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## Pro-fossil fuel advocate roughed up by climate change activists

By Valerie Richardson

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The environmental movement is turning up the heat as President Obama heads to New York for Tuesday's global climate gathering, but climate-change skeptics are calling for cooler heads to prevail.

Take Alex Epstein, who took part in the People's Climate March in New York City. An estimated 300,000 protesters attended the event, but Mr. Epstein wasn't hard to spot: He was the guy wearing the green "I [heart] fossil fuels" T-shirt.

Mr. Epstein did get roughed up a bit — a few protesters tried to steal his "I [heart] Fossil Fuels" banner — but his camera crew also captured polite exchanges with surprised marchers on energy policy and climate-change science.

"There are about three billion people in the world with almost no electricity," Mr. Epstein tells one protester. "In the last couple of decades, by using coal and oil and gas, people have gotten a lot more electricity. I would like to see that continue, but this rally is saying that that should be reversed."

"I don't think that's true," responds a college-age marcher.

"Well, they want to ban 80 percent of coal use," says Mr. Epstein, who heads the Center for Industrial Progress.

He may be the cheekiest, but Mr. Epstein is hardly the only climate-change skeptic offering an alternative view to the doomsday scenario pushed by environmental groups in advance of the United Nations Climate Summit, which begins Tuesday.

Patrick Michaels, director of the Cato Institute's Center for the Study of Science, said summit attendees truly concerned with climate change should follow the example of the U.S., which has reduced its carbon-dioxide emissions more than any other nation in the past decade.

"How did we reduce our emissions so much more than anyone else? Because we had capital to invest and hydraulic fracturing of natural gas," Mr. Michaels said. "We did it because our economy is free and vibrant. Unfortunately, it will be the tendency of the U.N. participants to try and impose command-and-control-type regulations."

The one-day summit, which is expected to draw leaders from more than 120 nations, is designed to "galvanize and catalyze climate action" with the aim of enacting a new international climate treaty by the end of 2015.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon participated in Sunday's march along with New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, former Vice President Al Gore, and actors Leonardo di Caprio, Mark Ruffalo and Edward Norton.

Mr. Ban told reporters later, "There is no 'Plan B'" for action on countering climate change because, "We do not have a 'Planet B.'"

"Climate change is a defining issue of our time," he said in a statement. "There is no time to lose. If we do not take action now, we will have to pay much more."

In a hit to the summit's prestige, however, the top leaders of five industrial nations — Australia, Canada, China, Germany and India — won't be in attendance, although they do plan to send representatives.

In 2012, those five countries were responsible for 38 percent of the world's carbon-dioxide emissions, whereas the United States accounted for 14 percent, said Mr. Michaels.

"It doesn't seem like there's a lot of respect," he said

The New York City march was the largest of 2,808 "solidarity events" held last weekend in 166 countries, according to the People's Climate March. Even so, polls show climate change is a low priority for many people, bringing up the rear in the ongoing U.N. Global Survey for a Better World.

"Looks like the 310 to 400 thousand people who marched in Manhattan yesterday have priorities that are out of touch with the rest of the occupants of this lovely planet," said independent researcher Bob Gilmore, who posted the survey on the science website Watts Up With That?

Among the priorities ranking higher than climate change on the survey include "a good education," "better healthcare," and "political freedoms."

"Considering the object of the U.N. meeting, maybe the marchers should have been calling for 'honest and responsive government,' which ranked much higher than climate," Mr. Gilmore said.

Critics of the climate-change movement argue that its agenda would result in more government control over the private sector. In photos from the New York climate march, a number of marchers could be seen in photos carrying anti-capitalism and pro-socialism signs.

The website Climate Depot reported that the Communist Party USA and eight socialist organizations were among the sponsors of Sunday's march, along with several Occupy groups.

At Sunday's climate march, Mr. Epstein informed marchers carrying anti-fracking signs that "your clothes are fracked," since polyester is a petroleum product. He also pointed out that most of the signs and banners carried by protesters were made of plastic.

"You know, they actually banned wood signs here, so all of these signs are [made of] petroleum products, which they would be anyway because of the ink," Mr. Epstein said.