

Pyramid Scheme

Meet the “green” radicals who want to plan your menu

By Erik Telford

Summary: Some of the most important decisions that directly affect American families are quietly being made by a small handful of academics with very little real-world experience, and almost no oversight. The Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee meets every five years to update the nutrition guidelines that are used to set meal plans in schools, military facilities, prisons, and federal cafeterias as well as SNAP benefits, more commonly known as food stamps. Unfortunately, this year the Committee is stacked with radical “green” activists who are placing sustainability and a push towards veganism (no meat, fish, eggs, or dairy) over sound nutrition principles.

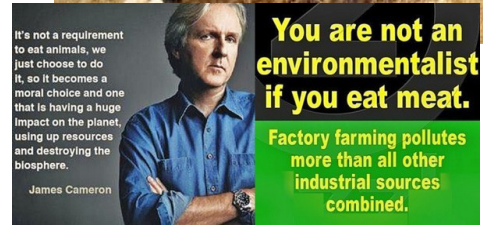
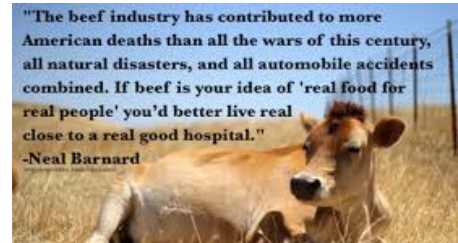
“Has any attention been paid to farmers’ markets with respect to carbon footprint and sustainability?”

When a taxpayer-funded committee met recently to design the government’s guidelines for nutrition—nutrition!—the committee addressed that concern. As the Obama administration seeks to influence, even control, what we eat, the stuff of satire is now reality.

Meet the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC): 15 career academics hand-selected by the administration to set the government’s official guidelines for healthful eating. The professors of DGAC have a unique view of the world of nutrition, and it has more to do with the “green” movement’s quest for nirvana than food science and common sense.

Their work is the basis for the Food Pyramid, which in turn is used to design the menu in schools and day care, on military bases and other government facilities like prisons, for food stamp beneficiaries, and eventually throughout society.

Committee member Frank Hu of the Harvard School of Public Health has sounded the



Government food recommendations, which evolved into the Food Pyramid and are now becoming coercive, have been hijacked by vegans/environmentalists.

alarm on “the magnitude of risk associated with very moderate red meat consumption,” and he promotes the idea that, to save ourselves, “we should switch to a plant-based diet.”

Hu’s views, based on inconclusive studies, place him in the minority of food scientists and nutritionists, who generally favor a balanced, higher-protein diet that includes a variety of meats and plant-based foods.

But as a member of DGAC, Hu is one of the most powerful professors in America. He and the other committee members have sweeping authority to shape the way we eat. Regardless of whether you prefer fresh kale or crisp bacon, you may soon be living in the vegetarian utopia of the ivory tower elite, all thanks to a little-known government experiment that is on the verge of going horribly wrong.

Environmentalism force-feeding

The Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee is a joint venture of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services. It meets every 5 years to set the government’s official nutrition recommendations.

Ideally, DGAC fosters healthful eating. In reality, current members of the committee have little interest in crafting dietary guide-

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lines based on nutritional science. Rather, they seek to force “green” lifestyles on unsuspecting Americans. Through expansion of the nanny state and surveillance state, the academics on the committee seek to use federal government oversight to impose their own practices—or, at least, those they espouse—on others. They seek to coerce people into thinking, eating, and living a certain way.

They extol vegetarianism or its most extreme form, veganism, which avoids all animal products, including eggs. They decry meat as “unsustainable.” They support government intrusions such as Michael Bloomberg’s ban on trans fats and his attempt to ban large sodas. In their eyes, Bloombergian social engineering projects are only the start. A nationwide ban on added sugar sounds more like the goal of a cartoon villain in a bad children’s movie than a public policy proposal in a free and democratic nation, but according to at least one committee member, it’s something we could and should explore. The expansion of the federal regulatory state that would be needed to save Americans from their own desserts makes this proposal cost-prohibitive, but the casualness with which committee members have suggested draconian measures is chilling.

The DGAC members are not satisfied merely to expand government power through regulations. They also believe that Americans need a stronger surveillance state, so the government can determine who is complying with regulations and then make intrusive “suggestions” to those it deems in need of help making food choices.

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The members use as an excuse the so-called obesity epidemic (not really an epidemic, of course, except metaphorically, because obesity isn’t caused by infectious disease). While obesity is a significant concern with regard to people’s private health, such coercive, ideological modification of private behavior unrelated to public health is outside the Constitutional power of the federal government.

Social engineering, much of it based on junk science rather than legitimate food science, is not the proper job of such a body.

Meet the Sustainability Police

At the committee’s January 2014 meeting, DGAC chairman Barbara Millen didn’t wait long to push the matter of dietary guidelines to the side. Millen turned to the matter of how data on food access and food marketing would help the committee “identify models for effective population behavior change.”

What behavior changes do Millen and her colleagues have in mind? You name a practice having to do with food, and they probably want to control it. The theme for the meeting, permeating nearly every topic, was radical environmentalism.

Millen opened the meeting: “The committee deliberated about what topics we’d like to have information on this morning and chose three that are really important themes for our progress and our deliberations going forward. One is the health care system, and prevention, and opportunities as they present to the DGAC. The second is food quality, security, and agricultural sustainability. And the third is the importance of looking at the global dietary pattern as it relates to health promotion and disease prevention.”

Miriam Nelson, a professor at Tufts, added, “We need to make sure that the guidelines and the policies are promoting those foods . . . [that] are sustainably grown and have the littlest impact on the environment.” She also noted that in crafting the 2015 dietary guidelines, the committee was “also really addressing the issue of long-term sustainability.”

The term “sustainability” is used to refer to practices that, in the view of environmentalists, do not deplete resources or cause disasters, real or imagined, like man-made Global Warming. Often, the term is used

incorrectly (for example, when it refers to wind power and solar power, which require the use of unrecoverable resources but are called “sustainable” for political reasons). With regard to food and nutrition, “sustainability” is a euphemism for a vegetarian diet. That’s because, as environmentalists measure such things, cultivating plants has a lesser effect on the ecosystem than raising livestock. Thus, those who eat “plant-based diets” (i.e., practice vegetarianism) live more “sustainable” lives than conventional omnivores.

Vegan virtues and the War on Meat

DGAC members’ out-of-touch views distort their ability to tackle serious issues pragmatically. In most people’s minds, farmers’ markets are synonymous with fresh, healthy produce and with support for local agriculture. But committee members look negatively at farmers’ markets because of their supposed carbon footprint. If the professors on the DGAC find farmers’ markets insufficiently green, what could possibly satisfy them?

Another speaker at the meeting, “sustainability expert” and radical environmentalist Kate Clancy, helped answer that question. Clancy called for “urban agriculture,” “climate change adaptation,” and “a plant-based diet.” She suggested that meat consumption is incompatible with a vision of sustainability.

The DGAC attempts to veil its war on meat with vague terms like “sustainable agriculture,” but make no mistake: Several of the committee members are outright hostile to meat consumption and would love nothing more than to push Americans to go vegetarian *en masse*. The committee’s skepticism regarding meat is manifested in the unreasonably small allotment that the food pyramid grants for lean proteins.

And if the DGAC decides to discourage meat consumption—based on personal ideals and not science—children, soldiers, and millions of other Americans could end up malnourished. By reducing the amount of lean meat served in federal cafeterias, the government would deprive growing kids and front-line warriors of essential nutrients. An inappropriate reduction in recommended meat consumption could also force the cash-strapped federal government to spend

more on food, because plant-based meat alternatives that provide needed proteins are often more expensive than lean meat per gram of protein.

Worse, a meat-deficient set of guidelines would effectively trick much of the population into abandoning an entire category of food with no scientifically sound evidence. If there's one aspect of nutrition at which the government has excelled, it's successfully characterizing things as "bad." Very few people had heard of trans fats before the FDA sounded the alarm on them in 2003, but today, these fats are synonymous in many people's minds with "junk food," and food labels proudly proclaim that products are "trans fat free" in order to convince you they are "healthy." If the DGAC takes a similarly harsh tone against meat, Americans could be driven through the forces of advertising and pop culture to drastically alter their diets—all because of junk science and personal agendas.

Bloomberg's Brigade

The focus at the DGAC meeting in January on "sustainable" agriculture could lead to a level of nanny-statism that would make Bloomberg himself blush. If the professors can't force America into vegetarianism directly, they can at least attempt to make it more difficult, more expensive, or outright unlawful to consume the foods that vegetarians find objectionable.

The DGAC's priorities became clear during a presentation by Sonia Angell, who recounted her experience in restricting trans fat consumption in New York City. The members of the DGAC expressed admiration, even adoration for her. Alice Lichtenstein, the vice chairman, had written in support of the bans Angell oversaw, and introduced Angell as "one of my heroes," citing not only her oversight of the Bloomberg food regulations and government food procurement restrictions but also her work at the national level mandating sodium reductions.

Angell spoke about the need to make "unhealthy" lifestyles more difficult through taxation and regulation. By taxing unhealthy food choices, government can force the creation of a healthy "default," so that the public will choose the healthier option automatically without realizing they are being

manipulated. Even if Americans resist this "nudge," as some call such manipulation, it could become cost-prohibitive for lower-income Americans to eat foods not approved by the elite.

In response to Angell's presentation, Milten said enthusiastically, "you've certainly showed how effective mandatory regulation is." At that point, members of the committee let their imaginations run wild, bandying about the other types of food the government could and should keep away from the simple people.

Nelson, the Tufts professor, called the trans fat ban a model for restricting consumption of added sugars and asked Angell how the committee could execute the same crackdown on sugar nationally as New York City's government did with regard to trans fats. Hu, broadening his horizons beyond the anti-meat crusade, asked how the DGAC could learn from New York City's handling of the backlash on the soda ban. Nelson commented that sustainability was "the question we are spending the most time on now."

Following Angell, each subsequent expert spoke about how to promote, prevent, or ban one dietary habit or another. If the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and of Health and Human Services had expected a scholarly discussion on the number of grams of polyunsaturated fat a healthy 30-year-old man should consume, they would have been disappointed.

No speaker pushed the envelope farther than University of North Carolina Professor Deborah Tate, who called for "comprehensive lifestyle interventions" as an umbrella strategy for manipulating Americans to lose weight through direct government intervention. Key components, Tate suggested, could include weekly contact between federal agents and obese people either in person or by telephone. This "comprehensive diet monitoring" could include multiple face-to-face contacts per month (all at the taxpayer's expense), because, she noted, "intensive contact is more effective." In-person visits won't suffice, though. DGAC members suggested enrolling the obese in a daily Internet weigh-in program using digital scales and sending them morning text messages, offering words of advice and encouragement. One shudders to imagine what these profes-

sors might text to a 400-pound 55-year-old who has yet to embrace the plant-based diet.

Radical ideas, real-world results

The DGAC's radicalism is frightening, but to fully understand the threat the professors pose to our everyday liberties, one must understand the committee's history and influence. Thirty years ago, the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services decided that the federal government should provide more nutritional guidance to Americans. The two bureaucratic behemoths jointly launched the DGAC, which is assigned the task of establishing official recommendations for healthy eating. It meets every five years to update the guidelines.

The Obama administration is rife with these sorts of committees, which make recommendations that make Progressives feel good and give leftist professors additions to their *curricula vitae*. But the DGAC is a rarity: an unelected and lightly supervised body with the power to change the everyday lives of millions of Americans.

To understand the DGAC's powerful role, consider the nutrition facts label on the next package of food you see. The label lists not only the amount of calories, fat, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrates, protein, and various vitamins and minerals the food contains, but also a Percent Daily Value for each of these nutrients. Larger nutrition labels will include the full set of daily values—for example, for an adult man, 2,000 calories, 65 grams of fat, 20 grams of saturated fat, 300 mg of cholesterol, 2,400 mg of sodium, 300 grams of carbohydrates, and 25 grams of fiber.

Most people can't list these numbers off the top of their heads but rely on the calculated percentages. It's one thing to see that a cheeseburger has 32 grams of fat, but it's far more striking to hear that the amount is 50 percent of your daily recommended fat allowance. Juice bottles proclaim that one serving contains 100 percent of your Vitamin C needs, and bread bags tell you each slice is good for two servings of whole grains.

Ever wonder who decides how much Vitamin C is 100 percent, how much sodium is too much sodium, and exactly what constitutes a serving of vegetables and how many

of these you need each day? It's the DGAC, which theoretically takes careful looks at the latest advances in food science and nutrition to create a set of recommendations for balanced, healthful eating.

The DGAC's work sets the recommended amounts of nutrients used to calculate the percentages for those nutrition labels, and also goes a step farther by telling us the best way to consume these nutrients. Its most recent set of guidelines, for example, discouraged consumption of soft drinks, processed grains, and solid fats, and directed Americans toward whole grains. Today, "whole grain" appears on countless packages at the supermarket.

More importantly, the federal government uses the DGAC's guidelines to decide what types and quantities of food it bulk-orders. When you think about it, McDonald's "Millions and Millions Served" slogan applies just as accurately to the government, which is responsible for feeding over 1.3 million active-duty military personnel and over 200,000 federal prisoners three meals per day. Additionally, many of the nation's nearly 50 million public school students and 17 million federal, state, and local government employees take at least one meal per day in a government-run cafeteria. All in all, more than 20 percent of Americans have daily access to meals served under Uncle Sam's auspices.

With so many mouths to feed, the federal government needs to mass-order ingredients and mass-produce balanced and nutritionally complete meals. Thus, it leans heavily on the DGAC's guidelines to determine what is served in cafeterias and mess kits. Likewise, many state and local governments rely on the guidelines. Any changes in the official dietary guidelines—an additional suggested serving of vegetables per day, an emphasis on whole grains, or a call for reduced meat consumption—can have a dramatic effect on this entire system, and lead to changes for those who rely on the government for meals, from kindergartners to Navy SEALs.

But those who take their meals directly from government facilities are hardly the only Americans affected. The USDA uses the same dietary guidelines to directly calculate benefits for low-income families with chil-

dren and disabled adults. Food distributed through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), which provides assistance to pregnant women and mothers of children under age 5, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), which supplements meal service in day care centers, must be aligned with the committee's official recommendations. Over 12 million people receive assistance through WIC and CACFP.

Moreover, although the DGAC guidelines do not directly govern the much larger Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or "food stamps"), the government uses them to influence the eating habits and purchasing patterns of SNAP recipients through a variety of educational campaigns.

No matter how you slice it, the DGAC guidelines matter. From soldiers taking three meals a day on military bases to low-income mothers on federal assistance to the millions of dieters who use nutrition facts labels to count their calories, the committee's recommendations affect how we eat every day. When the DGAC makes a mistake, disaster can ensue.

A legacy of failure

The first food guidelines put forth by the U.S. government were issued by an official in 1894. By 1916, the set of recommendations was refined to list five main types of food, a list that turned into the "Basic Seven" by 1943. By 1974, Sweden's National Board of Health and Welfare came up with the food pyramid.

In 1992, the USDA shaped the DGAC's recommendations into an infographic that was easy to read and comply with. And so the food pyramid—bread on the bottom, sugary snacks on top—became a staple of every classroom and dietary brochure in the country. For 13 years, the pyramid was the government's official model for healthy eating. It was a nutritional disaster on all levels. The high-carb, low-protein pyramid recommended up to 11 servings of grain per day (with no distinction drawn between high-fiber whole grains and the empty refined grains found in Wonder Bread), but called for only 2-3 servings of protein-rich foods like meat, fish, nuts, and eggs, out of fears of these foods' fat contents.

This plan was based on only the most rudimentary understanding of nutrition and failed to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy foods within its simple categories. As we now know, the high-carb diet is suitable for marathon runners but almost no one else. The DGAC's food pyramid was upside-down for the most part. Empty carbohydrates, including the natural sugars and starches found in many of the grain products the food pyramid extolled, cause spikes in blood sugar and are easily converted to fat and stored around the midsection. Proteins, the building blocks of musculoskeletal growth (which, in turn, is the catalyst for weight loss), should not have been relegated to the fringes of the pyramid. The DGAC also lumped all "fats" together in one small, ominous block, which turned Americans away from the healthy oil-based fats that are an essential source of energy by including those fats with less healthy solid fats like lard.

Then, as now, the DGAC's work was more a product of politics than of food science. Grains didn't end up as a disproportionately large block on the pyramid by accident. Rather, the committee bowed to political pressure from the agricultural industry, which reaped the benefits of the ensuing demand for bread, pasta, and other grain-based products. The committee's allegiances have recently shifted from the food industry to radical environmentalism, but its hands remain unclean, and if history is any indicator, the public health consequences could be devastating.

The upside-down food pyramid's official 13-year reign, from 1992 to 2005, happened to coincide with the initial spike in diabetes (an increase that continues today), as well as ever-rising rates of childhood obesity and adult cardiovascular disease. Although other factors have contributed to this trio of health nightmares, the DGAC's failure to craft balanced dietary recommendations cannot be overlooked, as the generation of children and their parents who followed the government's lead unwittingly consumed unbalanced and unhealthy diets.

In its 2005 and 2010 meetings, the DGAC compounded its food pyramid mistake with a pair of indecipherable "improvements" to the triangular graphic. First

came MyPyramid.gov, which rearranged the old pyramid's layers, but maintained an emphasis on grains at the expense of lean protein. Five years later, this was replaced by ChooseMyPlate.gov, which in its attempts to be interactive tells us nothing at all about healthy eating. Despite somewhat sounder food science, the government has been unable to successfully market either of these alternatives to its old pyramid, and the DGAC's 1992 mistake continues to encourage poor eating habits to this day.

The distorted view from the Ivory Tower

Rates of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease in the United States are jarringly high for a First World nation. The DGAC could have used this year's sessions to focus on creating simple and effective guidelines for everyday healthy living, but such an effort was doomed from the start, because the Obama administration seemed intent on loading the committee with Far Left idealists instead of experienced pragmatists. An examination of the committee's roster reveals that many of its members are far more concerned with social engineering than with food science and sound nutrition.

Professor Hu has the most notable trail of radical statements, but many of his colleagues are cut from the same paternalistic cloth. DGAC vice chairman Alice Lichtenstein, a Tufts professor, was one of the Bloomberg administration's most vocal supporters in the academic realm.

Bloomberg himself has his fingerprints elsewhere on the committee. Professor Cheryl Anderson, another member, has her offices at Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health, which has received over \$1.1 billion in donations from the former mayor.

Other members of the committee have tenure at universities from Yale to Purdue to Georgetown and have undertaken an impressive array of major research projects, producing highly regarded publications. The common thread is that none holds or has held a job outside of academia. There is not a single business owner, family physician, working nutritionist, food services executive, or federal nutrition program director in the mix. In fact, several of the committee

members appear to have continuously held one university position or another since receiving their undergraduate degrees.

The lack of diversity on the DGAC is astonishing. These men and women who have by and large never worked outside academia simply are not capable of thinking like large-scale food distributors, working nutritionists, pediatricians, commercial food cultivators and processors, and federal nutrition program administrators, all of whom will need to work with the committee's recommendations on a practical level. Although representatives of some of these groups will testify before the committee, none will have a say in crafting the official guidelines, and there is ample reason to believe that pragmatic concerns may ultimately be back-burnered.

Where the committee's homogeneity detracts from its ability to work practically, it enhances its potential for Progressive groupthink. By first assembling professors who have spent their lives conjecturing nutritional utopias and then giving them free rein to craft guidelines as they see fit, the government has invited the committee to turn loose a radical experiment, with the American people as the guinea pig.

Shamefully, much of that experimentation will be on the most vulnerable members of society. If the DGAC decides to tinker with logical dietary guidelines to satisfy members' environmentalist sympathies, those affected would include low-income mothers, infants, poor children on free-lunch programs, and disabled adults in day care centers. These are many of the Americans most in need of a balanced, nutritious meal, and the DGAC's grand social experiment could include reducing their meat allowance and banning sugar and trans fats—two sources of calories, albeit unhealthy, that are often most affordable and accessible to people with low incomes.

The DGAC is falling victim to academic hubris, one of the oldest tragic flaws known to man. Holding an impressive array of doctoral degrees, the professors truly believe themselves to be the smartest people in the room, and feel compelled to use their vast knowledge to change the lives of Americans through whatever means necessary. If Frank

Hu wants you to switch from a balanced diet to a plant-based one, it's not because he has a different opinion on nutrition than you. It's because he's smarter than you and you haven't realized that yet, and the government needs to take steps to ensure that simpletons like you follow the leads of the smart people.

Often, such people fail to understand the differences between an idea that sounds good on paper and an idea that works in practice. Their lack of real-world experience allows them to conveniently skip the implementation step, and they rarely consider the financial, bureaucratic, and personal costs. In their eyes, if a nationwide ban on sugar would lead to statistical improvements in public health—which is hardly a sure thing—the government simply must take immediate action to ban sugar. The spirit of detached paternalism that pervades the DGAC is more dangerous than a spirit of outright malice would be.

A wasted opportunity

The DGAC is hardly a superfluous federal committee. If it does its job correctly, it can help Americans eat better, indirectly saving taxpayers money by reducing government health care spending on the various maladies that are caused by unhealthful eating. All things being equal, a healthier America is in everyone's best interests, and it makes sense for the government to charge the people who best understand nutrition with helping the rest of us understand how to eat well and thrive.

Undoubtedly many professors, physicians, and private-sector nutritionists would be willing to use the DGAC's powers to do exactly this, but the 15 academics the Obama administration chose simply have other goals. The group's final guidelines won't be known for several months, but through their statements and the radical tones of the first two committee meetings, the professors have already told us all we need to know. The 2014-15 session of the DGAC is a waste of time and money, and it may set nutrition in America back for decades to come.

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GreenNotes

In **Florida**, a group called the **Evangelical Environmental Network** (EEN) claimed to have 12,000 signatures on a petition that calls on **Gov. Rick Scott** (R) to “create a plan to reduce carbon pollution” (by which EEN means harmless carbon dioxide) and “confront the impacts of a changing climate.” **The Rev. Mitch Hescocx**, president of EEN, appealed to Scott’s religion: “We’re hoping that with his values and his understanding of scripture, that helping him to understand climate change in a way that uses the values that he and I probably share—more conservative, pro-life values—will help him understand climate change is a real and very big threat to Florida.” Hescocx did not explain how environmentalist policies, which target working Americans with skyrocketing electricity prices and which threaten to trap billions of people around the world in abject poverty, are “pro-life.”

In response to Hescocx’s petition, **Neil Frank**, director of the **National Hurricane Center** from 1974 to 1987, noted that “Unfortunately, the science of the [Global Warming] debate has been hijacked by those seeking a political and profit advantage . . . **Dr. Ryan Maue** at **Florida State University** has shown that there has been a global reduction in the number of cyclones, typhoons and hurricanes, and in their accumulated energy, over the last 30 years. In Florida it has been eight years since the last major hurricane. As you know, it has not always been that way. Rev. Hescocx is probably not aware that Florida was hit by six major hurricanes from 1944-1950.” During a typical eight-year period, five or six hurricanes hit Florida, compared to none in the past eight years.

The three-day **U.S.-African Leaders Summit** held in early August in **Washington, D.C.**, focused largely on efforts to send aid to **African** countries (a major effect of which will be to prop up corrupt African dictatorships; only 3% of **sub-Saharan Africa** has a free press). But environmentalism was also on the agenda. At the summit, **U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry**, whose billionaire wife is one of the world’s top environmentalists, admonished leaders *not* to create more farms or farmland. The reason: Global Warming. “Rather than convert natural areas to new farmland, a process that typically releases significant amounts of carbon pollution [*sic*: carbon dioxide], we can, instead, concentrate our efforts on making existing farmland more productive.” The people of sub-Saharan Africa, where (outside of **South Africa**) the average income is 86 cents a day, could not be reached for comment.

The **London Telegraph** reports that **Pascal Hustin**, international program director of **Greenpeace International**, commutes round-trip twice a month between **Luxemburg** and **Amsterdam**. Meanwhile, a Greenpeace webpage declares that “the growth in aviation . . . is ruining our chances of stopping dangerous climate change.”

In the **U.S.**, working people—even members of unions that once supported **President Obama**—are beginning to fight back against the wealthy elites of the environmentalist movement. The **Beckley (West Virginia) Register-Herald** reported: “The echo of people chanting, ‘Hey, hey, **EPA**, don’t take our jobs away’ could be heard in downtown **Pittsburgh** . . . The voices came from about 5,000 **United Mine Workers of America** members and their families, along with other unions such as the **Boilermakers** and the **International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers** [IBEW], marching through the streets. . . . When the march arrived at the federal building, about 15 UMW leaders and other unions’ leaders stood their ground when asked by police to leave the sidewalk. All were arrested for civil disobedience,” including the national president of the mine workers union. The amount of coverage of this event on the broadcast networks, according to **Rich Noyes** of the **Media Research Center**: None.

IBEW president **Edwin D. Hill** wrote in the **Wall Street Journal**: “The EPA’s plan, according to its own estimates, will require closing coal-fired power plants over the next five years that generate between 41 and 49 gigawatts (49,000 megawatts) of electricity. That’s approximately enough capacity to power the state of **Georgia** at any given time. Unless that capacity is replaced, the nationwide equivalent of the Peach State would go dark. When gauged by accepted industry metrics, the agency’s plans also would result in the loss of some 52,000 permanent direct jobs in utilities, mining and rail and at least another 100,000 jobs in related industries. High-skill, middle-class jobs would be lost, falling heavily in rural communities that have few comparable employment opportunities.” He added, “The U.S. is already facing the loss of 60 gigawatts of power over the next three years, the result of older coal plants’ being forced to shut down because they cannot comply with the EPA’s Mercury and Air Toxics Standards enacted in 2012.”

CRC’s Henry Haller interns Marc Connuck, Maria Girard, and J.T. Mekjian contributed to this report.