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## The Only Thing You Have to Fear Is Environmentalist Logic

By Rich Tucker

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According to the religious sect “Family Radio,” the world will end on May 21. That’s an awfully specific date, but it does allow believers just enough time to get their affairs in order. Other doomsday prophets are less specific, but no less certain that the end is nigh.

“Today, underneath the solar panels, there’s a new set of deadbolt locks on all my doors,” environmental activist Mike Tidwell wrote in The Washington Post on Feb. 27. “There’s a new Honda GX390 portable power generator in my garage, ready to provide backup electricity. And last week I bought a starter kit to raise tomatoes and lettuce behind barred basement windows. “I’m not a survivalist or an ‘end times’ enthusiast,” he adds. “When it comes to climate change, I’m just a realist.”

That’s a dire prediction, so let’s consider the evidence he offers to back it up. “In the Washington region alone, in barely a year, we’ve annihilated all records for snow accumulation, we’ve seen appalling power outages associated with year-round thunderstorms, and we’ve experienced the hottest summer in the 140 years we’ve been measuring.”

Amazing. It snowed in winter and was hot in summer? In D.C.? Does that now qualify as what New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman called “global weirding?”

As for the power outages, most of those seem to be caused by falling trees and tree limbs. Large branches hang over, and often grow around, power lines. Just a few inches of snow, freezing rain or a brief windstorm can easily bring these branches down, knocking out power to entire blocks or even neighborhoods.

The solution is simple, as Patrick Michaels of the CATO Institute explained after a 2003 hurricane swept through the area: Take down all the trees within, say, 50 feet of any power lines. Then there won’t be any branches to knock out power. Although it would be effective at preventing outages, somehow one suspects that Tidwell would object to this approach.

The environmentalist says he’s worried that his neighbors, less prepared for the coming destruction than he is, will soon be knocking on, or knocking down, his door. This is not a person who thinks highly of his neighbors, it would seem.

Tidwell, though, doesn’t think they will be a problem much longer, since he says time is running out for humanity. He predicts that food riots, such as those that erupted overseas in 2008 and 2010, could soon sweep the U.S.

Of course, there’s an easy way to increase America’s food supply: stop burning it. Some 40 percent of our corn crop is diverted to ethanol instead of being eaten by humans and livestock. The fault isn’t with the environment – our corn crops are plentiful. The fault is with the government’s policy, as former President Bill Clinton noted recently. “[W]e have to become energy independent, but we don’t want to do it at the cost of food riots,” he told reporters.

Oh, and speaking of fuel, Tidwell also brags about his \$1,000 generator. He bought it because, “My solar panels, by themselves, can’t power my home.” That, of course, is the problem with solar panels. And windmills. And geothermal energy. Those sources are never enough, and need to be bolstered by old fashioned electricity.

Well, that generator will require gasoline to operate. Assuming Tidwell is willing to unlock his doors long enough to leave his home and pull the cord to start the generator, he’d still need to be able to buy fuel for it. That means he’s assuming that at least some portion of our economy – the segment that refines oil into gasoline and delivers it to stations for him to drive to and purchase – will still be working after his ecoapocalypse erupts.

He finishes with some bold predictions. “Our trees are going to keep falling in ways we’ve never seen before,” Tidwell writes. “And our power will keep going out, no matter how many ‘service improvements’ Pepco makes.” Well, yes. Unless the power company cuts down all the trees that hang over power lines or buries all its wires.

“Our streets are going to flood. Our neighborhood bridges will wash out. Our roofs will sag from freak snowstorms and bake from unimaginable heat,” he adds. Since he’s being so bold, I’ll try to match him. First, I predict the world will continue to exist after May 22. That one is easy.

Next, I’ll predict that humanity will still be thriving for decades, even centuries, to come. Human ingenuity has generated a better life for a

3/10/2011

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growing number of people for dozens of generations. Unless we lock ourselves indoor to hide from imaginary crises, human ingenuity will continue to thrive, decades after Tidwell has unloaded his generator on Craigslist.

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