

# Substantial Disruption



## The Great Global Fart

*By Mike Tully*

The third planet from the sun has gas. I'm not referring to atmospheric gases or natural gas that is fracked out of bedrock. The Earth's gas is deep within its bowels, the consequence of a slow-moving digestion over millions of years that converts organic material to methane. Giant pockets of methane gas lie beneath the oceans and the Arctic ice shelf. It has quietly leaked from the ocean floor for eons and small amounts of gas have escaped the Arctic shelf. Recently, the gas leakage in the Arctic [has been increasing](#) and the steady rise in global temperatures leading to Arctic melting may release a massive burst of methane in a catastrophic event. It has happened before.

One hundred twenty centuries ago – a Nano-second in geological time – methane gas [burst from below the Barents Sea](#), leaving craters still visible today. There are planetary bathtub bubbles in the Russian arctic region, blue lakes gurgling oddly in the land of the permafrost. Scientists [have not seen them before](#), indicating something strange and ominous is happening. “Ominous” is an appropriate term, given a recent discovery by Canadian scientists that the planet's climate was [drastically altered 110 million years ago](#) by what they referred to as a giant methane “burp.” (Scientists prefer the polite term “burp” but, face it, we're talking about methane.) "That was when Earth transitioned from a cold climate to a warm climate," said one of the researchers. As discomfiting as that prospect is, planetary history includes a more dire outcome: the [Permian Mass Extinction](#) that nearly wiped out every species on Earth. A [recent study](#) in the scientific journal *Paleoworld* suggested that a sudden release of trapped methane caused the extinction. While apocalyptic fears of an Arctic methane catastrophe are not uniformly accepted by the scientific community, many researchers consider the trapped methane to be a “[time bomb](#)” that can be released by global warming. There is [scientific consensus](#) that the planetary climate is changing and human activity is the primary cause. Whether or not global warming will trigger a catastrophic methane burst in the Arctic – a possibility that exists – human-caused climate change poses an elemental threat to every person on Earth.

Nonetheless, there are well-funded climate deniers, close cousins of the laughable [Flat Earth Society](#) in their willful disdain for the scientific method, logic, and facts. While they will eventually be confined to the padded room of history that is reserved for cranks and miscreants, they are able to inflict great harm, thanks to [dark money](#), as well as powerful enablers like the President of the United States. When the President announced U. S. withdrawal from the Paris climate accord, he stated, “As of today, the United States will cease all implementation of the

nonbinding Paris accord and the draconian financial and economic burdens the agreement imposes on our country.” This is Trumpian schizophrenic madness at its finest. How can a “nonbinding” agreement impose “draconian” burdens?

The most recent local diatribe against the Paris Climate Accord was in last week’s edition of The [Southern Arizona News Examiner](#) in which Dr. Jane Orient made wild and unsupported claims that transitioning to renewable energy would bring about a financial calamity and, in a loopy confluence of climate science and xenophobia, argued there will be a Malaria epidemic in Minnesota because of migrants from tropical countries. Seriously. She also claims that a transition to renewables would cause famines and water shortages because “energy is necessary for modern life itself.” Here are the facts: Global warming will [increase illness](#) through the proliferation of mosquito-borne diseases and will [reduce the planetary supply of potable drinking water](#), causing famine and death. Climate change will even relocate the North Pole closer to Paris (“Rudolph, the nez rouge reindeer...”)

Groups battling human-caused climate change include the [Union of Concerned Scientists](#), the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#), and [many other](#) respected scientific organizations. President Trump’s personal views notwithstanding, [NASA](#) and the [Defense Department](#) have declared concern over the effects of climate change and vowed to combat it. Secretary of Defense James Mattis has warned that global climate change is a [national security challenge](#). The deniers of global climate change, on the other hand, are a small but well-funded cadre of propagandists, some of them masquerading as experts, such as Paul Driessen, the only expert [cited by Dr. Orient](#). Driessen is senior policy analyst for the Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow, who argues for eliminating any reference to global climate change in American policies, defunding climate research, and removing the EPA’s authority to regulate carbon dioxide. He is a point man for industrial poison whose organization is [funded by dark money groups](#) such as Donors Trust and Donors Capital Fund, as well as the Koch Brothers. In a world threatened by noxious gasses and pollutants, his emissions are among the most lethal.