

From Tucker Carlson – *Ship of Fools*, Chapter 7

They Don't Pick Up Trash Anymore

If you're over forty and grew up in the United States, you probably remember the crying-Indian ad. It was one of the longest-running public service advertisements of all time, ubiquitous during the 1970s. It seemed to air in every commercial break during *Gilligan's Island* as my brother and I watched after school. It got me every time.

The spot opens with a weathered American Indian man in buckskins paddling a birch-bark canoe down the middle of a stream lined with trees. It's a peaceful tableau, and the man looks serene in his regal Indian way.

Suddenly ominous music comes up in the background. A piece of trash floats past the bow of the canoe. It's jarringly out of place, like a cockroach on a cake. It's repulsive.

Then the camera pulls back. Behind the Indian is an enormous steel power plant, pouring smoke into the sky. The man pulls his canoe onto the shore, which is covered with beer bottles and food wrappers, and begins to walk. Soon he's standing by the side of a busy highway. Cars roar by.

The narration begins: "Some people have a deep, abiding respect for the natural beauty that was once this country.... And some people don't."

With that, a man in a speeding white Impala throws a paper sack of half-eaten fast food from his car window. It lands at the Indian's feet and explodes, covering his moccasins with soggy French fries. The camera tightens on the Indian's face. A single tear rolls slowly down his cheek.

"People start pollution," says the narrator. "People can stop it."

It was emotionally exhausting to watch. Not only did you feel terrible for the Indian, who was hit with garbage, but you truly hated the guy in the Impala and everyone like him. Americans inherited the prettiest natural landscape in the world, and they spoiled it. Because some people are stupid and greedy, the air is brown and the streams are clogged with trash. Morons toss their refuse out of car windows. Wildlife dies. Indians cry. It was awful.

But it was also fixable. There was nothing abstract about the solution to this disaster: Stop being selfish and messy. Pick up your garbage. Clean up your country. It's a beautiful place. Don't wreck it.

This was environmentalism a first grader could understand. It was a conservation ethic designed to improve the lives of living things, people and animals. The message was dire but not hopeless. It made you want to pick up trash.

The ad made the crying Indian a national celebrity. His name was Iron Eyes Cody. He died in 1999 at the age of ninety-four in Los Angeles. He probably thought he had made a difference.

In 2018, the city of Los Angeles counted 55,188 homeless people on its streets, 75 percent of them living in the open air. Across the city the homeless were passed out on sidewalks, sleeping on benches, camped out in parks. They were relieving themselves everywhere.

On skid row, there were a total of nine toilets for the almost two thousand people believed to be sleeping in the area. Many people just dropped their pants in the street. Andy Bales, head of the Union Rescue Mission in the neighborhood, told the *Guardian* that the area was so dirty, it posed a life-

threatening health hazard. “I lost my leg because I got *E. coli* and staph and strep from the sidewalk because of feces being present,” he said.

A 2012 survey of the neighborhood by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health found “piles of feces and/or urine on the sidewalks and grass areas of the majority of the streets surveyed.” Storm drains were clogged with human waste. There were discarded hypodermic needles on almost every block. A UN monitor visiting Los Angeles found filth “on a scale I hadn’t anticipated.”

But it was still cleaner than San Francisco. A survey by the local NBC station in the spring of 2018 found garbage strewn over all 153 blocks of downtown San Francisco. On more than forty blocks, there were discarded hypodermic needles. Close to one hundred blocks had piles of human feces. “The contamination,” said an infectious disease specialist from UC Berkeley, is “much greater than communities in Brazil or Kenya or India.”

But for scale, nothing beats the filth of New York City. In 2018, there were an estimated 76,000 homeless people living in New York. The *Daily News* described one abandoned rail bed in the South Bronx, located directly across the street from a school, as blanketed with used hypodermic needles: “There are needles scattered on the ground like twigs and needles clumped under trees like piles of leaves. Needles are staked into a mud wall. Needles are floating in the pools of standing water below. Some of the syringes’ tips are still stained with blood.”

It’s not just New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Dozens of U.S. cities tolerate record levels of homelessness, public drug use, and filth. America has become much dirtier in recent years. Whatever happened to the crying Indian?

Strangely, environmentalism as an idea is more popular than ever. Go to San Francisco and see for yourself. Walk through Sea Cliff or Presidio Heights or any affluent neighborhood in the city and ask the first five people you meet if they consider themselves environmentalists. If only four say yes, chances are the fifth doesn’t speak English well enough to understand the question.

Just about everyone in elite America is an environmentalist. It’s all but mandatory. What’s changed is the definition of environmentalism. The new environmentalism has everything to do with making elites more powerful and self-satisfied. It has very little to do with improving the natural world. Modern environmentalists step over piles of garbage and human excrement on their way to save the planet.

The early conservationists would have stopped to clean up the street. The founders of the modern environmental movement spent a great deal of time outdoors. Teddy Roosevelt, who as president put hundreds of millions of acres of land under federal protection, spent years of his life in canoes and on horseback, hunting and fishing around the world. Aldo Leopold, who helped to found the Wilderness Society in the 1930s, once worked for the Forest Service in the then-territory of New Mexico, where his job included shooting bears and mountain lions. John Muir, who founded the Sierra Club, lived alone for years in Yosemite in a cabin he built himself, working as a shepherd. These were people who knew the difference between a conifer and a deciduous tree, who could name three bird species and identify a brook trout and never confuse deer with caribou. They became naturalists because they loved nature.

The early environmental movement reflected their outlook. Environmental groups preserved wilderness, created the national parks, fought pollution, and successfully lobbied for clean air and water legislation. The issues were straightforward. The goals were measurable.

Over time, environmentalists improved America. Waterways are far cleaner than they were in the 1970s. Ecosystems and fisheries have been restored, land has been preserved, and birds of prey are flourishing rather than at risk of extinction.

I watched it firsthand as a kid on the Androscoggin River in Maine, where I spent summers canoeing and fishing. For generations, paper mills dumped toxic effluent in the river. The water turned unnatural

colors and smelled bad. The trout died. The water was not just undrinkable, but considered dangerous to touch. Locals claimed it peeled the paint off houses near the riverbank.

You didn't have to work at Greenpeace to find this offensive. The paper companies didn't own the river. They had no right to destroy it. But until Congress passed the Clean Water Act, they did it anyway. Now the river is clean enough to bathe in, and the trout have returned. It's a huge improvement. The environmental movement deserves credit for that.

The problem is, there are only so many rivers you can restore before you run out of high-profile victories. At that point, where does your movement go? And more pressing for the thousands of professional activists with children and mortgages, how do you raise money?

A few months after Obama's election, a friend of mine and I rented an office on DuPont Circle in Washington. We found the place on Craigslist. It was being sublet by an environmental group that was moving to new space in a more expensive part of town. One of the employees showed us around before we moved in. Two of the sinks in the office, he conceded, didn't really work. What's wrong with them? I asked.

With remarkably little embarrassment, he told me. "We repainted the inside of the office and then poured the paint down the sinks and it clogged them," he said.

You poured paint down a sink? Aren't you an environmental group? "Yeah," he said, "we shouldn't have done that." He didn't seem very concerned about it.

Within days, he was gone, off to enjoy his new office, a shiny glass and steel space with working sinks. The group was suddenly flush with cash. They'd just won a multiyear grant to work on climate change.

With every passing year, the goals of the environmental movement become steadily more abstract. Environmentalists have shifted their focus from the tangible world, with its feces-covered sidewalks septic enough to infect pedestrians with *E. coli*, to concerns invisible to the naked eye, or even to science. Environmentalists now spend a lot of their energy trying to solve purely theoretical problems. These battles can never be won, which is of course their main appeal. Meanwhile, the trash is piling up.

Ocean Beach is a narrow strip of national parkland along the western edge of San Francisco. In 2015, the National Park Service removed all trash cans from along the beach's seawall. Nobody announced the change, or solicited the opinions of beach goers. One day, the trash cans just disappeared. A spokesman later explained that officials were "hoping to save staff time." Emptying trash cans took hours.

Very soon, the beach became filthy. Large piles of garbage collected along the seawall, some of it left by the city's vast homeless population. The trash stank. Neighbors and visitors complained, but to no effect. Park Service employees did not consider polluted beaches a meaningful environmental concern. They did not replace the trash cans. They did continue to update their website, including an extensive video series on "climate change in national parks."

In 1962, biologist Rachel Carson published a book that redefined what the environmental movement could achieve. Carson had studied the effects of government pesticide use, in particular the use of the chemical DDT, and concluded it was harmful to human health and devastating to bird populations. Her book was called *Silent Spring*, a reference to the absence of birdsong she predicted if the pesticide spraying continued. The book was serialized in the *New Yorker* and soon became a bestseller. It was an unexpected achievement for a science-heavy treatment of agricultural policy.

Carson died of cancer not long after *Silent Spring* was published, but the book's effects rippled outward for decades. Carson's work inspired the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970. Two years later, Congress banned the non-emergency use of DDT. As Carson had promised, eagle and falcon populations began to recover.

Rachel Carson became an icon of the American environmental movement. Jimmy Carter awarded her a posthumous Presidential Medal of Freedom. Her image was featured on postage stamps. Two of her homes were designated historic monuments. An elementary school in Maryland was named after her. To this day, the Audubon Society sponsors the Rachel Carson Award, in honor of her work to save bird populations.

Given all this, it's remarkable to see birds of prey once again dying in large numbers. Chemical companies aren't killing them. Environmentalists are. In 2011, at the urging of environmental groups, the Obama U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service granted an exemption to industrial wind companies under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. For most Americans, killing an eagle, even accidentally, remains a felony punishable by up to two years in prison. Corporate wind farms can kill eagles with impunity.

And they do. Wind turbines destroy hundreds of bald eagles every year. That's in addition to more than a quarter million other birds of various species, including hawks, owls, and songbirds crushed by turbine blades. Some experts believe the actual number of dead birds is much higher, possibly in the millions.

Two years after granting its initial exemption, the Obama administration gave a power company in California legal protection in the event its wind farms killed California condors, a critically endangered species with a wild population of fewer than three hundred. For the first time in many decades, killing condors was legal, as long as they were killed by wind turbines.

In addition to thinning bird populations, wind farms had a devastating effect on bats, a species already decimated in North America by a mysterious disease called white-nose syndrome. Bats regularly mistake wind turbines for trees. Somewhere between 600,000 and 800,000 of them are caught in wind rotors each year, though some experts suggest that number is "probably conservative."

Deep water wind turbines, meanwhile, kill untold numbers of aquatic animals. In 2017, experts concluded that noise pollution from offshore wind farms may cause the beaching of humpback whales. Fishermen in New York claim that wind turbines in Long Island Sound are destroying fisheries by altering the migratory patterns of certain fish.

These are real costs, measurable in the carcasses of dead animals, many of them endangered. To environmental groups, they mean nothing compared to the entirely theoretical benefit of wind power.

On August 16, 2016, an illegal immigrant from Mexico with a long criminal record named Angel Gilberto Garcia-Avalos drove out of bounds in California's Sequoia National Park and crashed his car. The accident ignited a patch of dead grass, which in turn sparked a forest fire that grew to 29,322 acres in size and incinerated a large percentage of the park.

Garcia-Avalos, a native of Michoacán who had just been released from a California jail after being charged with a felony, did nothing to summon help. Forest Service officials finally arrived and asked him if he knew how the fire had started. Garcia-Avalos lied and denied responsibility. He said his car had been stolen. As he said this, a methamphetamine pipe fell out of his pocket and onto the ground.

In the end, the fire burned for six weeks and cost taxpayers \$61 million before it was contained. Six homes were leveled. Cities across two counties had to be evacuated. The blaze destroyed forty-five square miles of Sequoia National Park.

The fire was an environmental disaster. Environmental groups ignored it. The Sierra Club, which was founded to preserve "the forests and other natural features" of the very region the fire burned, didn't issue a single statement about it. The Environmental Defense Fund issued half a dozen press releases during the same period, none of which said a word about the fire. Greenpeace was silent, too.

As the blaze raged, billionaire environmentalist Tom Steyer, a California resident, sent dozens of tweets about everything from fruit pickers to new climate measures. He never mentioned the fire. The Sierra Nevadas burned, but America's environmental establishment pretended nothing had happened.

It wasn't the first time. Throughout the West, illegal immigrants have left a wake of environmental destruction. According to a report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, illegal immigrants caused 40 percent of the forest fires on the Arizona–Mexico border between 2006 and 2010. In many cases, the fires were deliberately set to mislead Border Patrol agents. In other cases, the fires started because of campfires or gunfire. The fires caused millions in economic damages. They also destroyed habitat for endangered species, increased the growth of nonnative plant species, and caused erosion.

A 2011 Interior Department study found that the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge in Arizona, home to the last two hundred endangered Sonoran pronghorn left in the United States, had been marred by more than eight thousand miles of vehicle tracks left by drug and human smugglers. The report noted that constant illegal traffic was having a damaging effect on the plants, animals, and soil quality of the refuge.

In California, gangs of Mexican nationals have opened industrial marijuana farming operations on protected land throughout the state. An account in the *Los Angeles Times* describes “filthy work camps with makeshift kitchens, latrines and trash dumps in areas designated as wilderness. Biologists report fish die-offs and water contamination from fertilizers, pesticides and poisons used by growers.”

The response from the environmental establishment to these threats to the environment? Demands for even more illegal immigration. In the fall of 2017, the Trump administration announced it was bowing to lawsuits from state attorneys general and ending the DACA program that granted amnesty to illegal immigrants.

The Environmental Defense Fund immediately issued a florid statement decrying the decision. “Environmental Defense Fund has no expertise in immigration policy,” the group conceded with heavy understatement. “But we know that progress toward cleaner air and water is put at risk when the public debate is consumed by fear.... We will not ignore attacks on those who live around us. Their progress is ours.”

Earthjustice, an organization of environmentalist attorneys, agreed. The group called the repeal of DACA a “senseless and spiteful attack on the fundamental principles of freedom, opportunity, and success.”

The Sierra Club took a similar position. “The immigrant rights and environmental movements’ concerns are intertwined,” the group declared. “Those communities most threatened by Trump’s presidency—immigrants, communities of color, and women—are also most vulnerable to toxic pollution and climate change.”

None of these groups made a serious attempt to tie the repeal of DACA to actual environmental concerns. The Sierra Club didn’t try to explain how secure borders cause “toxic pollution” or climate change. It wasn’t necessary. Their donors understood the point: good people support the environment, oppose Trump, and protect illegal immigrants. They don’t need to hear rational arguments about cause and effect.

The Sierra Club, which was formed to maintain hiking trails in Yosemite, now takes a vigorous position in favor of transgenderism and taxpayer-funded abortion. Its website includes a section on “Equity, Inclusion, and Justice,” with articles like “Silence Is Consent: Solidarity with All People Fighting Oppression.” In the summer of 2017, the Sierra Club signaled its opposition to the “unsustainable whiteness” of environmentalism.

Environmental racism is a longtime theme at the Sierra Club. The term first became popular at the tail end of the traditional environmental movement, when it was clear that the last of America’s dirty rivers was finally getting clean. The concept was the brainchild of Robert Bullard, an energetic non-scientist with a degree in sociology. Bullard has written more than a dozen books on the topic, all with memorable titles, including *The Wrong Complexion for Protection*, *Residential Apartheid*, and *Dumping in Dixie*. Naturally, he is a favorite of television bookers.

In an interview with *Earth First! Journal*, Bullard explained that the fight against environmental racism isn't directly related to the environment. Instead, it is "more of a concept of trying to address power imbalances, lack of political enfranchisement, and to redirect resources so that we can create some healthy, livable and sustainable types of models."

Redirecting resources has always been a major part of it. In March 1990, dozens of self-described civil rights leaders wrote an open letter to the heads of America's ten biggest environmental groups accusing them of "racist and genocidal practices." The letter claimed that although environmentalists "often claim to represent our interests, in observing your activities it has become clear to us that your organizations play an equal role in the disruption of our communities." The proposed remedy: cash payments.

It's not clear who got paid how much, but by 2013 the Sierra Club and Robert Bullard were on excellent terms. The group gave Bullard one of its highest awards.

That same year, Obama EPA administrator Gina McCarthy told the Congressional Black Caucus that combating environmental racism was her agency's "core issue." McCarthy later explained that EPA regulations purportedly aimed at climate were really about "justice" for "communities of color." The agency directed millions in grants to fight environmental racism. To explain its rationale, the EPA's website quoted Robert Bullard.

What does any of this have to do with clean air and water? Nothing, obviously. But that doesn't mean modern environmentalism doesn't serve a purpose or meet a need. As a theology, environmentalism speaks deeply to America's elites. Its moral absolutes affirm them, adding meaning to their otherwise secular world. The collapse of mainline Protestantism left a void in the hearts of America's ruling class. The environmental movement fills it.

Seen this way, the movement's new priorities make sense. Environmentalism as a religion is more compelling than environmentalism as a means to save birds or clean up some river in Maine. After a while, details about the natural world begin to seem irrelevant. Compared to questions of virtue and salvation, they're not that interesting.

Leonardo DiCaprio understands this. DiCaprio is both a famous actor and perhaps the world's best-known climate activist. He doesn't speak on the subject of carbon emissions so much as he preaches. "Humans have put our entire existence into jeopardy," DiCaprio thunders. Climate change is "the most urgent threat facing our entire species." Those who question climate policy, he declares, should be banned from public office. "The scientific consensus is in, and the argument is now over."

Few preachers live up to the standards they set from the pulpit, and DiCaprio is no exception. In the summer of 2016, DiCaprio was scheduled to receive an award from the environmental group Riverkeeper. He was in Cannes attending the film festival at the time, so he chartered a private jet to fly from France to New York and back.

That's an eight-thousand-mile round-trip, which in addition to being physically exhausting, amounts to a gargantuan carbon footprint, bigger than the average African might emit in a lifetime. For DiCaprio, it was just another Cannes Film Festival. The year before, he was photographed off the coast of France meandering alone on the deck of a 450-foot, \$200 million yacht, which he'd rented as an accommodation for the week. Once again, a lot of carbon.

Billionaire investor Richard Branson tells audiences not to "be the generation responsible for irreversibly damaging the environment" with carbon. To spread that message, he travels on his own Dassault Falcon 50EX. He also uses the plane when he flies to his private island in the Virgin Islands.

Like most billionaires, Bill Gates knows climate change is "a terrible problem, and it absolutely needs to be solved," but still flies on his Bombardier BD-700 Global Express. Same with fellow billionaire Elon Musk, who warns that climate change could lead to "more displacement and destruction than all the wars in history combined." Musk has a Gulfstream G650 ER.

Climate change crusader Hillary Clinton once demanded her own private plane because she didn't want to share one with Michelle Obama. Months after promising to put "a lot of coal miners and coal companies out of business" for their sins against the climate, Clinton flew twenty miles on a chartered jet from Martha's Vineyard to Nantucket for a fund-raiser with Cher.

On the last day of his presidency, Barack Obama took Air Force One from Washington, D.C., to a donor's house in California, an eleven-thousand-square-foot air-conditioned mansion in the middle of the hottest desert in North America. After a few days, Obama flew on Richard Branson's plane to a yacht that ferried him to Branson's island. A few weeks later, Obama hopped yet another private plane to French Polynesia, where he planned to write his memoirs on yet another private island, this one once owned by Marlon Brando.

New York mayor Bill de Blasio presides over an unusually dirty city, but the health of the environment is nevertheless vitally important to him. In 2017, he reminded radio listeners that "everyone in their own life has to change their own habits to start protecting the Earth." To show he meant it, de Blasio announced a number of new measures aimed at other people's behavior, including a ban on plastic bags in the city and a crackdown on idling vehicles.

When a caller pointed out that de Blasio takes a five-SUV motorcade from his Manhattan mansion to his gym in Brooklyn, he wistfully acknowledged that was true. "I wish my life was like everyone else's," he said, "but it's not, for obvious reasons." He added that it would be "cheap symbolism" for him to give up his many SUVs. And in any case, they're "fuel-efficient hybrids."

Al Gore is the closest thing America has to a climate saint, so it may seem odd that he often flies privately, and surprising that his house in Nashville uses twenty-one times the electricity of the average American home. Thankfully, the *New Republic* cleared that up. The magazine ran a piece titled "Al Gore's Carbon Footprint Doesn't Matter." The article attacked literal-minded conservatives for pointing to what was not actually hypocrisy at all.

Gore's office followed up with a response of its own: "Climate deniers, funded by the fossil fuel industry, continue to wage misleading personal attacks on Al Gore as a way of trying to cast doubt on established climate science and distract attention from the most serious global threat we face.

"Vice President Gore leads a carbon neutral life," the statement continued, "by purchasing green energy, reducing carbon impacts, and offsetting any emissions that cannot be avoided, all within the constraints of an economy that still relies too heavily on dirty fossil fuels."

In other words, it's a fallen world. But Al Gore is a good person, much better than most other people. And in any case, he's spent a lot on indulgences.

Skeptics continued to raise the same persistent question, and not just about Al Gore, but about countless elite environmental activists like Gore: If you really believed that the future of the planet was imperiled by carbon emissions, why would you fly private?

But this is missing the point entirely. Gore and DiCaprio and Hillary Clinton and the rest feel fine about flying on private planes not because they're hypocrites, but because they're entirely sincere. They care deeply about carbon emissions, much more deeply than you do. Caring deeply is the only measure that matters. That's why their consciences remain untroubled, no matter how many times they violate the standards they demand of others.

Once you understand this, the Paris climate accord makes sense. An international agreement designed to curb carbon emissions, negotiated next to Europe's busiest private airport. Nobody in attendance flew commercial. Nobody seemed to feel bad about it, either.

If you can take a private jet to a global warming summit without guilt, you're probably not going to be troubled by a few inaccurate predictions, even if those predictions formed the basis of flawed public policy that affected the lives of billions. Climate change activists give themselves permission to make mistakes.

It turns out that predicting changes to climate over time is more difficult than anyone suspected. Indeed it's never been done. A 2013 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change found that over a twenty-year period, global temperatures hadn't risen nearly to the degree that models had predicted. In some cases, the predictions were so far off that the actual, observed temperatures fell outside their margin of error.

Keep in mind that these were sober predictions made by respected scientists using the best available data. They were still wrong. Lesser authorities have been even further off base.

In 1989, officials at the United Nations predicted that entire countries would be annihilated if warming trends weren't reversed by 2000. In 2007, the UN's former head of the IPCC predicted that if "there's no action before 2012, that's too late."

In 2008, ABC's *Good Morning America* estimated that, because of climate change, New York City would be underwater, "hundreds of miles" of the country would be on fire, and a billion people would be "malnourished" by 2015. By June 2015, ABC said with confidence that a carton of milk would cost \$12.99 and a gallon of gas would be \$9. "That's seven years from now," said anchor Chris Cuomo. "Could it really be that bad?"

As it turned out, no. But that didn't prevent the head of NASA's Goddard Research Center from predicting in 2009 that Barack Obama had "four years to save Earth."

Also in 2009, the head of Canada's Green Party said the world had just "hours" to "avert a slow-motion tsunami that could destroy civilization as we know it." Prince Charles of Great Britain estimated the West had just ninety-six months to save the planet. British prime minister Gordon Brown gave the rest of us "just 50 days to save the world from global warming."

By 2014, the foreign minister of France had extended that timetable. We have, he said, five hundred days to avert "climate chaos."

Clearly there's still a lot we don't know about climate change. To be fair, there's still a lot we don't know about a lot of things. After more than one hundred years of research, scientists haven't figured out what much of the human brain does. Researchers can't agree on the evolutionary purpose of sleep. These are basic questions, yet they remain shrouded in mystery. This is why hubris is the enemy of accurate conclusions. The minute you imagine a scientific debate has been settled, you start predicting nine-dollar gasoline.

Legitimate research requires relentless skepticism, a humility about conclusions, and a willingness to examine preconceived assumptions. Science isn't a scroll of revealed knowledge, or a discrete body of approved facts. It's a process by which we can gradually, incrementally understand how the world works.

A brilliant 2016 essay by William Wilson in *First Things* catalogues just how wrong much of what we think we know can turn out to be. Wilson cites a 2015 study by the Open Science Collection that did something never before attempted: researchers re-created one hundred peer-reviewed psychology studies in the field's three most prestigious journals to see whether their results could be replicated. The findings were grim: 65 percent of studies failed to replicate. Of those that did, many had far less conclusive results when they were re-created.

Psychology is a soft science at best, pseudoscience at worst, so Wilson pushed deeper. How did the hard sciences hold up to scrutiny?

Not well. Pharmaceutical companies now assume that about half of all academic biomedical research is false. Wilson cites one experiment in which scientists at the drug company Bayer attempted to replicate sixty-seven drug discovery studies that had appeared in top journals like *Science* and *Nature*. Bayer's scientists were unable to replicate the published results three-quarters of the time.

This doesn't mean that all scientific research is bogus. It does mean that, no matter how many times Leonardo DiCaprio claims otherwise, science is never settled. Science is a practice, not a product.

This is no longer widely recognized. Roger Pielke is a tenured professor at the University of Colorado–Boulder. Among other things, Pielke studies the political uses of science. His own views on climate change are fairly conventional. Pielke accepts that global temperatures are rising, and has said that he is “personally convinced that it makes sense to take action to limit greenhouse gas emissions.”

Pielke’s mistake was in questioning the assumption that global warming has caused a major increase in extreme weather events, like hurricanes. Pielke published a piece suggesting that the rising cost of natural disasters might be driven primarily by economic growth, rather than climate change. There’s more infrastructure than there was one hundred years ago, so the costs are higher when it’s destroyed. It’s an interesting theory. It turned out to be an unacceptable deviation from what all decent people know to be true. Pielke was punished for saying it.

Climate activists started a campaign to force Pielke from his side job freelancing for the statistics website FiveThirtyEight. After a few months, they succeeded. But the attacks on Pielke didn’t end there. In 2015, Congressman Raul Grijalva of Arizona demanded that the University of Colorado turn over to Congress all of Pielke’s private communications about climate change. The university refused, but Pielke learned his lesson. He stopped talking about climate.

Within academia, the pressure to conform to climate orthodoxy has rendered the scientific method irrelevant. Judith Curry, a longtime climatologist at Georgia Tech, resigned from her tenured position because of what she described as “craziness in the field of climate science.” Over the course of her career, Curry has published two books and 186 articles on climate. But by 2016, the field was so politically fraught that academic journals refused to publish research that deviated from conventional opinion.

In an essay announcing her resignation, Curry wrote that “research and other professional activities are professionally rewarded only if they are channeled in certain directions approved by a politicized academic establishment.” Discouraged by the stifling conformity, Curry gave up on academic journals altogether. She now publishes her research online. When science no longer requires evidence and no longer tolerates scrutiny, it’s no longer science. It’s dogma.

Bill Nye the Science Guy thrives in a world like this. A former stand-up comedian with a degree in mechanical engineering, Nye hosted a children’s science show on PBS during the mid-1990s. The show went off the air and Nye faded into obscurity for a time. Thanks to elite concerns about climate change, he’s back and more famous than ever. Nye’s unrelenting alarmism resurrected his career.

Nye has no background in climate research, or in any of the natural sciences. He doesn’t need one. When your job is to confirm the preexisting biases of people making more than one hundred thousand dollars a year, facts only get in the way.

When tornadoes hit Kentucky in the spring of 2016, Nye knew exactly what to say. “More severe weather. More suffering. More expense,” he tweeted. “Let’s all take climate change seriously.”

When a storm hit Texas and wildfires broke out in Alaska, Nye blamed “global warming & climate change.” According to Nye, who disseminates most of his scientific opinions on Twitter, global warming is the cause of rainstorms in Texas, flooding in Louisiana and California, and an early spring snowstorm in the Northeast. For the consistency of his views, *Vanity Fair* declared Nye “the Face of Climate Change.”

Nye takes the job seriously. When terrorists attacked Paris in 2015, Nye did his best to explain how climate change was at fault. Rising temperatures are a “very reasonable” explanation for Islamic extremism, Nye told the *Huffington Post*. Thanks to a drought in Syria, he explained, “there’s not enough work for everybody, so the disaffected youths are more easily engaged and more easily recruited by terrorist organizations, and then they end up part way around the world in Paris shooting people.”

The beauty of opinions like this is they're fundamentally impossible to disprove or rebut, though Nye has done his best to shut down any attempts. Questioning any part of climate orthodoxy, Nye has explained, is tantamount to "denying science" and is both "unpatriotic" and "unconstitutional." In one interview, Nye suggested jailing doubters who disagree with his views on climate change.

Some people look at statements like this and see echoes of the Soviet pseudoscience of the 1930s, where political orthodoxy determined the boundaries of acceptable research and resulted in generations of preventable failures. People starved to death because scientists were prohibited from telling scientific truths.

Others listen to Bill Nye and find themselves deeply impressed. On Earth Day 2015, then-president Obama made a video about climate change. In order to add scientific credibility, he invited Bill Nye to the White House to appear in it with him.

Increasingly, there are two kinds of environmentalists. I sometimes think about that when I go fishing on the Potomac in Washington. I'm usually the only American-born fisherman on the river, and always the only one with a fly rod. Everyone else is from Mexico or Central America. They're using bait and fishing for food. They're always friendly. We nod as we pass on the path.

The river has changed over the years I've been fishing on it. It's still pretty but no longer tidy. There's now trash everywhere along the banks, beer bottles and takeout chicken boxes and soiled diapers. The homeless have left their rusting shopping carts and moldering sleeping bags. This section of the Potomac is on federal land, so the National Park Service has jurisdiction over it. You see park rangers driving by in their green trucks. I often wonder why they don't clean up the mess.

Then I remember: our environmental leaders don't care about litter anymore, or even about the state of the natural world, the birds or the riverbanks. They've got bigger concerns now—global concerns, moral concerns—that ordinary fishermen stepping over dirty diapers and Tecate bottles couldn't possibly understand or appreciate. But they feel good about themselves, and that's what matters.