

# **CONVENIENT MYTHS**

**the green revolution  
perceptions, politics, and facts**

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Bloomington, IN 47403  
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*First published by AuthorHouse .3/29/2010*

ISBN: 978-1-4520-0428-0 (e)  
ISBN: 978-1-4520-0427-3 (sc)  
ISBN: 978-1-4520-0426-6 (dj)

*Library of Congress Control Number: 2010903959*

*This COLOR-EBOOK edition published by TerraBase Inc.*

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*Printed in the United States of America  
Bloomington, Indiana*

*This book is printed on acid-free paper.*

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## **Acknowledgements**

My heartfelt thanks go to all my fellow scientists, colleagues, associates, friends and relatives who have helped me bringing this work to fruition.

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## Preamble

This book is about myths. Not those perpetuated in ancient fables, but those currently of foremost interest, which are found in almost every newspaper, television or radio newscast, and so forth. It juxtaposes such myths with the scientific facts, and explores the different views, politics and perceptions derived from such facts.

This book is about perceptions. It has been said “reality is nothing, perception is everything.” When Terry Goodkind coined the phrase, he realized there is a difference between what most people may have thought to be true and what really the case was. Every decision we make is based on a perception, true or not, which helps us to rationalize and justify our deeds.

This book is about politics. In politics, myths, perceptions, and facts mix in subtle and mysterious ways. Different people often interpret a particular fact in entirely different ways. If at all interested in some kind of progress, many politicians try to find a “common ground,” a compromise which may not satisfy any individual, but which may offend or dissatisfy the least.

Foremost though, this book is about facts. In science, facts are rarely disputed (if presented accurately); however, their interpretations and any conclusion drawn from them can vary enormously.

This book is also about what I term algorisms, defined here to describe the “clever combination of convenient facts - and omitting inconvenient ones – with fiction, to produce a desired effect in the audience.”

Algorisms are not new. Every charlatan who plied his trade since time immemorial used the same technique: combine some well-known truths with hyperbolic assumptions or predictions to have the audience “buy-in.” It is sometimes known as the “bait-and switch” technique. Even in scientific fields, great hoaxes have been perpetrated that way, such as the “Piltdown Man,” “Poly-water,” “Cold fusion” and others.

Scientific discoveries are unbiased by themselves, but they can be exploited with vastly different consequences. For example, the discovery of different natural elements having different nuclear binding energies

led to the development of the atom bomb, as well as to controlled nuclear fission, which provides North America with ~20% of our electric energy needs. Almost any scientific knowledge can be used to promote or retard wellbeing.

At the beginning of the second decade in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with its great speed of disseminating information via radio, television, phone and the Internet, one might think that perceptions, politics, and science would begin to converge. Surprisingly - and regrettably - the opposite appears to be the case. Common public perceptions, politics, and science are as far apart as ever. Even on issues affecting the entire world, the same scientific evidence is used to justify radically different political actions. In reality, politics and science are drifting apart further than ever and further than many scientists can be comfortable with.

This book hopes to address some of the important issues of the day. It gives common perceptions, examples of policies, and true, unbiased facts and information. It is the prerogative as well as responsibility of the reader to determine his or her interpretation of the facts and the best path to follow, but at least the facts should be clear, not muddled in political or lobby group rhetoric, myths, and outright lies.

The subjects covered here are wide ranging. They include issues of burning concern at this time, such as “global warming” and “greenhouse gas emissions,” and issues not presently perceived as critical or urgent. No doubt, there will be other issues in the future as well. However, if we all can have the important facts, at least we can start to work on realistic and achievable goals for a better tomorrow.

## Introduction

In every field of science, research, is progressing at an astounding rate. From astronomers finding new stars and galaxies in unfathomable distances, to nanoparticle-research developing molecule-sized “machines” for medical and industrial purposes, the pace of new discoveries and inventions is unparalleled. For example, the Chemical Abstracts Service, which began to collate information on each chemical substance known to man, listed in the 1950’s about 1 million compounds. In the 1980’s the number had risen to 10 million. Most recently, in 2008, it exceeded 100 million.

Undoubtedly, the “computer age” revolutionized scientific discoveries through easy cataloguing, sorting, and filtering of vast amounts of data. Together with the rapidly increasing processing power and much faster, and almost limitless data storage capacities, computers have changed our life and work forever.

The development of the Internet is another good example. Initially it helped scientists to communicate. After the civilian use expanded, business usurped it to advertise and sell their products. Now, the entertainment industry has a firm grip on the bandwidth with on-demand-movies, etc. Looking at the latest flyers of major computer vendors, they advertise “entertainment systems,” not speed of data processing, or better systems for word processing, spreadsheet calculations, database, or other traditional computer functions.

Despite this computer-enabled “information age,” what has not changed is the discordance between scientific facts, politics, and common perception. In fact, at least in some aspects, they are steadily drifting apart. Hollywood, a term used here as a synonym for the entertainment industry in general, is doing its best to perpetuate and reinforce this chasm between fact and perception. If we watch a futuristic movie, we know it as a fantasy. However, if we watch what purports to be a documentary, we expect unbiased facts and interpretations. With increasing regularity though, documentary movies contain computer-generated animations, which frequently are figments of imagination.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the terms “statesman” and “politician” differentiated between the ideal of working for the long-term common good (statesman) and short-term political desires (politician). The former term has just about disappeared from the common vocabulary. These days, it is all about perception and politics, at least up to the next election. Whoever can or is willing to promise perceived and immediate benefits to the most voters is likely to prevail. Long-term common good, in particular the wellbeing of future generations is of little concern. After all, they will be the masters of their own destiny.

When it comes to science, progress is not always on a straight course. There are many failed experiments, dead ends, and other obstacles. While email and the Internet have greatly increased the ease and speed of communication, and research, they also make life and work more complicated by an increasing need for separating the chaff from the kernels. False and misleading information abounds and the search engine returns it all, no questions asked about veracity.

Much of my own research these days involves literature searches on the Internet. However, my colleagues and I notice an increasing amount of time spent on separating facts from interpretation, advertisements, and straight wishful thinking as the boundary between truth and conjecture is becoming more blurry. Moreover, search engines and related websites are increasingly trying to divert your attention from getting a factual answer to a simple question to “more meaningful” commercial websites. Trying to find a relevant response amongst the websites returned in the average Google search is becoming more difficult. Very few have information responsive to the question. Instead, most are advertisements of products and services without much relevance at all to the query.

Politicians do not have an easy life. They are constantly at the whim of the voters in their constituency, which is often as diverse as the world at large. How to best serve the majority of the constituents, and follow their own aspirations and convictions can be a real difficulty. Not surprisingly, many politicians fail one way or another. Even when they represent their constituents well, they still can be censored by their party boss and made to vote against their conviction for a party cause. Failure to comply can result in losing caucus privileges, loss of media interest, and ultimately forced retirement from public life in the next election.

Good politics is not easy. It tries to strike a balance between facts and actions taken. Poor politics caters mostly to perceptions. However, perceptions are only perceptions. They can change abruptly when confronted with different facts or interpretations. More often than not, it is the lack of good information, *i.e.* the true facts, that creates the wrong perceptions. Once all know the facts, perceptions become transformed into meaningful information on which rational decisions can be based.

In my perception, our governments and their agencies are not as forthcoming with the facts as one would hope or might think that they are. More on that in the next chapter.

Also, I find that in recent years, science has become more politicized than ever before. From international agencies to local ones, science and scientists have been increasingly put to work to “prove” the political thinking of their agencies, rather than being asked to provide independent research to find the facts. And, as research funds have been getting more difficult to obtain, many scientists have succumbed to following this folly. In the end, such work will fail, as the laws of nature cannot be changed or circumvented by us mortal humans.

The following chapters deal with a wide variety of subjects. They range from the role of governments and that of the media, from climate to weather, from power generation to power use, from steam engines to electric cars, from the environment to health, to name a few.

All these issues are linked by the laws of nature. As a scientist, I feel that every citizen in the modern world needs to know the basic facts and how they affect our daily life, or how they determine what may be physically and technologically possible or not.

One of the prerequisites for understanding the connections and consequences of these issues are common definitions. Vague terms, such as pollution, emissions, clean energy, sustainability and the like are useless if they are not defined in a clear and understandable way. The daily barrage of news propagated by the media often lacks this commonality of the meaning and definition of such terms. No wonder, misconceptions arise, conclusions diverge, and the actions based on such by different societies and other entities can be diametrically opposed to each other with respect to the same specific issue.

Precisely such confusion gave me the impetus for this work. It is my hope that it will help to bring clarification to some of the important issues of today and the future

## The Great Myth

One of the greatest myths of all began with alchemists, a long time ago. It pervades much of society's thinking today. The media are no less intrigued by it and like such stories. It is especially liked by many politicians.

This great myth is the idea that politics can direct scientific outcome; some journalists subscribe to this theory too.

Politicians everywhere like to believe that they can enact laws to rule scientific facts. If they just channel funds into the "right" direction, the research results will give them what they want. But they are all mistaken.

Initially, the "overwhelming evidence" (especially in the absence of any research to show the opposite), may "prove them right." However, eventually, more and more inconsistencies and problems arise. After a while then, despite all the efforts to prove their cause and implement solutions, based on the "overwhelming evidence," things do not work out as expected. Notwithstanding the resources dedicated to such ideas, the laws of nature cannot be broken. As W.G. Harding, a former president of the U.S. phrased it:

*No statute enacted by man can repeal the inexorable laws of nature.*

Despite what many politicians like to think, science should drive politics, not the other way around. I give examples of that throughout this book.

Many events, facts, observations, and changes can be mathematically correlated with others of that kind. Such correlations do not prove any cause-effect relationship whatsoever. Fortuitous relationships exist everywhere. Just to "prove" this fallacy, try on this silly correlation: Carbon dioxide levels have increased in the air above every nation on earth over the last 100 years. Similarly, the number of reported crimes committed has increased in the world over the last 100 years. Ergo, one concludes that there is a causative relationship between carbon dioxide in

the air and the number of crimes committed. Of course, that is pure nonsense. But many politicians, media reporters and the public at large fall for that kind of reasoning. Most of them think that they not only understand the problem but also its cause and, naturally, they have a solution. More often than not, it starts with raising taxes, or borrowing money from future generations to spend on their “solution.”

Alas, in the end most of these funds are wasted, valuable time is lost, and the problem has not been solved.

It is as much surprising as disconcerting to see how little interest there is by politicians in basic fact finding. Instead, they rely on claims by industries, reports in the media, statements by non-government organizations, movies, and the like. **There is a definite lack of “due diligence.”**

In my estimate, over the last decade or so, various levels of governments in Canada alone could have saved several billions of dollars by spending just a few million dollars on that kind of exercise.

This brings us to the next topic: the role of governments.

## **The Role of Governments**

### ***Information & Propaganda***

Governments have a dual role to fulfill. Apart from day-to-day governance, they have a legal and moral responsibility to collect and disseminate factual information to their citizenry. This may sound trivial, but for people living in less democratic societies, access to unbiased information is more difficult and not fostered by the state. In times of crises, most governments resort to highly biased reports as to the actual events. This is known as propaganda, a form of myth. For example, see items available at <http://www.mediafreedominternational.org>.

In World War I, governments on all sides had active propaganda departments. A detailed account relating to World War I propaganda is found at <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/FWWwpb.htm>. Some 400 propaganda posters supporting the war effort in the US can be viewed at <http://www.firstworldwar.com/posters/usa.htm>.

The purpose, methods and efficacy of propaganda have been described by A. Hitler in *Mein Kampf*, translation by R. Manheim, available at: [www.oldamericancentury.org/bb/index.-php?showtopic=19044](http://www.oldamericancentury.org/bb/index.-php?showtopic=19044) :

*The receptivity of the great masses is very limited, their intelligence is small, but their power of forgetting is enormous. In consequence of these facts, all effective propaganda must be limited to a very few points and must harp on these in slogans until the last member of the public understands what you want him to understand by your slogan.*

Even in times of peace and prosperity, in many democratic societies the governments and their agencies often fail to provide unbiased factual information to their citizenry. Sometimes, the governments do not even attempt to obtain such for their own enlightenment. You may find some of the following examples surprising:

Despite their push to alternative (electric) power generation, governments in North America have failed to collect and disseminate even the most rudimentary facts on wind or solar power generated electricity. There is not a single test-turbine for which all facts are available to the public or our politicians themselves. Instead, they rely on various industry- or media-sponsored statements and claims. Needless to say, such information is rarely complete and accurate. The full facts would have to include the cost of construction and maintenance, including associated infrastructure such as access roads and transmission lines, the actual wind speed and the actual energy fed into the electric grid. That information should be obtained and disseminated on at least on an hourly basis and it should be made available on the Internet for anyone to obtain and review.

Given the fact that both regional and federal politicians are constantly espousing “green” alternative energy sources (such as wind power), it is quite unfathomable that these politicians would not be pressing for such test systems and availability of the information at the very least for themselves, never mind for the public at large. Where are the due diligence reports for these ideas?

There are other examples of a total lack of pertinent factual tests and information to substantiate policies and government decisions. They are dealt with in more detail in the following sections and, therefore, are presented here only in point form below. To mention just a couple:

- Global Warming
- Greenhouse Gases

Governments need to provide accurate, timely and complete factual information to their citizenries. Anything else is propaganda, misinformation, or myth.

### *Economics*

The world history shows that great empires have risen and declined, many disappeared entirely. They all share some commonalities in terms of economic principles, namely over-extending their physical and economic ability to back-up their aspirations. Whether such aspirations involved armed conquest or not, people were unwilling or unable to provide the resources the government needed to maintain their system.

From ancient Babylon, to the pharaohs of Egypt, to the Roman Empire, to the Soviet Union in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the political desires outstripped the countries' ability to sustain the economic demands placed on it. These empires believed in the myth of their ability to overcome the natural boundaries of revenue versus expenses.

With such demands often come decrees to streamline resources, construction, agricultural production, and a host of other instructions. Furthermore, mid-stream corrections, U-turns, and new policies and directives typically appear more frequently towards the end of such empires. They usually hasten the demise of the system.

In this context, a recent article by the economics scholar M.J. Boskin is of interest [Source: Boskin, 2009]. Under the headline "*Government can't pick the winners, the return of industrial policy*," he writes:

*One of the worst official responses to the financial crisis and recession has been the revival of 'industrial policy.' Once again, governments are using subsidies, mandates, regulation and capital investment to pick industrial winners and losers, rather than employing a broad, even-handed approach.*

and

*Industrial policy appeals to politicians – it allows them to favour key constituencies while claiming to be helping the economy as a whole.*

*But it usually does far more harm than good.*

And, what I consider to be most important

*Most markets function best when the returns are received and the risks are borne by private owners, but for basic scientific research, the potential return is broadly available to any and all. Because private investors are unable to appropriate the returns, private markets invest too little in basic science. That's why economists of all political persuasions agree that governments should fund basic science and technology.*

and, in conclusion:

*Industrial policy failed miserably in the 1970s and 1980s. It's just as bad an idea today.*

The real problem here is accounting. If governments were to follow good accounting principles, these follies would quickly be discovered and rectified. But they rarely do and if they do, it often is much too late to prevent major problems from becoming manifest.

In ancient times, accounting of the country's treasury content was simple. The coins in it could be weighed or counted. With the modern world's financial instruments, assets and obligations are far less obvious. "Credit default swaps" and similar financial instruments have blurred the accounting process. "Off-balance-sheet" obligations can mean the difference between solvency and financial ruin.

The most recent worldwide economic slowdown during 2008 and 2009 was met with a firm commitment by many governments to "spend their way out of the hole." However, few governments if any had ever saved for such a "rainy day." Therefore, they all need to borrow, and major sums at that.

Where do these borrowed funds really come from?

Young people will be discouraged by the answer: these funds can only come from the income they will have to earn to sustain their own lives. The savings accumulated by the current generation are spoken for already.

The way most governments hope to pay for the borrowed funds, known as budget deficits in a fiscal year, and cumulatively as debt, is by inflation. More on these in the sections following.

***Deficits, Debt & Inflation***

Many governments worldwide incur large budget deficits. They spend much more than they gather in taxes. This shortfall must be compensated with borrowing from somewhere, and a certain interest will have to be paid to the lender. The table below shows the budget deficits by country as percentage of the countries' Gross Domestic Products (GDPs) in 2009. In total, the current deficits approach several trillion ( $10^{12}$ ) dollars equivalent. Obviously, that deficit spending has all the political support needed in these countries.

Table 1. Budgetary deficits and accumulated government debt for selected countries. [Source: Global Finance; <http://www.gfmag.com/gdp-data-country-reports>, and others].

Country	Fiscal year	Deficit for 2009 as percentage of the GDP	Accumulated debt as percentage of the GDP
Britain	2009	12	90
France	2010	8.5	75
Germany	2010	6.5	75*
Italy	2010	6.2	130
Canada	2010	32	40*
USA	2009	12.9	100
Australia	2010	5	15 (in 2008)
Japan	2010	8.5	170
India	2010	6.8	14 (external only)
G-20 nations**	2014	8.1 (in 2010)	120***

\*) estimated; \*\*) Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States; \*\*\*). [Source: International Monetary Fund, [http://www.imf.org/external/np/fad/2009/042609\\_table1.pdf](http://www.imf.org/external/np/fad/2009/042609_table1.pdf) .]

In principle, the GDP is a good measurement to compare countries in terms of their economies and finances. However, the measurement of the GDP is not uniform. For example, Canada includes much "labour of love" (such as raising children) in its measurement while other countries

do not. This fact inflates Canada's GDP numbers in relation to other countries and, consequently, shows the country's finances in a better picture than would otherwise be the case. Furthermore, deficits and debts incurred by the various regional authorities (such as provincial and state governments, cities) are also not equally included in the GDP or debt figures.

Governments have the benefit of an invention made several centuries ago, namely the Printing Press, developed by J. Gutenberg in 1436. Moreover, they have been able to persuade their citizenries to accept a piece of paper as the medium of exchange for value. Initially, this was based on the guarantee that there was an equivalent amount of "real value" in the government treasuries to back these "pieces of paper." Alas, such guarantees did not last long; they were soon to be replaced with other definitions, new promises, and generally more obfuscation.

In Greek and Roman times, money was in the form of coins made from metals with different intrinsic values. The Greek "Drachma" and the larger denominations were made of iron, copper, silver, or gold and lasted for several centuries. Apart from any numismatic (collector) values of such coins today, a 2,500-year old gold coin could be redeemed in any currency today for that intrinsic value at the current market price of its metal content. Not so with the paper issues by many countries in the intervening time. The purchasing power of, for example, gold over the last 400-plus years shows this vividly, in Figure 1.

As can be seen, except for brief periods above the average, the purchasing power of gold in England has remained quite constant over the last 400-plus years. In contrast, the purchasing power of banknotes has declined severely. The original meaning of "Pound Sterling," namely "one pound (by weight) of silver" does not hold true anymore. Currently, a pound of silver costs approximately 150 British Pounds (Sterling) in banknotes.

The rise in prices of goods and services, which is the loss of purchasing power of a currency, is termed inflation. Inflation is often seen as "beneficial" by governments and people alike. Indeed, several countries have official inflation targets, that means they wish to maintain a certain level of inflation (typically in the neighbourhood of 3% per year).

The financier André Kostolany (1906-1999) described benign inflation as a “warm bath,” but rampant inflation as a scolding one. He had experienced first hand the ravages of rampant inflation in Germany in the 1920’s, when workers were paid twice daily and had to use wheel barrows full of Million-Mark notes to buy what basic groceries they could before their purchasing power declined.

The main problem with inflation is that it is rarely compensated for in full by interest payments on the funds lent by the saver to the borrower. For example, a person wanting to save money for a later time may wish to invest in the most secure type of asset available, a government treasury obligation, such as a bond or bill. In regular intervals the lender receives an interest payment, until maturity of the certificate, at which time the principal amount is returned.

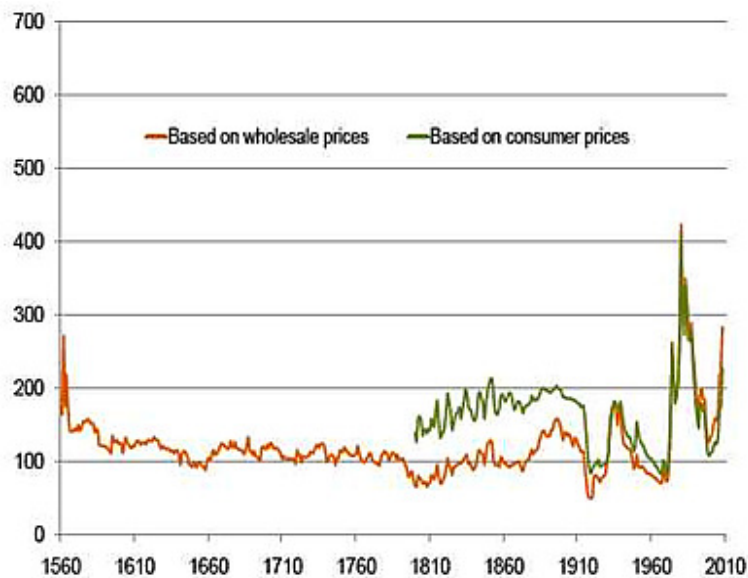


Figure 1. Purchasing power of gold (in £) in England/UK, from the year 1560 to present; the longer liner is based on wholesale, the shorter one on consumer prices. [Source: World Gold Council, <http://www.gold.org/> ].

This all sounds very good and simple, except for the effect of inflation. If the rate of inflation is larger than the rate of interest paid, it results in a net loss of purchasing power for the saver over time. To

complicate the picture even further, interest income is widely taxed by governments, causing an additional loss in purchasing power. If the rate of return (rate of interest after tax) on that bond is truly determined by market forces, it will usually be higher than the rate of inflation. This, of course, requires knowledge of the latter and for that reason, governments have invented various methods to measure the rate of inflation.

The following table gives some approximate values of coins and goods over the last 2,500 years in local currencies then and now (early 2010).

Table 2. Value of the metal in various coins at the time of minting and in 2010.

Country, year	Coin	Metal and its content [g] in the coin	Value then	Metal value, in 2010
Greece, 500 B.C.	Drachma	silver, ~4	1 worker day	US\$ 3
Pompeii, 79 A.D.	Denarius	silver, ?	1/125 donkey	?
Rome, time of M. Aurelius (150 A.D.)	Aureus	gold, 8	One month's legionary pay	US\$ 400
Germany, 1876	5 Mark	silver, 25	3 worker days	Euro 12
USA, 1933	\$ 20	gold, 31	15 worker days	US\$ 1,200
Canada, 1969	\$ 1	silver, 18	0.75 worker hours *	0.75 worker hours *
Canada, 1975	1 cent	copper, 2.3	\$ 0.01	C\$ 0.015
Canada, 1966	10 cents	silver, 1.86	\$ 0.10	C\$ 1.10

\*) minimum wage

If you buy a toothbrush every few months, you probably will not remember the price you had paid for it several months ago, and any increase in cost is not noticed. If you buy a loaf of bread every day, you are more likely to notice a change of its price. In order to track inflation (or its opposite, deflation), governments have created consumer price indices (CPI) and use “shopping baskets” of goods and services commonly consumed. This is where things become more complicated and obfuscated.

These “shopping baskets” are made up of many important items, but omit other vital purchases. They also differ between countries and are often changed within a country. Examples for England and the USA follow in Table 3.

**The myth, perpetuated by governments and mostly believed by their citizenries is that inflation is good for the country, and their own well-being.**

Table 3. Allocation of items that make up the consumer price index (CPI) in England and the USA, 2009. [Sources: UK: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>; USA: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/cpi.pdf> ].

Category	CPI weight (per cent) Britain	CPI weight (per cent) USA <sup>*)</sup>
Food & non-alcoholic beverages	11.8	15.8
Alcohol & tobacco	4.4	1.9
Clothing & footwear	5.7	3.7
Housing & household services	12.6	28.9
Furniture & household goods	6.6	4.8
Health	2.2	6.4
Transportation	15.1	15.3
Communication	2.3	3.2
Recreation & culture	14.5	5.7
Education	2.1	6.3
Restaurants & hotels	12.8	8.0
Miscellaneous goods & services	9.9	0

<sup>\*)</sup> The categories are not exactly identical for both countries; slight adjustments were made to allow comparison.

Indeed, it is a good feeling to have “more money in the pocket,” to be able to spend more, at least until one realizes that the increased amount of money does not buy any additional goods. Therefore, in the short term, the effects of inflation often appear as beneficial. It results in higher incomes, and higher spending, hence also increased tax revenues. However, the question rarely asked is “at what cost,” or more accurately “at what longer-term cost?”

P. Saxena, in *Inflation 101*, ( *The Daily Reckoning*, 18 Jan. 2010), describes inflation as follows:

*Inflation is a hidden tax, an insidious crime against the public. It is the easiest way for any government to confiscate the savings of the public and for generations, wealth has been transferred in this manner.*

The recent introduction of a tax-free savings account vehicle in Canada is a valiant step in the right direction of encouraging saving and eliminating the taxation of inflationary gains.

Good macro-economics supports low inflation. Massive government budget deficits, combined with existing cumulative debt loads, such as those presently incurred by many governments worldwide have severe long term consequences for the purchasing power of their currencies; without fail, purchasing power will decline. The reasons given for such massive borrowing and deficit spending are that they will increase future prosperity. This, however, is not certain at all. In fact, Dr. Marc Faber, in one of his frequent contributions to “*The Daily Reckoning*,” published by Agora Financial, LLC, has made the following comment:

*Central bankers and pundits seem to believe that they have averted the second Great Depression, while ignoring the fact that more and more debt produces less and less GDP and fewer and fewer jobs.*  
[Source: M. Faber, in *The Daily Reckoning*, November 11, 2009].

### ***In Summary***

- Government propaganda has a legitimate place in times of war.
- Government propaganda in times of peace is a sign of weakness.

- Governments need to provide accurate, timely and complete factual information to their citizenries. Anything else is propaganda, misinformation, or myth.
- Governments need to follow good accounting principles
- Inflation without proper compensation for the loss of purchasing power is tantamount to theft by the borrower from the lender.
- Current worldwide government deficits and cumulative debts will increase inflation in coming years.
- The short-term benefits of government deficits are less than the long-term costs of such programs.

### **The Role of the Media**

As shown in the paper on “*Press Guardedness toward Edward L. Bernays’ Conception of the Minority Voice and the ‘Corroding Acid’ of Propaganda*” by Burton St. John III (2008), the media’s task to distinguish facts and propaganda are not new. That work studies the problem in World War I. The article is summarized in the following paragraph:

*The press’s struggle in America to affirm its ability to accurately portray reality has its roots in journalism’s drive to heighten its legitimacy after World War I. Disillusioned with both the war and its own earlier credulity regarding the propaganda of the Committee on Public Information (CPI), the press gradually professionalized during the 1920s. Journalism’s efforts to enhance its credibility focused on developing work routines that allowed it claim it was more accurately reporting the “truth.” During this time, the press’s concerns about protecting its claims to truth were exacerbated when PR pioneer Edward L. Bernays asserted a beneficial role for propaganda in American society. The press attacked his declarations about propaganda, making counter-assertions that journalism was better qualified to search out and portray truth. Exploring journalism’s attempts to protect its growing professionalism in the face of Bernays’ claims of pro-social propaganda provides insights into the ideological roots of longstanding press conventions such as objectivity and detachment.” [Source: <http://www.allacademic.com>].*

The role of the media in times of war is generally viewed differently than times of peace. There is one problem though – war is not as cut and

dry anymore as it has historically been. Up to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, war was officially declared by one nation against another. This changed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, beginning with the “Cold War,” which was primarily a war of intimidation and espionage. Armed conflict, de facto wars without any official declaration of war then became common. The Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Iraq Wars were de facto wars. In addition, other “wars” arose, such as the “War against Drugs,” the “War against Poverty,” the “War on Crime,” the “War on Terrorism,” and the current undeclared “War in Afghanistan,” which combines elements of the former ones.

Of course, the opposite holds true as well. Undeclared wars are no longer followed by official peace declarations either, they just fade into memory.

The blurring of the peace/war boundary creates additional difficulties for the media. This is both a challenge and an opportunity. The most recent “war declarations,” namely the “War on Global Warming” and on “Climate Change” are perfect examples. Some news examples are the following headlines, in the British newspaper *Guardian* in 2007; [Source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2007/jan/29/themonarchy.usnews> ] :

*US must win the war on climate change, says Charles*

and in *The Kansas City Star* in 2009,  
[Source: <http://www.kansascity.com/105/story/1592518.html> ]:

*Obama preparing to escalate war in Afghanistan*

and in the book by J. Simon (2007) on:

*Governing Through Crime, How the War on Crime Transformed American Democracy and Created a Culture of Fear*

The above are just some of the examples available. “Neutrality” became one more casualty of (undeclared) war. To demonstrate the point, G.W. Bush, US President then, speaking about “the war on terror” in 2002, declared that [Source: *FrontPage Magazine*, <http://97.74.65.51/readArticle.aspx?ARTID=22019>]:

*If you are not with us, you are against us*

This statement later became known as the “Bush Doctrine.” In one fell swoop, his declaration did away with the concept of neutrality.

The language of war also is quite persuasive in sports these days. Teams and players are being “killed” right, left and center. The media continually needs new copy. Sometimes, events may be slow in coming, but does this justify elevating every article to a “war report?”

With respect to the “[Global Warming](#)” and “[Climate Change](#)” issues (more on these further down), the media are not without blame either. Their McCarthyism-style zeal to push the “climate change agenda” is unprecedented in recent history. One can see, hear, or read about it almost daily, usually with a slant towards the impending global disaster. Reports of a few people demonstrating for “emission controls” are given prominence, while scientific conferences and books detailing the lack of scientific fundamentals are barely mentioned, if at all.

As it so happened, in late 2009 some revealing information became public, commonly referred to as “Climategate.” These emails, some 3,000 or so from, to, or between climate researchers can be found at <http://www.eastangliaemails.com/index.php> . The British tabloid *The Daily Express* had the cover shown in Figure 2, below.



Figure 2. Cover page of *The Daily Express* newspaper.

B.W. King summarizes the issue in his contribution to *Outstanding Investments* as follows [Source: <http://agorafinancial.com>, 1 Dec. 2009]:

*Last week, the global warming movement crashed, along with its holier-than-thou 'only we can save the world' aura of empirical certitude. Down with the ship went the last semblance of unblinking, unthinking willingness to submit to draconian, Procrustean 'cap and trade' legislation against fossil fuels.*

*The cause of the crash was a batch of purloined e-mails from the University of East Anglia and its so-called Climate Research Unit (Climate Research Fabrication Unit is more like it). When the contents of the e-mails hit the fan, the U.K. Telegraph headlined that 'This Is the Worst Scientific Scandal of Our Generation.'*

*On this last point, we can now see how much of the conventional wisdom about carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), and related 'global warming' marches to a drumbeat that permits no foot to fall out of step. The East Anglia e-mails reveal a transnational cabal of scientists whose ethics and methods mirror those of Stalin's favorite biologist, Comrade Trofim Lysenko.*

*That is, these modern Marlins of global warming have massaged the climate data to fit their preconceived anti-CO<sub>2</sub> theories. For many years, the climate change Godfathers have humiliated and intimidated scientists who dared to disagree. They have squashed dissent. They have blackballed academic journals that did not toe the line of politically correct global warming wisdom. And they've done it all under the rubric of 'peer-reviewed' science -- where they are the peers über alles.*

Amongst other things, some of these documents unequivocally point out that, at the time of writing, the actual temperature observations did not fall into line with the expectations derived from the then current (i.e. these scientists' own) climate models. They also show a level of anxiety and feeling of entitlement by some scientists in regard to the common journal peer review process and to editors' views as to what was acceptable for publishing or not.

In this context, it is of interest to note that a particular scientific paper by some well known scientists, which caused such a stir a few years back, had been peer-reviewed by four others, none of whom thought that it should not be published. In protest, some other scientists resigned from the editorial board of that journal.

With so much “political capital” invested in the “climate disaster scenario,” it is no wonder that some scientists may have come to be their own victims of success, a la Macbeth.



Figure 3. Poster with excerpts and graphs, entitled “Climategate: 30 years in the making”. [Source: <http://joannenova.com.au/global-warming/climategate-30-year-timeline/> ].

For detailed information, see the figure above. The poster and all emails are available at the website provided in the caption.

Whether you think that climate change is real or not, or whether you think that the effects of carbon dioxide on the earth’s climate are the biggest threat to humanity, or the biggest hoax of all times, it does not matter. Neither view should prevent you from being able and willing to listen, to read, and to learn the facts. The responsibility of the media is to make available such information to its audience, without bias.

In January 2010, another revelation appeared in the press. Some critical data in the UN climate change panel report of 2007 had supposedly typographical errors. For example, the projected year for the possible disappearance of the glaciers in the Himalayas was given as 2035, while in fact it should have read 2350. Similar errors exist for the rate of glacial retreat and the total glacier area. None of the 25 or so expert glaciologists who authored the report appears to have noted these crucial errors. The latest news reports indicate an intentional falsification of these facts [Source: <http://www.sott.net/articles/show/201788-Glacier-scientist-I-knew-data-hadn-t-been-verified> ].

**Sooner or later, the facts surface on most items of importance. The media, therefore, would also do well not to fall for myths.**