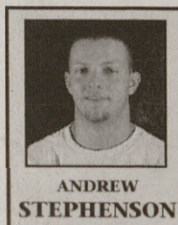


Global warming, my foot ... Environmental concerns exaggerated, unfounded

Global warming is the latest example of environmental paranoia that has stricken America. Despite the fact that many of the actual research findings are inconclusive, politicians have used the "issue" to draw attention to themselves, so that the public will feel that its elected leaders are actually doing something. Al Gore's main duty as vice president seems to be warning the American public of the "dangers" of global warming.



ANDREW STEPHENSON

An important distinction to make before discussing global warming is the difference between it and the "greenhouse effect."

The greenhouse effect is a phenomenon in which the carbon dioxide and water vapor found naturally in the Earth's atmosphere keep the surface warmer than it would otherwise be.

The greenhouse effect is a very real thing, essential to the survival of life on Earth, while global warming is a theory that states that humans are irreparably altering the temperature of the planet through irresponsible actions.

One problem with the theory of global warming is the lack of records to prove or disprove the conclusion. Records such as global temperatures, ozone levels in the atmosphere and levels of other atmospheric gasses are sketchy at best. Precise monitoring of carbon dioxide levels was not possible until 1958, for example.

Temperatures on the Earth have fluctuated throughout history. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says there have been "ice ages and interglacial warm periods," which had temperatures similar to today's.

According to the EPA's research,

the world today may simply be going through a warm period, which has nothing to do with human actions.

There are also some interesting aspects of the EPA's research. One of the major sources for the information on this portion of the Website seems to be a paper, published in 1997, titled "The Natural Greenhouse Effect," by Jan Schloerer of the University of Ulm in Germany. The paper outlines basic climate change topics. While the article appears to be informative, in one of the early paragraphs, the author states, "Please note that this is not my field. I have a fair idea of the broad picture, but I don't understand all the technical niceties."

The question is, why does the EPA use as a factual source an article by someone who has only a "fair idea of the broad picture" when discussing what is supposed to be a major environmental concern?

Even if this can be accepted as a viable data source, after Schloerer explained complicated topics such as radiation absorption/reflection and surface vs. atmospheric temperature, she went on to say, "It is currently hopeless to draw conclusions from the observed temperature record about the present or future amount of greenhouse-gas-induced warming," as caused by humans.

One tactic is to blame extreme weather events, such as droughts, violent storms and even disease outbreaks on climate change, despite the fact that "they are well within the limits of natural variability."

On a Website for Public Interest Research Groups (PIRG), conse-

quences such as health risks from infectious disease and severe heat waves, terrible environmental destruction and catastrophic weather are all blamed on global warming. PIRG even compares recent world events to its predictions. However,

that history is littered with those who made absolute predictions for the future.

An article from The New American, "Hot and Cold Running Alarmism" by Gary Benoit can put this whole issue into perspective.

Benoit brings to light some interesting facts.

The April 28, 1975, issue of Newsweek warned, "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 — output could begin quite soon, perhaps only 10 years from now."

The evidence in support of these predictions has now begun to accumulate so massively that meteorologist are hard-pressed to keep up with it."

The terrible change in weather predicted by these scientists was not the current trend of global warming, but global cooling. This article went on to inform readers, "The central fact is that, after three quarters of a century of extraordinarily mild conditions, the earth's climate seems to be cooling down."

Other publications joined in spreading this environmental paranoia: Even Fortune and Time warned of the coming disasters from the Earth's cooling.

When these magazines published their findings, they cited the

work of many eminent scientists of the time.

One proponent of these theories on global cooling was Dr. Stephen Schneider, a scientist who spent 20 years at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Colorado.

In 1971, he warned in Science magazine that an increase in the amount of dust in the atmosphere could decrease the surface temperature, and "such a temperature decrease could be sufficient to trigger an ice age."

He also stated that the warming effect of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (greenhouse effect) would eventually level off, so the net result of the dust and the greenhouse gasses would be the cooling of the Earth.

Schneider has changed his mind, it would seem, and these days he supports global warming. This prestigious scientist has written a book, Global Warming. But in 1976, he endorsed a book by Lowell Ponte, The Cooling, saying it pointed out "that the climactic threat could be as awesome as any we might face."

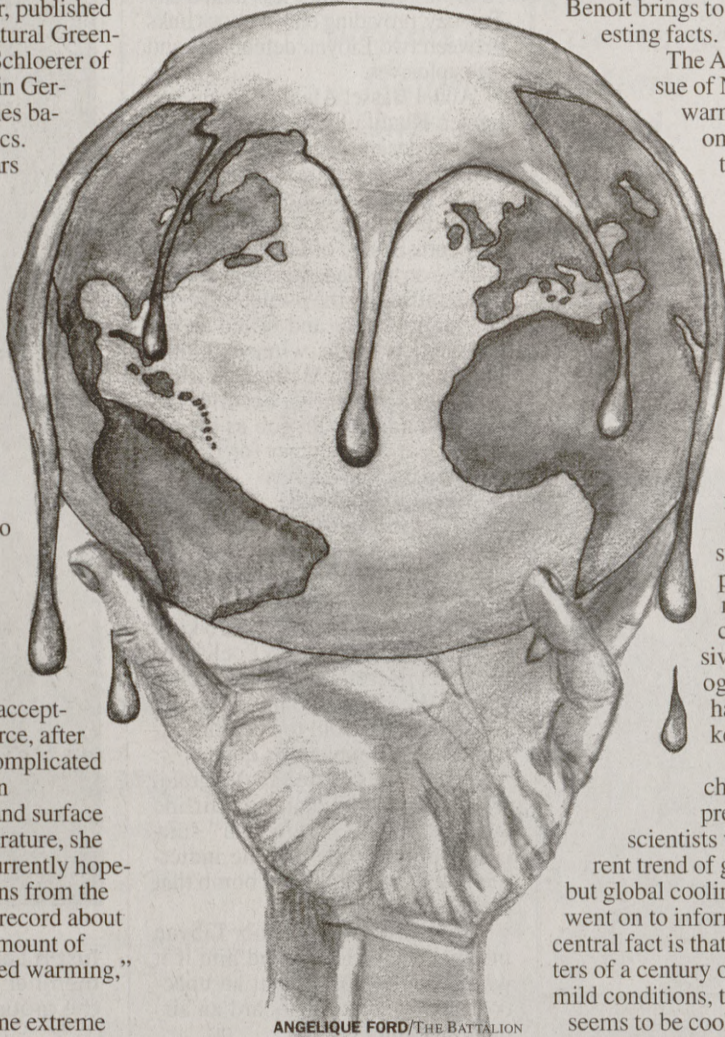
Even today, the subject of global cooling still pops up, often when bad weather strikes. Time and Newsweek ran articles in the 1990s that brought up the possibility of impending ice ages.

Schneider once stated that scientists often "have to offer up scary scenarios, make simplified, dramatic statements, and make little mention of any doubts we might have" in order to generate public interest in scientific issues.

Before Americans decide this country needs massive changes to fight global warming, the public needs to be told all the facts surrounding the issue — not simply the horror scenarios.

There are not enough facts on global warming and its effects.

Andrew Stephenson is a sophomore environmental design major.



ANGELIQUE FORD/THE BATTALION

the tiny print at the top of the web page says: "Although factors other than global warming may have contributed to the events below, they are consistent with scientists' predictions." PIRG should remember

EDITORIAL

THE BATTALION

Editorials appearing in *The Battalion* reflect the majority view of the editorial board members. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other *Battalion* staff members, the Texas A&M student body, regents, administration, faculty or staff.

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A Good Investment Board supports Student Center Fee referendum

The *Battalion* editorial board fully supports the passage of the Student Center Fee Referendum during today's general election.

The Memorial Student Center (MSC) Council is presenting the referendum to the student body, asking voters to approve a two-part package benefiting the University Center complex.

The referendum proposes:

- a \$10 increase in the existing \$30 Student Center Fee and
- an increase in the cap on the fee from \$40 to \$100.

The MSC Council has assured students that the cap will not be reached for approximately 20 years and that each time a fee increase is needed, it will consult the Student Senate.

In the end, additional fee increases will have to be approved by the student body.

In the immediate future, the \$10 fee will be allotted to MSC operational costs and minor refurbishment — such as repairing broken tiles, recovering torn furniture and replacing damaged carpet.

Down the road, the University Center could see major renovations that will benefit the student body in general and the variety of student organizations that meet there on a regular basis.

This is where the cap increase comes in — it will save the University from having to consult the Texas Legislature for each individual fee raise, cutting down on needless inefficiency.

Students are encouraged to vote "yes" for the following four reasons:

- As the "living room" of the University, the University Center complex is used primarily by students.

Whether it be groups of friends lounging in the Flagroom or individuals catching a quick nap before class on a nearby couch, stu-

dents treat the place much like their own home.

Therefore, students should shoulder the bulk of its maintenance and beautification costs.

• Aesthetically, serious renovation is needed. The 1970s-style interior decorations are outdated and, at times, an eyesore.

A comparison can be drawn with the renovation of Sterling C. Evans Library — its dusty, neon-themed interior has been replaced with an office-like, professional atmosphere that is conducive to study.

Imagine the same outcome at the University Center.

In addition, ideas such as a cyber cafe being constructed in the basement indicate that student-oriented renovations will be made — justifying the fee and cap increase.

• The MSC must be thought of as the "front porch" of the University because dignitaries and former students walk its halls on a regular basis.

From their point of view, the University Center might present a poor image of our school because of its outdated condition.

• We must not forget that the MSC serves as a gateway to our University's honorable past.

Whether it be the row of Medals of Honor, the wood carvings commemorating the different aspects of Aggie culture, or the upcoming Bonfire collapse memorial that the MSC will house, the University Center does not deserve to fall into further decay.

Granted, any fee increase is a bitter pill to swallow for any college student.

However, this is a case where the ends will justify the means.

We, *The Battalion* editorial board, urge the Texas A&M student body to participate in today's election and approve the Student Center Fee Referendum.

Bull Board

Bad Bull — Congratulations to the Texas A&M Athletic Department. It has found another way to commercialize and cheapen Aggie football games at Kyle Field.

Apparently, the Athletic Department is so strapped for cash that it has to seek sponsorship for the "Make Some Noise" animations on the stadium's Sony Jumbo Tron.

Between the "Academy Sports & Outdoors Instant Replays" and the "Exxon Tigermart Great Moments," Aggies are now inspired by the United Parcel Service to "Make Some Noise."

It is kind of hard to get pumped about football, even Aggie football, when goofy computer-animated delivery trucks and airplanes are racing across the stadium scoreboard.

Of course, the Kyle Field goal-post pads sport ads for Verizon — why should the rest of the stadium be any different?

At the current pace, it is just a matter of time before Reveille starts wearing an advertisement for the official dog food of Aggie football.

Bad Bull

— Can someone please stop the Taco Bell marketing department?

After subjecting the population to ads featuring Little Richard at the piano and a talking Chihuahua extolling its need for Taco Bell's products, the company has unleashed another horribly annoying advertisement upon the innocent masses.

The ad features a woman annoyingly singing "I want a Fritos Burrito" at least five times in the span of 15 seconds.

With the maddening intonation of her voice and its excessive repetition, the ad does not only annoy its listeners while they hear it — it stays in their heads all day long.

While it is great that she wants a Fritos Burrito, the rest of us just want her to shut up.

Good Bull — Instead of ignoring public sentiment, the state of Mississippi is encouraging its citizens — especially its children — to participate in the debate over the state flag.

Students will be able to submit new flag designs and write essays explaining why the current design — which features a Confederate battle flag on the upper-left-hand corner — should be kept.

In addition, an appointed commission will conduct town hall meetings throughout the state so citizens can give their opinions on the matter.

Unlike South Carolina, which resisted attempts to remove the Confederate flag from its state Capitol before finally giving in, Mississippi is willing to consider that its citizens might not want a visible reminder of the Old South on their flag.

While the South Carolina Legislature appointed itself the defender of the state's Confederate heritage, Mississippi is doing what governments should do — listen to the public and weigh the options before making public policy.

Whether it decides to keep the current design or replace it, the flag flying above Mississippi in years to come will unify the state, not divide it.

Bad Bull

— The University of Wisconsin recently admitted that it doctored a photo used on the cover of a recruiting brochure to make its student body look more diverse.

Using a picture of white Wisconsin Badger football fans, the university publications staff digitally added a black student in an attempt to illustrate its diversity.

The incident shows that the University of Wisconsin is not as diverse as it hopes to be. If the University could not find a single photo with minority students to use in its brochure, perhaps efforts should be directed toward creating an actual multicultural presence on campus — not just for photos.

Real diversity takes years of effort to achieve, something even Texas A&M knows. Diversity cannot be created using a computer and photo-editing software.

It takes understanding and acceptance.

— Nicholas Roznovsky

PICKY-PICKY

Harry Potter books harmless, overanalyzed



MELISSA BEDSOLE

Last summer, it seemed strange when millions of adults — with and without children — were completely infatuated

with the latest children's book series — Harry Potter books. Strange as it was, there did not seem to be any problem with adults reading them — until now.

Recently, school districts across the nation have been banning the Harry Potter books based on allegations that they "glorify witchcraft and the occult and are incompatible with Christianity."

Children's books are being read by adults with an older mind-set than the books were intended for and that are being overanalyzed.

It is doubtful the books' author J.K. Rowling intended to provide children with an inappropriate introduction to witchcraft. The stories focus on the adventures of Harry Potter, an orphan who attends the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

They are merely stories about magic, no different from Alice in Wonderland or The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe.

The idea that these books are promoting a sacrilegious message of witchcraft assumes a great overanalysis by the children who read them. Children are interested in the adventures of Harry Potter and imagine what it would be like to have his powers. That is all.

Children do not think about whether it is right to believe in witchcraft. They think it feels right to believe in the magic that ultimately will rescue Harry Potter from his undesirable life with his mortal relatives.

Children's books are being read by adults with an older mind-set than the books were intended for and are being over-analyzed.

Banning any book denies the public of education. In the past, books like *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* have been banned for various reasons. Each book has something to offer its readers — the opportunity to interpret the story and take away from it what they please. Concern about foul language or messages of violence is understandable.

However, these stories are also filled with messages that have provided great inspiration for many lives. Sometimes it is important to look beyond the surface of a book to realize how much can be experienced through fictional depictions of extraordinary people.

These books have sparked the interest of many children. This summer, many children counted down the days until the next book in the Harry Potter collection would be released. These children spent their summer days reading instead of glaring at a television. Aside from likely being better quality than afternoon cartoons, reading — no matter what the subject — stimulates young readers to use their imaginations and think beyond the words on the pages.

What explanation can be given to a child as to why he or she can no longer read about his or her new friend Harry Potter? No matter what it is, the result will not be good. Either the children will disobey and continue reading the "witchcraft" material or simply not read at all. The next major series that comes along may not spark them to read 700 pages the way Harry Potter did.

Lighten up a little. This is the magic of Peter Pan, and adults are trying to make it the Blair Witch Project. If adults are going to continue analyzing these stories with such depth, maybe the parents' reading needs to be monitored and restricted.

Cayla Carr is a junior speech communication major.