Is CO2 Deadlier Than Sarin Gas? Ask a History Professor

By Josh Bloom — April 19, 2017

I’ve read some stupid _ _ _ _ (you know the word) in my time here, so nothing really surprises me anymore. Except when it does. ? Like this: "The Other Poison Gas Killing Syrians: Carbon Dioxide Emissions [1]," which was written for The Nation by Juan Cole, a history professor at the University of Michigan. Cole is as qualified to talk about science as I am to be a wet nurse.

Yes, he claims fossil fuel emissions are what Syrians should be worried about rather than a homicidal dictator. His politics are clear, but what about his science? Cole’s statement could not possibly get by a chemist without scrutiny. So let's scrutinize.

"Yet the president and most of his party are committed to increasing the daily release of hundreds of thousands of tons of a far more [than Sarin] deadly gas—carbon dioxide. ?"

Comment: While I have no knowledge of the president's intentions, I believed this statement about carbon dioxide to be scientifically untrue. Just to make sure, I did an extensive literature search. Here are the results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gas</th>
<th>Are you dead if you breathe it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarin</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO₂</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Science 1, History Professor 0.
"CO₂ is a deadly greenhouse gas that turned Venus into a torrid hellhole hot enough to melt lead."

Comment: Well, it’s a damn good thing that we have higher melting metals on Earth. Like tin.

Little known fact: Margaret Hamilton was made entirely out of lead

If The Wizard of Oz had been filmed on Venus

"We need zero emissions, not almost as many as last year."

Comment: Nothing like setting impossible goals. But, have you stopped to consider the ramifications of your advice?

- The potential harm to endangered species is incalculable:

- Our way of life will change radically
Diet Pepsi, which is vile enough on a good day, will become decidedly undrinkable.
OK, Professor Cole. I've said my piece. If you can use hysterical hyperbole to make your point, shouldn't everyone else be afforded the same opportunity? Maybe you ought to stick to history. There are plenty of people out there who don't know that Magellan was the first person to circumnavigate Neptune in 1511.

Peace out, dude.