

TODAY'S "SHORT TOPIC"

SUSTAINABILITY: IT DOES DESERVE SCRUTINY AND EXAMINATION!



By Stephen L. Bakke  July 9, 2015

Here's what provoked me:

There's been a lot of "back and forth" lately about "sustainability" campaigns at colleges and universities. Much of the debate has been about whether this movement is a traditional educational discipline, or more of a religious ideology. I have entered the discussion with some success of late. Here is my most recent offering.

Here's my response:

Sustainability: It Does Deserve Scrutiny and Examination!

There's been much "bickering" about "sustainability" campaigns at colleges and universities – especially here in these pages (Kersten, et al.). Much of the debate has been about whether sustainability is an educational discipline, or a religion-like ideology. If sustainability is not subjected to a vigorous cost/benefit analysis, it falls on the side of ideology. If sustainability campaigns tend to exclude evaluation of credible alternative opinions, it becomes an ideology. If "premises are more assumed than demonstrated" (George Will's description), that's an ideology.

I fear that the "sustainability premise" is accepted without meaningful analysis. Examining opposing ideas is what should happen at colleges. Have students:

- been exposed to scientists skeptical of the popular view?
- been taught the definition of "greenhouse gases"?
- learned that climate predictions come from untested models?
- compared predictions with actual observations?
- been exposed to economic implications of proposed environmental solutions?
- evaluated how the "97% consensus" was determined?
- been advised of differing measurement techniques used by opposite sides in this debate?
- determined the proportion of CO₂ which is the human contribution?
- studied actual levels of ice on the planet?
- discovered that replacing coal with modern combined-cycle gas turbines cuts 2.6 times more CO₂ than using wind, and four times as many as solar (WSJ, July 5)?
- come to realize that settled science comes from observations, not consensus?
- concluded that climate science is in its infancy?

If sustainability is more ideology than settled science, let's be honest about it.