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- Agriculture and Food
- Atmospheric Issues
- Biodiversity
- Clean Air
- Commentary
- Eco-Education/Religion
- Energy Production
- Environmental Justice
- Government Regulations
- Land Use
- News
- Population
- Toxics
- Transportation
- Waste Management

CFACT Today

Just the Facts (Real Audio)

■ 12/9/2007

- ▶ New hope for sustainable development
- ▶ Pressing toward a sustainable future
- ▶ Video: Craig Rucker on Global Warming
- ▶ Video: CFACT's Adopt-A-Village Project
- ▶ Does racism cause breast cancer?
- ▶ Malaria atonement and forgiveness

■ One Minute Radio Commentary

- ▶ 11/17/2007: Global climate models still not dependable
- ▶ 11/14/2007: PERC questions forest sequestration plans
- ▶ 11/13/2007: Oil on the water?
- ▶ 11/12/2007: SUV impact on oil consumption overstated
- ▶ 11/9/2007: Britain's not so jolly good taxes

- home
- contact
- links

[more information](#) »»

[View radio Archive](#) »»

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- 📄 About CFACT
- 👤 Our Leadership
- 📧 Email Updates

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Forty years of irresponsible social responsibility

Crusades against DDT and fossil fuels hurt people and planet

Wednesday, April 04, 2007
 by [Paul Driessen](#)

"When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean," said Humpty Dumpty – "neither more nor less." Lewis Carroll's "Looking Glass" logic too often seems to be a guiding principle for environmental and corporate social responsibility (CSR) activists.

They claim to be committed to people and planet, not just profits – and to honesty, transparency, accountability and human health. One would expect that such basic ethical standards would apply equally to for-profit companies and nonprofit advocacy corporations. However, the activists who defined CSR standards routinely exempt themselves and use the terms primarily to pressure companies, raise money and advance political agendas.

Forty years ago, Environmental Defense (ED) was launched to secure a ban on DDT and, in the words of co-founder Charles Wurster, "achieve a level of authority" that environmentalists never had before. Its high-pressure campaign persuaded EPA Administrator William Ruckelshaus to ignore the findings of his own scientific panel and ban DDT in the US in 1972.

The panel had concluded that DDT is not harmful to people, birds

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December, 2007: 1 article
November, 2007: 1 article
July, 2007: 1 article
May, 2007: 1 article
April, 2007: 1 article
February, 2007: 1 article
December, 2006: 1 article
October, 2006: 2 articles
August, 2006: 1 article
June, 2006: 1 article
March, 2006: 1 article
December, 2005: 1 article
November, 2005: 1 article
September, 2005: 1 article
August, 2005: 1 article
July, 2005: 1 article
May, 2005: 1 article
April, 2005: 1 article
February, 2005: 1 article
January, 2005: 1 article
December, 2004: 1 article
November, 2004: 1 article
October, 2004: 1 article
September, 2004: 1 article
August, 2004: 1 article
July, 2004: 1 article
May, 2004: 1 article
April, 2004: 1 article
March, 2004: 1 article
February, 2004: 1 article

or the environment. That's especially true when small quantities are sprayed on walls to repel mosquitoes and prevent malaria. However, ED and allied groups continued their misleading eco-catastrophe campaign, until the chemical (and other insecticides) were banished even from most global healthcare programs.

Thankfully, DDT had already helped eradicate malaria in the United States and Europe. But the disease still sickens 500 million people a year and kills 2 million, mostly African women and children. Since 1972, tens of millions have died who might well have lived if their countries had been able to keep DDT in their disease control arsenals.

A year ago – after an extensive public education effort by the Congress of Racial Equality, Africa Fighting Malaria, Kill Malarial Mosquitoes NOW Coalition and other health and human rights groups– the USAID and World Health Organization finally began supporting DDT use once again. But ED, Pesticide Action Network and other agitators still promote ridiculous anti-DDT themes on their websites, claiming it is "associated with" low birth weights in babies and shortened lactation in nursing mothers.

Even if these assertions were true, notes Uganda's Fiona Kobusingye, such risks "are nothing compared to the constant danger of losing more babies and mothers to malaria." She has had malaria at least 20 times and lost her son, two sisters and five nephews to the disease. "How can US environmentalists tell us we should be more worried about insecticides than about malaria?" she asks. "Their attitudes are immoral eco-imperialism – a crime against humanity."

None of these anti-insecticide pressure groups has ever apologized for their disingenuous campaigns or atoned in any way for the misery and death they helped perpetuate, much less been held accountable. Instead, they blame today's horrendous malaria rates on a new "crisis" – global warming.

Malaria was once common even in Ohio, Virginia, California and Siberia – and they claim it is spreading because global temperatures have risen a few tenths of a degree. Even worse, they are using fears of climate chaos to justify their long antipathy to energy and economic development.

Two billion people rarely or never have electricity – for lights, refrigeration and cooking, water treatment plants, hospitals, schools, offices, shops and factories. Women and children are plagued with lung infections caused by wood and dung fires, and by acute intestinal diseases caused by tainted water and spoiled food. Up to ten million die from these causes every year. But instead of helping destitute families get abundant, reliable, affordable electricity, Rainforest Action Network, Environmental Defense and other pressure groups block efforts to build coal and gas generating plants, because they would release greenhouse gases. They block hydroelectric and nuclear projects on equally questionable grounds – and then praise Citigroup, JP Morgan and Bank of America for being "socially responsible," by refusing to finance any major power projects.

Up to 95% of people in Sub-Saharan countries have no electricity, Al Gore personally uses more electricity in a week than 25 million

Ugandans do in a year – and agitators are telling Africans the biggest threat they face is hypothetical climate change.

Environmental Defense is poised to rake in millions from emissions trading credits, through its new alliance with Morgan Stanley, and an axis of anti-developers is telling the Third World: You can't have electricity. You can't have a modern, industrialized society. Your future is expensive, intermittent, insufficient "renewable" energy: a solar panel on your hut, to power a light bulb, radio, hot plate and tiny refrigerator – and eventually a few wind turbines to electrify a school, clinic and minimal light manufacturing operations.

Such a future would perpetuate poverty, deprivation, misery and disease in Third World countries – ensuring death tolls that would likely dwarf even the activists' malaria records.

In the United States, coal generates half of all electricity. Fossil fuels account for 80% of all the energy that fuels US technology, progress and living standards. Canada, Australia and Europe also rely heavily on fossil fuels.

Proposals to reduce global carbon dioxide emissions by 80% over the next few decades would put US companies at a competitive disadvantage, cost millions of jobs, and add \$2000-4000 to the average American family's annual bill for electricity, gasoline, food and other basics, say government and other studies. Other developed countries would suffer similar fates.

Moreover, all this pain would bring no gain in the climate change arena. Ice core and temperature data covering thousands of years clearly show that planetary temperatures rise first and, 400 to 800 years later, atmospheric carbon dioxide levels increase. Temperatures fall and, centuries later, CO2 levels decline. Even Al Gore's own temperature-and-CO2 graph demonstrates this.

Warm oceans release trapped CO2, while colder seas absorb the gas, in cycles controlled by changes in solar energy and cosmic ray output, shifts in the Earth's orbit and other natural forces. (See ("[The Great Global Warming Swindle](#)")

Talk about an inconvenient truth!

It demolishes the central premise of climate alarmism – that CO2 is responsible for climate change. It makes it clear that the Kyoto Protocol and assorted legislative proposals are nothing more than hundred-billion-dollar-a-year symbolic gestures, whose primary effect would be to give bureaucrats and activists an ever greater "level of authority" over energy, economic and personal decisions.

To Humpty Dumpty, the central question when defining words was "who is to be master." It's become the central question when discussing climate cataclysm theories.

Instead of CSR, we need *global* social responsibility: for all corporations, including multinational activist corporations; for all people, especially the Third World's poor and families on low and fixed incomes; and for all concerns, health and economic, as well

as environmental. A healthy dose of sound science and robust debate would be equally helpful.

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