentary regarding energy and climate in much of the major media. As a result, saner voices are squeezed out. One of those saner voices is Dr. Indur M. Goklany, who has written and spoken trenchantly and fearlessly on these issues. Fossil fuels, he says, are to be celebrated and used, not condemned.

“For most of its existence, mankind’s well-being was dictated by disease, the elements and other natural factors, and the occasional conflict,” he [wrote](#) in *Humanity Unbound: How Fossil Fuels Saved Humanity from Nature and Nature from Humanity*, published by the Cato Institute. “Virtually everything it needed — food, fuel, clothing, medicine, transport, mechanical power — was the direct or indirect product of living nature.”

“Then,” Goklany writes, “mankind began to develop technologies to augment or displace living nature’s uncertain bounty. Gradually food supplies and nutrition improved and population, living standards, and human well-being advanced haltingly. The Industrial Revolution accelerated these trends. Mankind broke its Malthusian bonds. Growth became the norm. Population exploded, along with living standards and well-being.”

Dr. Goklany, who represented the United States on the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and helped produce the IPCC’s First Assessment Report, notes:

Technologies dependent on cheap fossil fuels enabled these improving trends. Nothing can be made, transported, or used without energy, and fossil fuels provide 80 percent of mankind’s energy and 60 percent of its food and clothing. Thus, absent fossil fuels, global cropland would have to increase by 150 percent to meet current food demand, but conversion of habitat to cropland is already the greatest threat to biodiversity. By lowering humanity’s reliance on living nature, fossil fuels not only saved humanity from nature’s whims, but nature from humanity’s demands.

Dr. Goklany is one of the many scientists, economists, and policy experts who argue from sound data and verifiable history (not from discredited “black box” computer models that are inaccessible to the



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public and other researchers) that fossil fuels should be unleashed, not locked away.

In a recent column entitled [“Why Fossil Fuels Are Morally Good,”](#) John Stossel praises the work of Alex Epstein, whom he has also featured on his television program.

“Alex Epstein’s book *The Moral Case for Fossil Fuels* documents the rapidly shrinking number of human beings killed by storms, floods and other climate events thanks largely to ever-growing industry, fueled mainly by oil, natural gas and coal,” says Stossel.

Stossel continues:

In 2013, “Climate-related deaths were at a record low — in supposedly the worst climate in history — under 30,000,” says Epstein. In 1931, bad weather killed 3 million people. You can argue that we get some things wrong as a civilization, but thanks to our use of fossil fuels, we get something very right.

Epstein points out that humanity owes its current ability to survive harsh winters, arid deserts and other naturally dangerous environments to the same fuels activists now condemn: “We have the luxury of being able to absorb a certain amount of climate-related damage so we can live in all of these cool places.”

What Epstein, Stossel, Goklany, and others are pointing out is the fact that real societal “resiliency” only comes about when energy production has raised a society’s technology to a level that enables people to cope with the cruel vagaries of nature. Greenies like to talk about “renewables” providing a resilient society, but the amount of energy needed to lift the developing countries out of desperate poverty will not be provided by expensive and dilute power from wind turbines, solar panels, or chicken manure. And mandating that the life-saving, life-transforming power of fossil fuels remain buried in the ground is a prescription for early death, privation, and suffering for billions of our fellow human beings. And that is *truly* immoral.

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