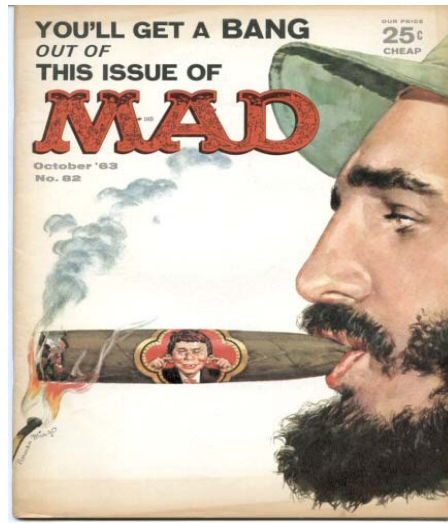


Tobacco and global warming



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Scientists were right about tobacco (that tobacco causes cancer) but they were wrong about a lot of things. They were wrong about DDT. First they gave the inventor the Nobel Prize and then they banned the product. Both of these actions cannot be right.

In retrospect, the movement to ban DDT was somewhat overzealous and was quite likely driven more by the media hype associated with the book "Silent Spring" than by logical reasoning. It turns out that most of the environmental and health damage ascribed to DDT was not caused because the product itself was bad but because it was used helter-skelter without any precautions whatsoever. Its ban allowed killer diseases like malaria and dengue, mostly eradicated by the use of DDT, to make a deadly comeback.

They were also wrong about global cooling in the 1960s when we were told to live in fear of the coming of another mini ice age like the one that visited us in the Middle Ages. We were told then that, given the global cooling scenario, a nuclear war between the Cold War rivals could spew enough dirt and ash into the stratosphere to cause a nuclear winter that mankind would not survive. In those days we lived in fear of cold and not of warmth. Every time there was a winter that was colder than usual and every time there was a catastrophic snowstorm, there were pundits and talking heads on TV telling us that the icy end was near.

This Armageddon mentality of scientists was likely responsible for the ozone hole scare of the 1990s when they were sure that the sky was falling because R12 refrigerants were spewing out too much CFC chemicals into the air. They said that these bad chemicals were wafting up to the stratosphere and there they were removing ozone from the ozone layer and that is what would explain the observed data on ozone depletion and the increasing size of the ozone hole over Antarctica.

CFC refrigerants were hurriedly banned worldwide. The change to non-CFC refrigerants caused hundreds of billions of dollars of economic losses to the world before we found that both the amount of ozone in the ozone layer and the size of the ozone hole over Antarctica were cyclical phenomena of nature and not man made. It has to do with shifting of wind currents in the stratosphere that distribute ozone from the equator (where they are formed) to the poles.

Once upon a time, scientists used to tell us that alcohol is bad, full stop, but now they say that alcohol in moderation is better than no alcohol at all. Coffee is bad for the heart, no, wait, maybe it's good for the heart, but Viagra is bad for the heart. No, wait, Viagra is good for the heart. And so on and so forth. It is this group of Keystone Cops that are now telling us that carbon dioxide from fossil fuels is somehow different from that produced by biological metabolism, and is therefore the culprit that is responsible for global warming even though metabolism in nature accounts for over 95% of carbon dioxide production.

Just because they were right about tobacco does not give them the kind of credibility that we would like them to have so that we can feel nice and cozy and comfortable knowing that SCIENTISTS are taking care of us. There is nobody taking care of us. We have to think for ourselves.

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