

Steven Chu's legacy of waste, fraud and failure

Why scientists make poor politicians

By Terrence Scanlon - -

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ANALYSIS/OPINION:

[Steven Chu](#), who is leaving his position as secretary of energy, might have been a great pick for the job, if only the real world worked like bad science fiction.

In comedies and sci-fi, we often encounter the “generic professor” character, the all-discipline scientist, the master of all areas of human knowledge. In real life, though, most scientists specialize. One might be an expert on the CCR5-Delta32 AIDS-resistance allele, another on the (mem)brane concept in string theory. The

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amount of study and the narrow focus needed to become a world-class scientist rarely allow scientists to move outside their fields.

When scientists get involved in politics and public policy, they often make fools of themselves. Scientists promoted now-discredited ideas about phrenology (linking traits such as criminality to the shapes of people's heads), eugenics, white supremacy, nuclear winter and the "impossibility" of missile defense.

All-star polymaths do exist, and some have become effective politicians. Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin come to mind.

[Steven Chu](#) is no Ben Franklin.

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Former President Barack Obama speaks during a rally in Detroit Friday, Oct. 26, 2018. (AP Photo/Paul Sancya)
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There's no question he's a great physicist. He won the Nobel Prize (with two other scientists) for the development of techniques for trapping and cooling atoms with laser beams. That research makes it easier for scientists to study individual atoms, notably to study biology at the single-atom level. To his credit, he did important work to bring together the fields of biomedicine and physics, and he defied political correctness by speaking out in support of nuclear power.

The problem was that [Mr. Chu](#) overreached and became an activist. Science is supposed to be based on replicable experimentation, but little scientific research is independently

 In this photo taken with a mobile phone, Jeff Jarvis of Berkeley, Calif., holds his 4-year-old daughter, Sofia Jarvis, during a news conference at Lucille Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford University on Monday, Feb. 24, 2014, in Palo Alto, Calif. Sofia is one of a handful of California children who has been diagnosed with a rare polio-like syndrome that has left her arm paralyzed. Stanford researchers say there is a possibility of an emerging infectious polio-like syndrome in California. (AP Photo/Martha Mendoza)

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verified. So trust plays a big role in science. That's why so many scientists fell for the "evolutionary levels" concept that fed Nazism, and for the idea of catastrophic, man-made global warming.

President Obama, it is said, brags about having [Mr. Chu](#) among his top advisers. Never mind that the secretary of energy should know something about the oil and gas business, and that a random guy working a rig in the Gulf of Mexico is probably more qualified to be energy secretary. [Mr. Chu](#) is a famous scientist — and thus an expert on everything.

Inevitably, Secretary [Chu](#) fell for one con after another.

First, Solyndra, which received \$535 million

from taxpayers, is now bankrupt. Abound Solar ate up \$374 million and is now bankrupt. Others include UniSolar, \$100 million; Ener1, \$118.5 million; and Nevada Geothermal, \$98.5 million. All are bankrupt. Well, at least there's A123 Systems, which was awarded \$249 million and developed some impressive battery technology. Oh, wait — A123 was sold to the Chinese. How about LG Chem (\$142 million)? The new jobs it promised ended up in South Korea.

[Mr. Chu](#) and his cohorts claim to have created 3.1 million “green jobs” — a term that includes janitors at solar-powered facilities, drivers of hybrid buses and people who fuel the buses, workers at antique shops and used-record stores, environmentalist

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professors, and oil company lobbyists. In other words, the term is a fraud.

What about “renewable energy”? Another fraud, given that wind and solar require, for example, rare-earth minerals that are most definitely not renewable.

The United States sits on massive energy reserves. Our country is the Saudi Arabia of both coal and natural gas and has abundant supplies of oil, but we can’t exploit our resources fully because anti-hydrocarbon ideology stands in the way.

[Mr. Chu](#) prefers a “glucose economy” based on glucose from tropical plants. Before his nomination he said, “Somehow we have to figure out how to boost the price of gasoline to the levels

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- ☐ GOP CONTROLS THE SENATE
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in Europe,” which would be \$8 to \$10 a gallon.

Most frighteningly, [Mr. Chu](#) dreams of a U.S.-China partnership, rooted in the theory of man-made global warming, that would set the course for the world economy.

Daniel Roth reported in Wired magazine (May 2010) that [Mr. Chu](#) considers China “the key to America’s long-term energy future. Since the U.S. and China produce some 40 percent of the world’s carbon dioxide emissions, [Chu](#) argues that far-reaching multicountry agreements aren’t really necessary It’s smarter to deal with China alone.”

Just picture it: The United States, teamed up with a government that has killed more of

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its own people than any other government in world history, in order to bully the rest of the world.

With [Mr. Chu's](#) departure, we could have a new secretary of energy with real-world experience in the energy field and with sophisticated views about technology, business and dangerous nations such as China. More likely, though, we'll get someone like [Mr. Chu](#) — someone who reminds us that the term “know it all” is usually sarcasm.

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