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4-16-2008

### April 16, 2008: Global Warming and Carbon Taxes

Bruce Ledewitz

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Title: Global Warming and Carbon Taxes

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4/16/2008--This post begins an occasional series in which I will address particular issues of importance to our future. These issues do not always bear a direct relationship to Hallowed Secularism, but in the future world of Hallowed Secularism, they will of course have to be addressed. I begin this series with carbon taxes and global warming. In last Sunday's New York Times Magazine, Deborah Solomon interviewed Gorver Norquist. Norquist is the anti-tax crusader who has so much influence in the Republican Party. Undoubtedly, some of Senator John McCain's recent tax cutting proposals represent attempts to woo Norquist's support. Norquist called McCain a Bohshevik after McCain originally voted against President Bush's tax cuts. In the interview, Norquist called carbon taxes "nonsense". This was his full response on the issue: "If you let people own their land, they take care of it. That's why privately owned land is always taken care of, and the parks look like cesspools. Nobody takes care of what everybody owns." There is, of course, a great deal of truth to this observation, which was explained in Garrett Hardin's 1968 essay, The Tragedy of the Commons. It's too bad that Solomon does not know enough economics to have challenged Norquist's statements. What Norquist either does not understand or, more likely, intentionally omits is that this problem of ownership is precisely why carbon taxes are proposed. No one owns the climate. If someone owned the climate, you would have to pay that person to change it. Every time you drove your low mileage car, you would have to pay or outbid coastal property owners, ski operators, wheat farmers and so forth, for the right to take away their property and livelihoods. You would have to pay so much for this right, that climate change would not happen. It would be too expensive. Norquist doesn't want the market to work or he would support carbon taxes. He just wants to take other people's property without paying for it. He's just like the government he says he opposes. In fact, he's a thief.