

The Oil Drum: Canada

DISCUSSIONS ABOUT ENERGY AND OUR FUTURE

7-7-7: The Launch of Global Warming Inc.

Posted by [Stoneleigh](#) on July 9, 2007 - 3:30am in [The Oil Drum: Canada](#)

Topic: [Environment/Sustainability](#)

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This is a guest post by [HeIsSoFly](#).

July 7, 2007 (7-7-7) was, according to various numerologists, destined to be a lucky day. Countless occasions, from weddings to caesarians, were specifically planned to take place this day. While those who chose to "undergo their procedures" that day may well see themselves finding favor and blessing from it on an individual basis, collectively they will certainly not. Even more certain, their children will not, and neither will the world's poor, or their children. A thing named Live Earth happened, that's why.



Al brings home some extra bacon?

photo: J. Rosenberg

On the collective, global, level, 7-7-7 will be recorded as one of the darkest days in history, all the more so because the majority of us will, in a bitter feat of reverse irony, continue to sing its praise long after its dark deeds become clear.

The Live Earth message, for an estimated TV audience of 2 billion viewers, was that global warming is still a not-too-serious issue. Why else would 150, mostly rich and fading, rock acts, fly all over the globe to "entertain" themselves and countless equally ignorant middle-agers with regurgitated tunes interspersed with fuzzy messages about light bulbs and hybrid cars? It's not the kind of thing you do when disaster is imminent. In the face of utter mayhem, you don't pay \$100 for a ticket, sing along, drink beer and put your hands in the air for hours. Well, yes, maybe

that last one. Still, what lingers after Live Earth is the idea that we can "solve this one" while drinking and having a grand old time.

The worst of it all is not that Al Gore himself makes money off of climate change, lives in a big home, and travels non-stop, while spewing record emissions levels to spread the divine word. He's just one person, and may well have the best intentions. No, the worst is that, as of 7-7-7, 2 billion people have been led to believe that his is the appropriate approach to the problems. And that is most certainly not the case.

Whether Gore is too dumb, naive, or conceited to grasp the reality of it all makes no difference anymore. What does is what's been in the works for a while, and had its crowning moment at Live Earth. Al Gore has been pushed, by business and media interests, into the forefront of the "fight" against climate change, specifically elected because he doesn't actually fight it. What Gore represents is the idea that there is ample time left, and moreover that there's money to be made from rising CO2 levels. How do we know? For starters, he says so in his book and film, *An Inconvenient Truth*.

During Live Earth, one simple short sentence spoken during the North American TV broadcast, words of which Gore was acutely aware, and deserves to be damned and doomed for, was all it took to hammer it home: *"This NBC presentation of Live Earth was brought to you by Chevy"*.



Singer KT Tunstall performs onstage during Live Earth New York at Giants Stadium on July 7, 2007 in East Rutherford, New Jersey. - AFP

The climate change issue has been hijacked by corporate America (and EU), and turned into a bite-size feel-good issue. That's why we've all of a sudden seen so much media attention this year for climate change, and that's why Live Earth was both such a perversion and success. The big corporations have found ways to turn this into a profit vehicle. That, however, takes diluting and distorting the issue until it no longer has any sharp edges, and it also takes selling it like one sells a detergent or cereal. The secrets of salesmanship are in appealing to what makes people feel better, and these days the magic words are "green" and "sustainable". The dilution of the global warming issue is most striking right there: A car that pollutes 2 percent less than another one, is now advertised as "a green car", just like a cereal with 2% less sugar is labeled as "healthy".

Carmakers, obviously a large part of the climate change problem, are now presented by talking head Gore as the providers of -part of- the solution. It's a brilliant marketing move, but it doesn't

work that way. What it does do is this: it dilutes the message, and its urgency and seriousness, until there's nothing left that requires either our immediate attention, or any true sacrifices. What is left in proposed measures is vague terminology such as "lowering emissions levels by 60% or 90% by 2050". The number doesn't matter, since we don't react to 2050, it's too far away to worry about today. It's a message that allows us to keep on going and trucking, steady as she goes.

The dilution and distortion in informing people of what's really happening to our planet is also evident in what can be considered the core of the matter: climate science. The (heavily) UN-sponsored IPCC publishes reports once every 5 or 6 years, not nearly often enough when both climatic conditions and scientific findings change as fast as they do. Why not a report every year? Because that time-lag is precisely why it was set up the way it was.

The IPCC was structured to provide outdated or even false information. If 1500 scientists, speaking dozens of different languages, need to reach consensus on every letter in a report, and then politicians, from China to the White House, have a last word as well, what could the outcome possibly be? This is how tough issues are played down: take control and distort. The entire process is so cumbersome that 1 year old peer-reviewed papers are left out, too late to review, not to appear till 5-6 years after they were published, even if they're ground-breaking and earth-shattering.

Back to Live Earth. The key buzz word in all of it is raising "awareness". But awareness of what, exactly? That there is a problem in 2050, or that there is one today? Though many people brush it off, that is a crucial difference. If the problem is immediate, 2050 is pretty much a meaningless date. Raising awareness of a problem to take place in 43 years is useless, and even damaging, since it diverts attention from the real issue: today's problems. Besides, how big is the problem? Do we know? Is there some slight discomfort on the horizon, or will 500 million people die? Which of the two are the Live Earth crowds "aware" of the day after the party? Is just any awareness better than none at all? Even if it concerns false facts? The magician says: "Watch the hand". Is that reality enough when the lives of your children depend on it?



Aboriginals perform a traditional dance on stage while the band Blue King Brown perform during the first Live Earth concert in Sydney.

Photo: AP

Luckily for those among us who prefer real information, there are brave hearts such as James Hansen, NASA's chief climate scientist, under siege from everyone ranging from his own NASA boss to George W. So far Hansen has refused to be silenced, and we should cherish him for as long as he does. He's not the only outspoken voice out there, but at his level certainly a rare one.

Where does Hansen differ from the "official" IPCC models? Try this, from a George Monbiot article in the July 3 Guardian, talking about modeling melting ice sheets:

"When temperatures increased to between two and three degrees above today's level 3.5 million years ago, sea levels rose not by 59cm (IPCC,ed.) but by 25 meters (Hansen,ed.).[1]"

Is that clear enough? If it's not, here's Hansen (and 5 colleagues) talking directly about the IPCC:

"The IPCC analyses and projections do not well account for the nonlinear physics of wet ice sheet disintegration, ice streams and eroding ice shelves, nor are they consistent with the palaeoclimate evidence we have presented for the absence of discernible lag between ice sheet forcing and sea-level rise.[2]"

(Translation: ice sheets melt much faster than the IPCC recognizes in its reports.) From the same source comes this:

"In a densely referenced scientific paper published in the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society, [...] "they say, planet Earth today is in "imminent peril"."

Is that the impression you got, when watching Live Earth, watching Madonna and Al Gore, that the planet is in "imminent peril"?

Supposing that James Hansen is right, and the IPCC is not, we have no time left for former rock stars and vice-presidents throwing parties, much as we might like to. What we witnessed on 7-7-7 was the launch of Global Warming Inc., or, if you will, Climate Change Ltd, its European version. If they are the model we choose to follow, if the best we can think of to do is to buy a different car, we are lost and doomed. The current economic system is the root of the problem, not the root of the solution, no matter what Gore says. We can't buy ourselves out of this.

In a nutshell: Hansen's message is that we have 10 years left, at most, to prevent disaster. On 7-7-7, Live Earth robbed us of those 10 years, simply by downplaying the severity of the problem, and turning the issue into a party.

The predicament we're in is far worse, and much more advanced, than the incorporated bite-size rock-star version of the problem wants to make us believe. We still have options, we have choices, but we're fast on our way to choosing the wrong ones.

As for Al Gore, he by now is eerily reminiscent of the Faust(us) presented by Marlowe and Goethe. Faust was a good and very smart man, who more than anything else in life wanted the best for all mankind. He wanted it so much that he couldn't wait, and in order to speed up the process, sold his soul to the devil, hoping that in the end it would all work out for the best.

It didn't.

[1] [Monbiot: Stop doing the CBI's bidding, and we could be fossil fuel free in 20 years](#)

[2] [The Earth today stands in imminent peril](#)



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