



# Cambridge Climate Research Associates

## *Climate Science for Human Survival*

[Climate-Research.Com](http://Climate-Research.Com)

[Climate-Research.TV](http://Climate-Research.TV)

in collaboration with the

Cambridge Community Television (CCTV) – [BeLive!](http://BeLive!) Program Series

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## Eco Views & News

Program #1 - 1 February 2009 | [Video Stream](#) of Program

[Cambridge Climate Research Associates \(CCRA\)](#)

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## What Are We Doing Here?

Timothy C. Weiskel

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Welcome to the [BeLive!](#) series on CCTV and this new program called **Eco Views & News**. What are we up to? Why is this needed? Why bother with yet another program on the environment? What do we hope to accomplish? In short, "What Are We Doing Here?" That is the question what we hope to address in this first program -- and then keep addressing, in some sense, every time we come back to share our views with you.

To begin with, then, why bother in the first place? In a media-saturated culture, why do we need yet another program on the environment?

Well, the answer is, that perhaps we wouldn't need one IF the currently available media were doing their job adequately. But this is simply not the case. This is not just our own opinion. Within mainstream media circles there are wide-spread and deep seated critiques of our news programs. No less a figure than Normal Lear -- renowned for his achievements in entertainment and media circles -- made this point recently in a program aired on the series NOW on PBS. In a similar vein, the PBS program Frontline recently examined what it called the "news war" (See: ["Something is Broken..."](#) PBS-NOW, 1 Dec. 2006; and ["News War - Part III."](#) PBS - Frontline, 20 February 2007), detailing what has gone wrong with American news media

Briefly put, while it is true to say that we live in a "free society," it is more accurate to say that we live in a "free-market society." The impact of this fact is significant when we consider the flow of information in our culture. We are not told the news; we are sold the news. What we learn is, in large measure, what some corporate owners of the news media feel we are willing to "buy."

This sad fact was made dramatically apparent during this past year in America. We have just gone through an election year with extensive -- indeed seemingly exhaustive -- media attention given to examining, quoting and questioning all the candidates about their views on a wide range of topics. Or, so it might seem at first. In fact, however, if we analyze the media coverage of election issues carefully, the glaring omissions of the mainstream commercial media become readily apparent. Consider, for example, the entire issue of global climate change. It is as if all of the major candidates decided that this would NOT be what they might call "an election issue" and they therefore avoided mentioning it.

The news media, for their part -- despite its unrivaled resources, considerable personnel with investigative skills and substantial financing -- failed to draw out the candidates on this -- the number one issue facing the human community. The League of Conservation Voters was so irritated by this virtual total absence of coverage on climate issues during the 2007 run-up to the campaign that they launched an ad on YouTube to underscore this shameful collapse of the media's responsibilities (see: ["What Are They Waiting For?," YouTube - LCVheatison](#), 18 December 2007).

Some point to the capacity of the Internet to provide us with a new kind of news -- the kind more directly related to our lives. Further, they are generally encouraged by the online skills of the younger generation who have grown up with this technology and know how to use it effectively to convey what they want. It is certainly true that the new technologies combined with the new skills of youth, make new kinds of communication possible

on a scale never before possible. Consider, for example the amazing success Andrew Baron in launching RocketBoom.Com. (See: Jim Axelrod, ["Vlogging' Enters Cyberspace," CBS News Online](#), 19 August 2005).

The problem is that with all these new skills and Internet capacities, we have not yet evolved the capacity collectively to filter the merely trivial from the truly important. While RocketBoom.Com can report instantaneously on huggable vests and blenders that work by screaming at them, one senses there are more important issues not being addressed.

More than fifty years ago, when broadcast television news was only in its infancy, Edward R. Murrow warned of this potential problem with television media. The film "Good Night and Good Luck" produced by George Clooney, has reminded us of his important insights, delivered in a historic speech on 25 October 1958. (See the beginning of ["Good Night, and Good Luck"](#)).

In part, many have turned to YouTube as a potential way of accessing this new material. But this only solves some of the problem. It is true that one can "subscribe" to individual producers of programs on YouTube. For example, the importance of YouTube has developed to such an extent that organizations as different and varied as the Associated Press, the BBC, Yale University's School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and the Vatican now have their own "space" or "channel" on YouTube. For this reason, it is sometimes easier for students at Harvard to access lectures by Professors at Harvard through various channels on the Internet than it is to hear them through their own campus facilities (See, for example: Dr. Paul R. Epstein, ["Climate Change and Health," YouTube - Google Tech Talks](#), 30 October 2006).

In fact, whole university systems have begun to use the Internet and YouTube as the backbone for communicating between their various campuses and for diffusing important university-based lectures to the wider world. As a result, it is often possible for Harvard students to learn of their Professor's thoughts by way of access to other universities public outreach facilities on the Internet (See, for example, John Holdren at the University of California, Berkeley's 2006 ["Energy Symposium: The 'Rosenfeld Effect'."](#) University of California, (28 April 2006). The University of California has a YouTube Channel devoted to its programs that reach the world in this manner (see: YouTube's - [UCTV](#)).

Our problem with the media, then, has been shifted to a new level. It is not that there is a total lack of access to information. It might even be argued that there is too much access to too much media simultaneously and without ceasing. This poses a new dilemma. In the past we counted upon the major news outlets to deliver to us some sense of what was important and deserved our extended consideration. Yet, as we have seen with the coverage of climate change during the election period, the mainstream media has totally failed in fulfilling their responsibility in this regard. On the other hand, while we have ubiquitous and continuous access to news as the Internet and broadcast media continue to converge, there are, as yet, very few dependable filters that can allow us to locate reliable and timely information on environmental problems that demand broad public understanding.

In fact, our problem is compounded by the ways in which scientific information has been intentionally distorted and stifled over the last eight years. It has taken the Canadians to point this out to us in a very insightful documentary on climate change evidence and America's public understanding of the issues. In a program called the Fifth Estate, they outlined what they referred to as the "denial machine" which operated on climate matters under the last administration. (See: ["The Denial Machine," CBC - TV](#), 15 November 2006).

This, then, is why the [Cambridge Climate Research Associates](#) are beginning this series called [Eco Views & News](#) as part of CCTV's [BeLive!](#) broadcast series. We plan primarily to offer context and commentary on the environmental news that has been presented elsewhere in the media. On occasion, we also expect to meet live with environmental analysts as well as community organizers and activists who are engaged in trying to address environmental and climate issues on a local, national or international level. The effort will be to facilitate new forms of citizen-scientist collaboration in the face of the important environmental problems confronting our community, our nation and the world.

In forthcoming programs we intend to cover a wide variety of topics that have only been partially covered in the mainstream media or not covered at all. We will further seek to highlight some of the news that has not been covered at all. Further, we hope to give special emphasis to what is happening here in Cambridge as part of our collective response to the environmental problems we must all now confront as global citizens.