

Climate Moral Panic

Greta Thunberg, AOC, and countless others tell us it's time to panic about climate change! We actually think the opposite. It's time to calm down. What we're concerned about is the distinct possibility that catastrophic man-caused climate change is now what sociologists call a "moral panic." In other words, the panic surrounding climate change may be far more dangerous than the issue itself.

It's fascinating how human beings can whip themselves into a fervor over a problem. They don't stop to consider the problem is likely to be manageable. Or, the problem may not even be a problem.

Remember the Salem Witch trials? That was a moral panic. How about Y2K? Nearly every tech expert agreed we needed to spend hundreds of billions of dollars to avoid catastrophe. We did... but fell way short fixing everything. Then, nothing happened. How about Stranger Danger? People became convinced child abduction by strangers was a widespread problem largely because they saw missing kids on milk cartons. Child abduction by strangers is horrific... but it's very rare.

Here's what you need to know about moral panics. There are five defining elements: Concern, Consensus, Hostility, Disproportionality, and Volatility.

It begins when people become Concerned about a problem they believe threatens community interests. A dangerous changing climate meets that requirement.

A Consensus arises that there is an urgent crisis. This "consensus" is typically not real, just a manufactured perception. The false claim that "97 percent" of scientists agree that burning fossil fuels is creating a climate catastrophe fits nicely as a moral panic phenomenon.

Anyone who disagrees with this so-called "consensus" is met with Hostility. Sociologists call them folk devils, or in this case "science deniers".

The solution to the problem is Disproportionally out of scale with what is actually known. Spending inconceivable amounts of money to change every aspect of how we live? Yeah, that's disproportional.

And, finally, moral panics are typically Volatile. They flare up, but then go away pretty quickly. This is where climate change doesn't fit the model, but it seems clear why.

In any given week there is always a storm, drought, flood, record high or even record low temperature. There's always something an alarmist can point to and say, "see, climate change!" It doesn't matter that weather extremes are a constant in nature or that there is little proof man's activities are causing some extreme, unnatural variation. The panic has become familiar, and predictably, valuable.

While there may be a legitimate cause for concern initially, the panic gets amplified by people and organizations capitalizing on the fear people feel. The news media hypes the panic because exploiting fear and creating conflict is the foundation of their business model. People who sell expertise or products designed to fix the problem encourage the hysteria. Remember during Y2K? Lots of tech companies and software developers made a fortune.

Panic is highly profitable. Of course, those who seek power use the scare to seize as much as they can as fast as they can.

Finally, and this is the most important thing about moral panics, those pushing the hysteria always have the same goal in mind. That goal is to create a compelling incentive for changes in public policy that favor those stoking the fear.

So, what do you think? Climate alarmists say there is no time for debate or private sector innovation. We must spend unfathomable amounts of money and blindly trust the politicians and bureaucrats who spend it. We must sacrifice many freedom, capitalism, even our way of life. We don't know about you, but that's something... we're concerned about.

For the Clear Energy Alliance, I'm Mark Mathis. Power On.

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