

Donald Trump vs. Good Science

By Norm R. Allen Jr.

There was a time in the not-too-distant past when I believed that it did not really matter who became the President of the U.S. I was of the opinion that any moron could reach that position without any serious damage being done to the nation.

However, President Donald Trump has quickly disabused me of that foolish notion. Trump is the most anti-intellectual, anti-science, hopelessly irrational, conspiracy-minded president in the history of this nation. And the damage that he could do to the world is truly terrifying.

Recently, Trump has been in the news for his willingness to speak with President Kim Jong Un of North Korea about denuclearization. However, what has not received front-page news coverage is the fact that he has done so *without the help of a White House science adviser*.

According to a story by Coral Davenport in the *New York Times*:

Trump is the first president since 1941 not to name a science adviser, a position created during World War II to guide the Oval Office on technical matters ranging from nuclear warfare to global pandemics. As a businessman and president, Trump has proudly been guided by his instincts. Nevertheless, people who have participated in past nuclear negotiations say the absence of such high-level expertise could put him at a tactical disadvantage in one of the weightiest diplomatic matters of his presidency. (“In the Trump administration, science and advice have been made unwelcome,” the *Buffalo News*, June 10, 2018, p. A4.)

The story goes on to quote R. Nicholas Burns, who headed negotiations with India about nuclear power for civilian uses during the Presidency of George W. Bush. Burns pointed out that without a powerful senior science adviser at the negotiations, the U.S. is at a clear disadvantage. “You can be sure the other side will have that,” he said.

The article summed up leadership under Trump as “the death of science in shaping U.S. policy.” As evidence supporting this disturbing claim, the story related:

There is no chief scientist at the State Department, where science is central to foreign policy matters such as cybersecurity and global warming. Nor is there a chief scientist at the Department of Agriculture. Trump last year nominated Sam Clovis, *a former talk show host with no scientific background*, to the position, but he withdrew his name and no new nomination has been made. (Emphasis added.)

The article pointed out that due to Trump’s war on science, the Interior Department and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration have done away with their committees addressing climate science. Moreover, the Food and Drug Administration eliminated its Food Advisory Committee that addressed the issue of food safety.

All of this is added to the long-known fact that government scientists complain that the Trump Administration is squashing their research. Trump is alienating scientists to the point where many of them are moving to other countries to do their research. Trump is, in many ways, dumbing down the United States.

Trump has taken the lead in attacking Obama’s climate change policies. The article quoted William K. Reilly, head of the Environmental Protection Agency during the Presidency of George H.W. Bush. Reilly says that Trump’s moves “will diminish the characterization of pollution as risky.” John Walke, who specializes in clean-air policy with the Natural Resources Defense Council, noted that EPA head Scott Pruitt, “wants to set a definition of clean air that is medically unsafe.”

Trump and his cronies are primarily interested in making money for big businesses, the environment and the people (and other animals) be damned. They are suppressing research that shows the relationship between surface mining and poor health. They see the Earth as a playpen with unlimited riches for the wealthy.

However, it is good to know that some people will not sell out. The story pointed out that:

In January, the majority of members of the Interior Department's National Parks System Advisory Board, which advises on management of national parks, resigned to protest Trump administration policies. Tony Knowles, the former head of the board, said [Interior Department secretary Ryan] Zinke "appears to have no interest in confronting the agenda of science, the effect of climate change, pursuing the protection of the ecosystem."

Trump loves playing to his deluded, ignorant base and their hatred of "elites," scientists and other smart people deemed too big for their britches. All the while, the world continues to suffer at the hands of these ridiculously incompetent, unreasoning buffoons.