

## Panic, little ones, it's the Carbon Monster

Brendan O'Neill | November 02, 2009

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**IF you don't reduce your carbon footprint, then puppies will drown and bunny rabbits will die. And a terrifying, jagged-toothed monster with crazy hooked hands will descend from the clouds to eat you up.**

Believe it or not, that is the message being delivered by the British government to children, in a pound stg. 6 million (\$10.7m) advertising campaign designed to scare the next generation witless about the alleged horrors of global warming.

Taking environmentalist propaganda to a new low, the TV ad shows a father reading a nightmarish bedtime story to his perturbed-looking young daughter.

He tells her of a land where the "weather is very, very strange". There are "awful heatwaves" and "terrible storms and floods". A cartoon bunny is shown crying as it starves on the dried, cracked earth, while elsewhere a puppy drowns in floodwaters.

Above it all, a sooty, blackened monster - CO<sub>2</sub> made hideous flesh - surveys the horrors with a grotesque grin on its face.

And just in case the little girl, and the millions of children that the TV ad is aimed at, thinks this is merely a twisted fairytale, her father makes clear that it is reality.

It is the "horrible consequence", he says, of human beings using too much CO<sub>2</sub>, much of which comes from "everyday things like keeping houses warm and driving cars".

In short? Children who live in warm houses and who get lifts to school or football practice should feel guilty, because their evil antics are causing dogs to die and cute rabbits to go hungry.

Not surprisingly, the ad has caused a storm. Nearly 400 people have complained to Britain's Advertising Standards Authority. Some are disturbed by the ad's scientific illiteracy (how one gets from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's relatively sober reports about changing weather patterns to a cartoon dog drowning in a flooded city is anybody's guess). Others have slammed the government for knowingly and deliberately - and with taxpayers' money - scaring kids.

Yet the ad is only an extreme version of what has become mainstream environmentalist policy in recent years: terrifying children.

The environmentalist ethos, whether it is spouted by official bodies or radical, dreadlock-sporting campaigners, presents itself as caring and considerate, yet it is shot through with the politics of fear.

In place of grown-up, adult debate about the future, environmentalists continually use scaremongering - conjuring up horrid, squalid future scenarios based more on their fantastic imaginations than scientific fact - to try to force people to lower their horizons and change their behaviour.

And this green politics of fear is starting to have a detrimental effect on children.

As popular culture bombards kids with messages about a fiery, bunny-hostile future, and as many schools in Britain and elsewhere rebrand themselves as "eco schools", devoted to reducing children's carbon footprints as much as expanding their minds, so children are becoming paralysed by fear.

In 2007, a survey of 1150 seven to 11-year-olds in Britain found that more than half had lost sleep as a result of worrying about climate change.

"It's making me and my friends go mad," said a 12-year-old girl.

The children were most likely to be kept awake thinking about "the possible submergence of entire countries" and the "welfare of animals", indicating that hysterical, fact-lite, The Day After Tomorrow-style scare stories about worldwide flooding or the wiping out of polar bears have hit children where it hurts.

Worryingly, the survey also found that one in seven children blamed their own parents for the coming climate doom. This suggests that environmentalists' emphasis on the destructiveness of people's everyday behaviour - their driving habits, their food choices, their holidays - has successfully convinced kids that all adults, even mummy and daddy, are dirty and dangerous.

Indeed, environmentalist activists now cynically exploit children's fears to try to get them to snitch on their parents. A book called *How To Turn Your Parents Green*, by James Russell, encourages children to "nag, pester, bug, torment and punish the people who are merrily wrecking our world", that is, grown-ups, or "Groans".

It tells kids to become "Guardians of a Glorious Green Future" and to get their parents to sign up to a "Glorious Green Charter". Traditionally, it has only been the most authoritarian regimes on Earth - think Mao's China or Stalin's Soviet Union - that encouraged children to spy on and squeal on their parents. Now environmentalists do it, too, though with a Little Green Book rather than a little red one.

When I was a child in the 1980s, the spectre of nuclear war was used to keep children in a permanent state of panic; today climate change plays that role. We should be wary indeed of any campaign that makes children feel scared and guilty and even drives them mad, and which turns them against their own parents.

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