

State of Blissful Delusion

Book Review by John F. Rohe

Michael Crichton's latest book, *State of Fear*, will be found on the fiction shelves of your local bookstore. Astute booksellers will relegate it to the section on abnormal psychology for paranoid schizophrenics.

If you prefer a novel that describes women by their physical attributes and shallow relationships, and that describes men by their personalities and intellect, then this book should adorn your bookcase.

Crichton, of *Jurassic Park* fame, has made a career of obfuscating scientific fact with fiction. His latest work of fiction derides concerns over global climate change. He naively points to the lack of substantive proof that the globe is "abruptly" and "catastrophically" heating up.

Crichton's agenda is manifest. If you would hope to preserve an unfettered natural legacy, don't expect Crichton's support.

The book trivializes guilt or concern over resource depletion. It regards nature as an assortment of marketable commodities, free for the taking. The effect of present day actions on the future will never be known with certainty until a later date. It is possible that current greenhouse gas emissions just happen to coincide with a natural global trend. For Crichton, that's reason enough to disregard the emission of greenhouse gases. When the proof of destruction is rock solid it will be too late to act. It will be interesting to see how Crichton capitalizes on that

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topic in his sequel.

The book raises an interesting issue. How might we weigh the risk of uncertainty over global climate change? Shall resources be depleted and waste be generated until the certainty of proof resonates in history books? Shall the next generation become the unwary stakeholders in our wild gamble?

Crichton errs on the side of the reckless. His belief system displays little regard for the future. Surely there is an audience for this book. Good ancestors are not likely to be found among them.

Crichton offers the observation that the world did not end on January 1, 2000. Fears over Y2K were highly overrated. Therefore, by his assessment, concerns over global climate change must also be a hoax. There are few shortcomings in this book that couldn't be resolved in a study of logical

fallacies.

Characters standing in the way of the author's logical fallacies generally do not fare well. Crichton offers creative alternatives for silencing the opposition. In a graphic moment, one in particular is fiercely devoured by a tribe of cannibals.

Plants inhale carbon dioxide. Accordingly, increased CO₂ levels offer plants more to inhale. Crichton employs this principle to venture into another logical fallacy. More CO₂ is better because plants get bigger! Unsurprisingly, the book neglects to point out that accelerated plant growth merely spreads the plant's same nutrients over a larger area. In a richer CO₂ environment, the nutrient intake per volume of leaf area will be lower. Herbivorous and omnivorous animals consume the same quantity of leafy material, and are therefore deprived of essential nutrients. This nutritional deficiency then ripples throughout the web of life. Don't expect to find the results of this study here.

State of Fear
by Michael
Crichton
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HarperCollins
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Crichton's statistics reveal that not all points on the globe respond equally to global climate change. Global temperatures have followed atmospheric CO₂ concentrations over the ages. Some places will rise in temperature. Others will fall. By identifying specific regions with falling temperatures, Crichton attempts to blur the effect of greenhouse gases.

The environmental activists in this work of fiction are in a frenzy over "abrupt" and "catastrophic" global

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warming. As CO₂ emissions have resulted from the Industrial Age, we know it to be a gradual process developing over 150 years.

Crichton claims the politics of science-funding has reduced university professors to fearmongers when sharpening their pencils for grant applications. Trust no one. Vested interests in academia stalk funding by stretching the frightful truth.

Crichton offers an appeal to a defined audience. Smokers flustered by laws banning cigarettes in public places will be gratified to find he shares their view. The book panders to readers who believe that groundwater contamination, pollution, windborne particulates, global climate change, and atmospheric carcinogens are mere delusions.

By drawing upon a string of logical fallacies, Crichton leads the reader to conclude that environmental concerns are a disguised effort to gain mind control. Crichton sees environmentalists as

the intellectual successors to the Nazis and Stalinists. Power is derived by instilling fear, ergo, the title *State of Fear*.

Crichton ridicules Malthus who, over 200 years ago, predicted resource depletion. "I think," if Crichton can be so classified, "for anyone to believe in impending resource scarcity, after two hundred years of such false alarms, is kind of weird." To ignore disappearing fish stocks, water shortages, and resource deletion requires a concerted ostrich-like effort.

In this book, an environmentalist is transformed into a skeptic. In making the transition, the character finds his colleague, a jet-setting environmentalist, has become an eco-terrorist just to make a point. He then meets up with DDT enthusiasts. "Actually," Crichton reports, "(DDT) was so safe you could eat it." Michael, it's time to stop ingesting and smoking the DDT. Get real!

Following Crichton's environmental ethic, we would apply our skills toward managing nature, rather than preserving it. Reading this book might cause one to ponder how nature managed to survive without human managerial intervention for the first 3.5 billion years of evolution. So how would Crichton's conservation ethic operate? Here's a clue: "We would

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set aside a wide variety of wilderness tracts and run them under different management strategies.”

Crichton twists the facts, demonizes a caring sentiment, and offers feel good prospects for fossil fuel depletion. *State of Fear* would more aptly be titled *State of Callous Indifference*.