



WASTE REPORT for November 30, 2015

Climate Change: The Video Game

A whole generation remembers the thrill of strolling into an elementary school computer lab, firing up an Apple II computer, and playing *The Oregon Trail*. Well, thanks to an almost **\$450,000 grant from the National Science Foundation**, it appears a whole new generation of students will have their own iconic game...on climate change.¹

Apparently “[e]ducating young people about Global Climate Change (GCC) is challenging because they have difficulty relating to its slow pace, with larger effects 10s-100s years in to the future.”² How to solve that problem? A video game aimed at indoctrinating kids into the climate change way of thinking.

The Climate Change Narrative Game Education (CHANGE), which is being developed by researchers at the University of South Florida and piloted at Hillsborough County high schools, aims to counter this morass by, “develop[ing] a place-based futuristic gaming simulation model...”³ Of course, the CHANGE project is all supposed to be “scientifically realistic.”

The game will involve a **science fiction narrative of the effects of climate change on the students’ community as told by virtual persons from the future. This, “focus on the built environment will help students attach a ‘human face’ and a sense of immediacy to hitherto abstract issues of global warming.”** The first part of the game will ask students to deal with simulations like severe weather and sea-level rise, while the second part of the game will group students in teams to create plans to “save the future.”⁴

How far in the future? **Well, 110 years.** Recall that Doc Brown and Marty only went 30 years in the future; and while *Back to The Future* was a great movie trilogy, accurately predicting just 30 years in the future proved pretty hard.

Perhaps the government, instead of Hollywood is better at predicting the future? **Take for example Dr. John Holdren, who is the President’s chief science advisor and was a technical advisor on former Vice President Al Gore’s movie *An Inconvenient Truth*. In 1986, he predicted 1 billion people would die as a result of global warming by the year 2020. At his 2009 confirmation hearing he was asked if he still believed climate change would kill 1 billion by 2020. He said, “I think it could happen.”⁵ Scared yet?**

Here’s a prediction: the real science behind this game is psychology and political science.



You Have Died of Global Climate Change

¹ NAF Award number 1316782 http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=1316782&HistoricalAwards=false.

² G. Smith, L. Lou, A. Feldman, P. Wang (2015) SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS WITH GAMES FOR LEARNING CLIMATE CHANGE SCIENCE, EDULEARN15 Proceedings, pp. 6163-6169.

³ NAF Award number 1316782 http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=1316782&HistoricalAwards=false

⁴ <http://www.ces.fau.edu/SLR2013/posters/feldman-change.pdf>

⁵ Confirmation hearing for Dr. John Holdren to be Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy; U.S. Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee; February 2009.