

POLICY SERIES

FRONTIER CENTRE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • POLICY SERIES NO. 102 • FEBRUARY 2011



Getting Society Off the Climate Change Bandwagon

It is only through 'expanding the tent' of those who take a realistic perspective of climate change that we have a chance to bring the climate wars to a sensible conclusion

By Tom Harris



About the Author

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Date of First Issue: February 2011.

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ISSN 1491-78

FCPP Policy Series No. 102 • February 2011

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Note to reader: Some words in this document appear in blue and are underlined. Clicking on these words will direct the reader to relevant sites or documents using your associated web-browser.

Do experts really agree that we are causing a climate crisis?

Despite the past year of UN climate science scandals and vitally important research discoveries, we are still being told by activists, politicians, media and official science bodies that climate change science is 'settled'. They tell us there is no doubt that our emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other so-called 'greenhouse gases' are causing a climate crisis and we must take urgent action to prevent dangerous global warming. Supposedly, only a handful of unqualified naysayers contest this conclusion.

For example, in their film "[Polar Science for Planet Earth](#)", the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) assert, "... Earth scientists are now beginning to understand ... how to deal with unprecedented levels of man-made carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that control future climate change." Newcastle University (U.K.) Professor Nicholas Owens, Director of both the BAS film and the BAS proper, [asserts](#), "There is now overwhelming consensus that human activity is driving climate change," a statement echoed verbatim in the film. Another BAS leader, Prof Corinne Le Quéré of the University of East Anglia [maintains](#), "The only way to control climate change is through a drastic reduction in global CO₂ emissions."

Besides the absurdity of the notion that humanity, at this stage in our development, could hope to "control climate change" of planet Earth, observant readers will ask: how does anyone know that there is a consensus among climate scientists that our CO₂ emissions are driving global climate, let alone that they

are causing a crisis? After all, climate was changing for billions of years before we arrived on the scene. Are all the ancient natural climate drivers suddenly being eclipsed by human CO₂ emissions?

No one knows for sure, of course, but much recent research suggests it is highly improbable.

It is also true that no one knows, or even currently can know, what the so-called "consensus" is in the world climate science community about whether our CO₂ emissions are causing a climate crisis. This is because there is not known to have been a conclusive worldwide poll about the topic among the thousands of scientists from the vast array of disciplines related to understanding the causes of global climate change.

Scientific theories are never proven by a show of hands anyways, no matter how scientifically esteemed those expressing their views are. If it were otherwise, the Earth would still be considered flat and space travel impossible. It is indeed those who go against the flow—independent, original thinkers—who are usually responsible for our most meaningful advances in science. But, most reporters, politicians and the public understand little of the scientific method and even less about the exceptionally complex field of climate change science. Consequently, they often look for an indication of 'consensus' when trying to decide which science should form the basis of important public policies decisions. Distasteful though this is to pure scientists, it is a reality we need to recognize and it

is therefore important to try to decide whether a reliable determination of 'consensus' has been made about the causes of climate change.

First, it is important to realize that, of the prominent national and international science bodies that have issued official statements that are truly in support of the CO₂/climate crisis hypothesis, none are known to have released results that show a majority of their members agreeing with the assertion. Since the Canadian Geophysical Union (CGU) seems to have at least tried with the pre-Copenhagen Climate Conference [open letter to the Government of Canada](#) they endorsed along with four other organizations, the Canadian Meteorological and Ocean Society (CMOS) included, it is worth examining the letter's contents closely (while wondering what special knowledge two of the signing societies, the Canadian Society of Soil Science and the Canadian Society of Zoologists, would have about the causes of global climate change). The following discussion is an illustration of the problems inherent in many such efforts.

At first glance, the letter appears to pass muster. On the web page dedicated to the five societies' open letter, is stated: "This letter was overwhelmingly endorsed by councils or members of the following organizations of scientists", followed by a list of the five societies. In an article published across Canada entitled "[3,000 scientists tell federal government to 'act now' on climate change](#)", CanWest News Service writer, Margaret Munro writes, "The letter is signed by the presidents of the Canadian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society [CMOS], the Canadian Geophysical Union [CGU], the Canadian Association of Physicists, the Canadian Society of Soil Science and the Canadian Society of Zoologists. They represent more than 3,000 researchers,

including experts studying how rising carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere are altering the planet's climate and ecosystems."

There are problems with this, however. While 91% of CGU members who voted supported the letter, less than a third (31%) of the membership actually voted, leaving the letter supported by just over one quarter (28%) of the members. So, CGU support was not a result of an 'overwhelming' (or even a majority) endorsement from its members. It must then have just been an overwhelming majority of the CGU council who supported it, which is of course far less significant since group-think can easily dominate such small entities.

Group-think may very well have played a significant role in CMOS' endorsement of the open letter since we are told on their Web site that "This letter was approved through a vote by members of CMOS Council and Scientific Committee." Of the 50 positions in these groups, CMOS says 100% voted in support. What about the hundreds of rank and file members of CMOS? Perhaps they did not support the letter at all.

The other endorsing societies did not release signing statistics on their web pages (or even mention the letter at all) so it is not apparent that members of the other groups were even polled, let alone that an "overwhelming" majority of them supported it.

So the headline on Munro's article is totally unsubstantiated, yet all then-President of CMOS Dr. Bill Crawford wrote about this in the "[From the President's Desk](#)" section of their website is "The English headline noted these societies have over 3,000 members." Why did he not correct CanWest's misrepresentation?

Similarly, Munro's assertion "They represent more than 3,000 researchers, including experts studying how rising carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere are altering the planet's climate and ecosystems" is misleading. Unless she is privy to information not readily apparent to the public, she would have no way of knowing how many of the thousands of researchers were even asked about the five societies' letter, let alone how many actually agreed with it. While these groups do indeed include "experts studying how rising carbon dioxide levels ...are altering the planet's climate...", the vast majority of the membership of these societies focus on entirely different topics and so would lack the expertise to assess this question. In fact, two of the signing societies', the Canadian Society of Soil Science and the Canadian Society of Zoologists, may very well have no one in their groups at all who professionally study the causes of global climate change.

The [open letter to the Government of Canada](#) from these five societies is no worse than many of the other documents of its kind that the public have been bombarded with in recent years. In fact, it may be more representative of the opinions of these societies' memberships than other open letters and declarations that I examine later. However, we simply don't know and so are no closer to substantiating the commonly asserted claims of consensus than before. We need to dig more deeply.

“While these groups do indeed include “experts studying how rising carbon dioxide levels ...are altering the planet’s climate...”, the vast majority of the membership of these societies focus on entirely different topics and so would lack the expertise to assess this question.”

Are we being tricked?

Other scientific society statements that have little known membership support.

We are told on the Canadian Meteorological and Ocean Society website that “Following the [CMOS/CGU] Congress, several delegates met to discuss the presentations they heard. Many of the presentations focused on climate change and these delegates agreed on the [following statement](#).” That statement, linked from a prominent entry on the CMOS “What’s New” web page (see [here](#)), includes unrealistically confident assertions that it is difficult to believe the majority of CMOS members would ever support, even if they had been asked by these “several delegates”. Here is the first:

“Current warming will continue and get worse. Human-made warming, occurring due to increases in carbon dioxide concentration, will likely be irreversible for more than 1,000 years after emissions stop.”

Such an absolute claim (“will continue and get worse”) is clearly irresponsible, especially coming from professional scientists.

Also, the following statement is odd:

“Water supplies in the Prairies are dwindling and will continue to do so. The Canadian Prairies are susceptible to droughts, which are among the most costly natural disasters in Canada in terms of socio-economic impact.”

Yet, ICSC science advisor, Dr. Madhav Khandekar, a CMOS member, former Environment Canada research scientist and extreme weather expert reports, “Prairies are suffering from floods this year, and there was flooding in 2005. Southern Alberta had floods in 2002.”

Fellow ICSC science advisor, Dr. Tim Ball, former climatology professor at the University of Winnipeg explains further, “The Prairies go through wet and dry cycles; right now they are in a wet cycle. From the end of one drought to the beginning of the next is approximately 17 years on average so add that to the end of the last drought in 2001-2002 and you get the next drought occurring in approximately 2018-2019.”

So who endorsed this “Statement of Concern by Scientists”? Just “We, the undersigned, ...”, with no one at all “undersigned”—the next page is blank. All we know is that it was some delegates to the Congress who “feel that an urgent message must be brought to the attention of all Canadians.” A check of the [document’s](#) properties revealed its author as being “Gordon McBean”, the Chair of the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Science Board of Trustees and, although it is dated June 4, right after the Congress, the document properties actually list it as being created on June 15.

If the “several delegates” who are said to have agreed to this statement highlighted prominently on the CMOS website are not identified more specifically than that, then how can the public have confidence that CMOS, a Registered Charity (see Canada Revenue Agency listing [here](#)), is not experiencing dominance by a special interest lobby causing organizational ‘mission creep’ into increasingly political lobby efforts?

The problem of national and international science bodies, or even small subsets of those groups, endorsing the CO₂/dangerous global warming theory without the known support of a majority of their membership, appears to be common. For example, Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada (RSC) and a leading Canadian energy expert, “Archie” Robinson of Deep River, Ontario, explains what happened with a Royal Society (the world’s oldest scientific organization) climate initiative supporting the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Third Assessment Report:

“the president of the Royal Society of London ... drafted a resolution in favour and circulated it to other academies of science inviting co-signing. ... The president of the RSC, not a member of the [RSC’s] Academy of Science, received the invitation. He considered it consistent with the position of the great majority of scientists, as repeatedly but erroneously claimed by Kyoto proponents, and so signed it. The resolution was not referred to the Academy of Science for comment, not even to its council or president.”

A similar episode happened in the United States and Russia concerning the Royal Society effort and a survey of pronouncements from other science bodies reveals that they are usually just the opinions of the groups’ executives or committees

specifically appointed by the executive. The rank and file scientist members are rarely consulted at all.

But what about the supposedly authoritarian United Nations IPCC report that constitutes the foundation of most official climate concerns today? Media and politicians tell us that 2,500 official “expert reviewers” who worked with the UN body on its most recent (2007, the fourth) “Assessment Report” (called “AR4”) agreed with its conclusions. Perhaps most importantly, in Chapter 9 of the IPCC Working Group I report (“The Physical Science Basis”, reporting on the extent and possible causes of past climate change as well as future ‘projections’) appears the following assertion: “Greenhouse gas forcing has very likely caused most of the observed global warming over the last 50 years.”

Determining how many of the “2,500 scientists” are known to actually agree with this statement is difficult, but we do know how many commented on anything in Chapter 9. Sixty-two is the number ([see](#) this analysis). The vast majority of the expert reviewers are not known to have examined this or related statements. Instead they would have focused on a page or two in the AR4 report that most related to their specialties, usually having little or nothing to do with greenhouse gases (CO₂ or otherwise). And, of those sixty-two experts who did comment this chapter, the vast majority were not independent or impartial since most were employees of governments that had already decided before the report was written (indeed, as MIT Professor Richard Lindzen, a past IPCC lead author, explains, before much of the research had even begun) that human CO₂ emissions are driving us to climate catastrophe.

When one eliminates reviewers with clear vested interest, we end up with a grand total of “just seven who may have been independent and impartial”, according to Australian climate data analyst, John McLean ([see](#) his report). And, two of those are known to vehemently disagree with the statement. Prominent climate scientist and IPCC insider Dr. Mike Hulme even admits that “only a few dozen experts in the specific field of detection and attribution studies”, not thousands as is commonly asserted by the IPCC and others, “reached a consensus that human activities are having a significant influence on the climate” (p. 10, 11 of Hulme’s April 12, 2010 paper in “Progress in Physical Geography” at <http://tinyurl.com/2b3cq3r>).

To meaningfully assert that there is a consensus in any field, we need to actually have convincing evidence. And the best way to gather this evidence is to conduct unbiased, comprehensive worldwide polls. Since this has never been done in the vast community of scientists who research the causes of global climate change, we simply do not know what, if any, consensus exists among these experts. Lindzen concludes: “there is no [known] consensus, unanimous or otherwise, about long-term climate trends and what causes them.”

During 2010, there were however some promising developments—two prominent scientific organizations issued revisionist statements that toned down their former enthusiasm for global warming alarmism.

At the bi-annual congress of the Geological Society of Australia in Canberra in July, a challenge was made by the membership regarding the accuracy and representativeness of the Society’s previously published statement on the global warming issue. Accordingly, and under a new President, Quaternary geologist Brad Pillans, the

Society signaled its intention to (i) withdraw its previous (alarmist) statement on global warming, and (ii) conduct a poll of the membership of the issue, prior to considering reposting the same, an altered or no statement at all on the issue. CMOS, CGU, the RSC and all the rest must do the same or their statements should not be taken seriously.

Even more dramatically, in September 2010, the Royal Society of London issued a new statement on climate which, recanting the alarmist tone of its predecessor, concluded that “It is not possible to determine exactly how much the Earth will warm or exactly how the climate will change in the future”. As ICSC Chief Science Advisor, [Professor Bob Carter](#), PhD, Adjunct Research Fellow at James Cook University, Queensland, Australia explains, “This statement, a much overdue dose of truism, gives lie to the naïve idea that we know enough about the path of future climate to try to engineer it by reducing carbon dioxide emissions.”

“IPCC insider Dr. Mike Hulme even admits that “only a few dozen experts in the specific field of detection and attribution studies”, not thousands as is commonly asserted by the IPCC and others, “reached a consensus that human activities are having a significant influence on the climate”...

Do scientific society open letters really say what we are told they say?

Besides examining precisely who agrees with the official statements from prominent science bodies, it is also important to assess how closely they come to addressing the most important question of all for human societies, namely,

"having assessed the relevant scientific evidence, do you find convincing support for the hypothesis that human emissions of carbon dioxide are causing, or will in the foreseeable future cause, dangerous global warming?"

It must be "dangerous global warming" that scientists are asked about because, if it is not dangerous, then, while it is an interesting scientific question, it is not a significant public policy issue and so not worth vast investments of public funds to 'stop' (if indeed 'stopping' climate change were even possible).

Again, let us examine the CGU/CMOS et al [open letter to the Government of Canada](#) as a sample since it employs many of the same tactics used in other such public declarations.

Like most documents of its kind, the majority of the letter is self evident 'boiler plating' with which no sensible person would disagree. This lulls readers (and likely many scientists considering endorsement) into simple acceptance, rather than critical thinking. "Major initiatives and changes are needed to adapt to our new climate" is a good example.

[Professor Tim Patterson](#), a paleoclimatologist at Carleton University, told the Canadian House of Commons Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development in 2005, "the only constant about climate is change; it changes continually". So of course we need to adapt to "new climate[s]", whatever their causes. For millennia, human societies have either successfully adapted to climate change or perished.

Some of the open letter is clearly wrong, such as "Current and anticipated impacts of climate change in Canada are well documented." ICSC Science advisor Dr. Tim Ball explains, "Much of what is actually happening with regards to our climate is unknown since we have less weather stations now than in the 1960s. The funding for operating these vitally important stations was largely diverted to financing the construction of primitive and flawed computer models—they were again 100% wrong with their Prairie forecast for this spring and early summer in that the prediction of "hot and dry" turned out to be "cold and wet". Consequently, we certainly do not have good documentation of climate change or its impacts in Canada. The belief that "anticipated impacts in Canada are well documented" is even more absurd since they are based on models we already know don't work."

Some of the CGU/CMOS et al letter diverts the reader to somewhat related but different topics: "With vigorous action we can develop more efficient processes that reduce emissions, improve the quality of air we breathe and the water we drink,

maintain the integrity of our ecosystems, and open new economic opportunities.” By associating the climate change issue with clean air and water, etc., it seems to make severe CO₂ controls and planetary climate control sound wholesome, instead of what they really are—expensive and largely impossible.

The closest the CGU/CMOS et al document comes to addressing society’s critical question (does CO₂ cause dangerous global warming?) is the assertion “Rigorous international research ... reveals that greenhouse gases resulting from human activities contribute to the warming of the atmosphere and the oceans and constitute a serious risk to the health and safety of our society, as well as having an impact on all life.”

The first part of this sentence is obvious. Practically no one doubts that so-called ‘greenhouse gases’ (primarily CO₂ in most nations, including Canada and the U.S.), whatever the source, contribute to the warming of the atmosphere and the oceans. If they didn’t, the Earth would be a lifeless, frozen ice ball. ICSC scientists would have no trouble endorsing that part of the AGU letter, even though they don’t conclude that the warming is significant enough to be “dangerous”.

The second part of the sentence is odd and, perhaps intentionally, difficult to interpret. Combining it with the applicable phrases from the first part of the sentence gives, “Rigorous international research ... reveals that greenhouse gases resulting from human activities ... constitute a serious risk to the health and safety of our society, as well as having an impact on all life.” The last part of this is self evident—CO₂ does have an impact “on all life”. Indeed it is the ‘staff of life’ as it is a critical reactant in plant photosynthesis.

“Practically no one doubts that so-called ‘greenhouse gases’ ... whatever the source, contribute to the warming of the atmosphere and the oceans. If they didn’t, the Earth would be a lifeless, frozen ice ball.”

But the other part of the sentence is a complete red herring. The science societies endorsing the letter are not qualified to professionally determine that CO₂ emissions “constitute a serious risk to the health and safety of our society”. Perhaps medical researchers and safety engineers could, but they would dismiss such a claim out of hand since CO₂ is no where near levels at which it would pose a health or safety risk to society. Perhaps the authors of the CGU/CMOS et al letter meant that the warming caused by human CO₂ emissions would be dangerous, but they didn’t actually say that.

The CGU/CMOS letter makes other statements that seem meant to lead the reader into thinking they are addressing the critical question for society listed above, but in fact they do not. They list many “current and anticipated” destructive impacts of climate change. Besides the fact that even CMOS members are known to completely disagree with some of the supposed currently observed impacts, “increased melting of glaciers and permafrost” and “more extreme weather”, being examples, there is no time frame given during which the “anticipated” impacts are forecast to occur.

This is simply because no one really knows when they will occur. Given a long enough time period, centuries to millennia, all of these scenarios may very well come true someday. This, in addition to the fact that the letter does not actually state that human CO₂ emissions are responsible for these “current and anticipated” impacts, gives no real guidance to today’s public policy formulation. Again, it is meant to do so by implication but completely fails to address the key issue.

The same sort of analysis must be applied to all open letters and other advice to government on both sides of the climate issue. Do they actually provide substantive, scientifically-founded guidance from well qualified experts in the field or are they mostly bland, ‘feelgoodery’ coupled with just enough sensationalism to ensure they are reported on favourably by a headline-seeking mass media? When they are noticed by main stream press at all, open letters from skeptics of the CO₂/climate crisis hypothesis are invariably subjected to rigorous examination and this is how it should be. But reporting uncritically on open letters and other statements from scientists on the politically correct side of the debate, as most media do, does not serve society well.

Do [open letters and other advice] actually provide substantive, scientifically-founded guidance from well qualified experts in the field or are they mostly bland, ‘feelgoodery’ coupled with just enough sensationalism to ensure they are reported on favourably by a headline-seeking mass media?

Governments and most media still promote climate fears despite contradictory advice from thousands of experts

According to climate activists, only a handful of unqualified naysayers dispute the CO₂/dangerous global warming hypothesis. “On one hand, you have the entire scientific community and on the other you have a handful of people, half of them crackpots”, [said](#) Lord Robert May, former president of the Royal Society.

But Lord May is completely mistaken. Not only is there no known broad agreement in the “entire scientific community” about the causes of climate change (and it only matters what climate experts think, not all scientists), but literally thousands of scientifically qualified individuals have endorsed open letters and other declarations opposing, either directly or indirectly, the CO₂/dangerous global warming hypothesis.

Here are 14 of them (all linked, in blue, to the documents and endorser lists):

2010: [SPPI letter to the U.S. EPA](#)—signed by 35 climate and related experts.

2009*: [Copenhagen Climate Challenge](#) which currently lists [166 experts well qualified in climate science](#) plus some in ‘other related disciplines’.

2009: [Open Letter to the Council of the American Physical Society](#)—signed by 61 experts.

2009: [Climate Change Reconsidered: 2009 Report of the Nongovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(NIPCC\)](#),

Craig Idso and S. Fred Singer, eds.; 36 contributors listed. Easily read summary may be seen [here](#).

2009: [Cato Institute newspaper ad campaign letter](#); 115 scientist signers.

2008: [Manhattan Declaration on Climate Change](#), 1,497 endorsers, over half of them well qualified in science and technology and 206 of them climate science specialists or scientists in very closely related fields.

2007*: [Open Letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations](#) (the “2007 Bali open letter”), 100 scientist signers.

2007: [Independent Summary for Policymakers](#) contesting many of the conclusions of the UN IPCC’s 4th Assessment report (2007).

2006: [Open Kyoto to Debate](#)—An open letter to Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada, from 60 climate experts.

2003: [Protocol lacks ‘credible science’](#)—Open letter to Canadian PM Paul Martin, 46 leading scientists endorsed this.

2002: Open letter to Canadian PM Jean Chretien, [30 scientist signers](#).

1997: [Global Warming Petition Project](#)—organized through the [Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine](#), starting in 1997. That document now claims some 31,486 U.S. scientists and technically qualified signers, 9,029 with PhDs—see [breakdown](#).

1995: [Leipzig Declaration on Climate Change, 80 scientist signers plus 25 TV meteorologists.](#)

1992: [SEPP Statement by Atmospheric Scientists on Greenhouse Warming,](#) 47 signers.

* UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon has yet to acknowledge receipt of either the [2007 Bali open letter](#), or the [2009 Copenhagen Climate Challenge](#) (a U.S. postal trace (see [here](#)) was done on the latter after it was sent a [second time](#) and it was confirmed that Secretary General Moon did indeed receive the open letter). Judging from Moon's pre-G8 summit visit to Canada (May 12th) to pressure Canada to "[comply fully with the targets set out by the Kyoto Protocol](#)", an impossible task at this point even if it were worthwhile, the Secretary General appears to be hoping most people never hear of the alternative advice he is receiving.

And that is the problem faced by climate skeptics—most main stream media do not report on these declarations, and, on the rare occasion when they do, dismiss them as endorsed by unqualified 'outliers' from the scientific community. Consequently, even though these open letters are signed by some of the absolute leaders in the world in understanding the causes of climate change, the majority of the public know little about these lists, freeing government to proceed as if they didn't even exist.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in the speeches and pronouncements of former Canadian Federal Environment Minister Jim Prentice, who has either fallen, hook, line and sinker, for climate extremism, or wants the public to believe that he has.

On June 15, Prentice [told](#) the Canadian Energy Forum in Ottawa, "The international

scientific community has determined that recent changes in many aspects of global climate have been primarily caused by the build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere..." His government's promotion of so-called "carbon capture and storage", pumping compressed CO₂ underground to supposedly help "stop climate change", is equally absurd in that it is extremely expensive, useless (except when used for enhanced oil recovery) and potentially dangerous should the CO₂ leak out in large quantities (as, being heavier than air, the leaked CO₂ will initially displace oxygen and suffocate animals and people—witness the animal bones in depressions on the slopes of volcanoes, which are major CO₂ sources). But government strategists are obviously counting on the public continuing to believe in the CO₂/dangerous global warming hypothesis for a little while longer—at least until they have forgotten about it entirely at which time the government can quietly back away from the issue. Considering no one has any idea how long man-made global warming will continue to push policy, this is a very dangerous and costly approach indeed.

But why do most of the press generally disregard the massive lists of highly qualified skeptical scientists to date?

First and foremost, crisis sells media and global warming is the grand-daddy of all crises, tailor-made for editors to insert into the news on any otherwise slow day. Statements like "It is the biggest problem that mankind has ever faced." and "No other species in the history of life on Earth has ever faced a problem of its own creation that is as serious as this one," [from Lord May](#) make great copy and lead to breathless speculation from editorialists anxious to portend disaster. "At best we face widespread climatic disruption; at worst, we face devastation,"

[claimed](#) The Guardian of London, a statement that undoubtedly helped circulation numbers that day.

Truly accurate headlines such as “Sea level rise forecasts drop again in latest UN study”, or “Worldwide cyclone energy now at its lowest in three decades”, just don’t compete with [“Climate change far worse than thought before”](#) (*Times of India*). While U.S. editor H.L. Mencken’s famous quote[†] was directed at politicians, it could have equally well apply to most reporters, especially those who see themselves as social crusaders instead of mere raconteurs of the events of the day.

A few years ago, an editorial pages editor of a major eastern Canadian newspaper told me candidly that he didn’t cover both sides of the climate debate because “our advertisers wouldn’t like it”. At first I thought he just meant that crisis sells media and advertisers were more likely to pay for expensive ads if the periodical had high circulation numbers. But a look at the paper told me more—major international corporations have identified reducing ‘greenhouse gas emissions’ as an important marketing tool and so often incorporate it into their advertising so as to appear virtuous—Dr. Tim Ball [describes this well](#) with respect to British Petroleum. The last thing an advertiser wants is for a climate expert to be stating in an opinion piece on the page opposite that what the advertiser is boasting about is nonsense. Ergo, many media outlets have obviously concluded, don’t publish the OpEd but happily accept advertising dollars promoting how a corporation is helping ‘stop climate change.’ It is good business, though damaging to society at large.

There isn’t much we can do about the above barriers to publication in most main stream media but, in other ways,

climate skeptics are at times their own worst enemies. In the concluding parts of this piece, I lay out other reasons for our failure to bring the press along on what should be the science story of the century—how a poorly-substantiated scientific hypothesis has come to be accepted as reality even at the very highest levels of government and academia worldwide. This situation can be corrected, but only if we learn from our mistakes and develop a new, more functional strategy.

† *“The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety) by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary.”*

- [H. L. Mencken](#)

US editor (1880 - 1956)

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Politicizing the climate science debate has boosted alarmism

“The fundamental scientific foundation of the anthropogenic CO₂-caused dangerous global warming hypothesis is wrong or grossly exaggerated,” said Dr. [Brian Pratt](#), Professor of Geology (Sedimentology) at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada.

Although most so-called ‘skeptics’ are less assertive, doubts about the scientific validity of a human-caused climate crisis are being heard more and more often in the climate science community.

This is very good news indeed and something everyone needs to hear about. After all, aside from those with vested interests in promoting alarm, no one in their right mind wants a climate crisis. The fact that scientists of Pratt’s stature are increasingly concluding that the problem may simply not exist should give governments the incentive to begin transferring funds from misguided programs to “stop global warming” to worthwhile endeavors like education, healthcare, paying down the debt and addressing real environmental problems such as toxic waste dumps, urban air quality and ocean pollution. Alternatively, the cancellation of programs that, even now, are soaking up hundreds of billions of dollars internationally should permit tax cuts across the board. Whether one is capitalist or socialist, left or right, rich or poor, a legitimate end to the climate scare would benefit our societies immensely.

Yet, many people do not see it that way. Those of us who do not support the idea that human greenhouse gas emissions are dangerously warming the planet are usually condemned by main stream media

as being ultra-conservative, ill-informed, anti-environmentalists, when the press acknowledges us at all. As a consequence, many in the public still regard the climate debate as a left vs. right wing struggle, with supposedly greedy industrialists on the right trying to sway governments against the concerns of supposedly caring environmentalists on the left. For this reason, numerous corporations, even some in the energy and natural resources sector who have the most to lose in a CO₂-restricted future, now financially support the very campaigners who, given the choice, would completely close down their companies. Besides being a public relations exercise similar to that [described by Dr. Tim Ball writing about British Petroleum](#), many corporations are simply ‘paying for protection’. Publically contributing to climate lobby groups lessens the likelihood that their specific companies will be [targeted](#) as ‘[climate criminals](#)’. Being supported by some of the world’s largest corporations and foundations allows climate campaigners to increase their already vast PR network even as much of the science that supports the climate scare is being increasingly called into question (witness the recent expansion of The David Suzuki Foundation to new offices in Montreal and Toronto, and an addition of about fifty new staff).

The story of how climate change became a left vs. right wing debate, is beyond the scope of this paper but this polarization is readily apparent when one examines the political affiliations of the most outspoken participants, be they special interest

lobbyists, scientists, politicians, media or even ordinary citizens. Historically, this situation is counterintuitive. The left have usually been the most opposed to organized religion and faith-based approaches to life, while this has been a staple of many conservatives. But, in the climate debate, the tables were turned and it is the left that unquestioningly accepted climate catastrophism, damning those who dare contest official doctrine, while skepticism became strongest on the right.

Regardless of its causes, this development has been enormously beneficial for climate campaigners for a number of reasons.

First, most scientists are not right wing. Surveys show that, in all disciplines, university faculty are overwhelmingly left or center-left. The same is true of university students. Consequently, it is far easier for a university researcher or professor to speak out in agreement with left wing ideals than in support of what are regarded as right of center views. University scientists who do not agree with the CO₂/dangerous global warming hypothesis therefore usually remain quiet, rather than risk the wrath of students, condemnation of their peers, reduced research grants and, in extreme cases, even death threats (at least two of ICSC's leading scientists have received death threats).

Meanwhile most public school systems, few of which would ever be considered right of center, have gradually 'greened' their curriculum to the point of accepting climate change dogma as unquestioned fact in textbooks, as well as other supporting material provided to students. A whole generation has grown up without the benefit of a balanced education on this topic.

The evolution of the left vs. right aspects of the climate debate has also been a

boom for climate campaigners' fund raising. In most western democracies, true right-wingers are in the minority, especially in Canada and Europe. This is one of the reasons that conservative governments usually shift left after gaining power, Canada being a prime example. Fund raising in such an environment will always be much easier for those seen to be slightly left of center.

But the biggest benefit to climate campaigners of the politicization of the climate debate came as a result of the inherent bias of mainstream media, most of whom are left or centre-left. Many reporters, even before knowing much about the field, instinctively support the CO₂-caused crisis hypothesis promoted by climate campaigners, while vigorously opposing the stance of those they regard as their philosophical and political opponents. Consequently, main stream media became a communications arm of the environmental movement, amplifying the message of climate campaigners orders of magnitude louder than these groups could ever afford on their own.

This is a feature of the debate that most of those opposing the CO₂/dangerous global warming hypothesis have not adequately accounted for in their programs. They have generally ignored the fact that, as long as the climate debate remains left vs. right, most of the press and a large fraction of the public and academia will retain their current bias against climate skepticism, regardless of new science findings and, at times, even against their own financial best interests. Even when they come to understand the serious discrepancies in the CO₂/extreme climate change argument, most on the left, like the majority of those of any political persuasions, will simply stay quiet about it, rather than risk alienating their ideological fellow travellers.

As a sample of what is possible if the climate debate is framed in a less partisan way, look carefully at the wording of [this article](#) by leading BBC journalist Roger Harrabin reporting on the Heartland Institute's Climate Change Conference in May. Like most mainstream reporters, Harrabin's distain for things he regards as right of center is palpable. But, his coverage of the views of skeptics he sees as being not "right-wingers" (I am not a "left-winger" either) is far less critical and I found Harrabin intensely interested in hearing about the serious flaws in the science backing climate catastrophism, provided I presented it in a politically neutral way without ad hominem criticism of my intellectual opponents (an approach that often mars the arguments of campaigners on both sides of the issue).

In my discussions with other left and center-left reporters at the conference (and elsewhere), I have found a common thread—while many are genuinely curious about alternative interpretations of climate change science, their hostility to conservative values is so strong that this often overwhelms their objectivity when they actually get down to the job of reporting on the issue at hand. One naturally wonders if the whole tenor of main stream media coverage of climate science, and indeed the approach of academia and the public as well, would change markedly if the situation was presented in a more politically neutral way.

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Time for a new, inclusive approach to the climate science debate —expanding the tent of climate skepticism through non-partisan science communication

On my flight to the UN climate conference in Copenhagen a year ago, I sat beside a U.N. Environment Program (UNEP) arctic scientist, who was also going to the big show. After some awkward minutes during which each of us must have been wishing we could sit somewhere else, we made several important discoveries. First, it turned out that we shared the same moral compass concerning our obligations to the human and natural world, both present and future. We also agreed that the regular use of “*ad hominem*” and “motive intent” logical fallacies by both sides in the climate debate were offensive and inappropriate tools with which to judge scientific positions. Perhaps even more importantly, I learned that his father had just been diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease, a sickness my mother has suffered from for 18 years. What was in store for his father, he worried. The prognosis is usually bleak, I had to tell him, although there are certainly ways to prepare for the inevitable hard times.

Moving back to discussing climate, a new sense of cooperation emerged. The opposition had a human face after all, so both of us approached the conversation with a more open mind, finally determining that the source of our disagreement boiled down to one point—whether or not carbon dioxide (CO₂), at its current level and

above, is driving us towards dangerous global warming.

I maintained that it is probably not and that, as the Earth warms, the strongest feedbacks are now thought to be negative (i.e. these feedbacks cool the planet). The UNEP scientist did not agree, although his primary argument was based on an appeal to ‘consensus’, something which he finally accepted was actually unknown. But the learning was mutual—the U.N. scientist gave me some important insights about our responsibilities to help the poorest countries prepare themselves to adapt to climate change, independent of the causes. His ideas helped me tune my approach to developing nations’ delegates later at the conference.

While in Copenhagen (and since [then](#)), I discovered that, within the left wing community, there is a growing doubt about the science underlying the climate scare. Since there were no hotel vacancies in Copenhagen by the time I made my bookings, I stayed in a finished attic of the house of an upper middle-class Danish family. After I made my reservations, I discovered that the husband and wife of the family were left-wing activists in Denmark and so I decided to keep the reasons for my attendance at the climate conference to myself. However, my landlords looked me up on the web before I

arrived and so knew all about ICSC's work, casually mentioning to me the morning after I got there that they were generally in agreement—"but where is a left-wing climate skeptic to turn?", they asked.

At the climate conference itself, I discovered an entirely new constituency of thoughtful people who, while clearly not right-wing, were nevertheless open to hearing about alternative theories of climate change—the representatives of developing nations, especially the Africans as led by the Ethiopian delegation. These groups had come to Copenhagen hoping to obtain adaptation funding for their peoples, many of whom are suffering greatly, partly due to the impacts of climate change of one form or another.

Several of the delegates had little patience with the protesters outside the building who were focused almost exclusively on reducing greenhouse gases to spare the world from hypothetical impacts late in the 21st century. "Don't these people understand that we are suffering right now and need help today?" one African delegate asked me. "The focus should be on helping our people adapt to climate change that is already happening!" (The fact that few of the protestors had ever worried about where their next meal was coming from and were advocating 'climate friendly energy solutions' that the poor could never hope to afford probably did not impress the African delegates either).

Yet, like most international meetings of this kind, by far the majority of financing being debated in Copenhagen was for programs to mitigate (i.e. slow or stop) climate change, not adapt to it. This continued throughout 2010 (e.g. only 10% of the \$400 million pledged by the Government of Canada to fulfill our Copenhagen Accord "commitments" are for adaptation, even though the

Accord specifies that it should be a 50-50 split). Even some who support the human-driven climate change hypothesis see this as backwards. For example, Frances Cairncross, then-President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (now the British Science Association), [said](#) in 2006, "Adaptation policies have had far less attention than mitigation, and that is a mistake ... Climate change is inevitable, and policies to help societies adapt to a warmer future are badly needed." (Historical climatologist and ICSC science advisor Dr. Tim Ball points out that a cooler climate is far more dangerous than a warmer one so policies to help societies adapt to colder conditions are even more critical). The protesters on the streets of Copenhagen seemed not to understand a fundamental premise [explained well](#) by Cairncross: "... global poverty is likely to diminish as the world economy continues to expand. So being fair to future generations is partly about whether to put the needs of today's poor ahead of tomorrow's less poor."

Two of the African delegates I spoke with were qualified environmental scientists and they told me confidentially that they did not actually believe the CO₂/dangerous global warming hypothesis. "But the negotiations for adaptation and mitigation are linked and so, if we want one, we need to support the other," they explained. Nevertheless, negotiations for legally binding mitigation actions failed in Copenhagen and so solid agreements for adaptation funding mostly went down the drain as well.

Ending the scare

There are clearly many people around the world who would welcome an end to the climate scare. But for that to happen any time in the near future, we need an entirely new approach to the climate science debate—an approach that is neither left nor right but based simply on real scientific evidence and a common interest in protecting the environment while fostering human progress. Those following this new approach must be critical and supportive of the points of view of others based solely on what they say, not who they are or what they represent. If we are to quickly ‘expand the tent’ of supporters of realistic, science-based climate policies to include citizens of many different political persuasions, social philosophies and commercial interests, then logical fallacies and personal attacks on the integrity of our opponents must end. This will be very difficult for some who have based much of their activism on trying to [disgrace their opponents](#) or support (or never criticize) their political friends. But the rest of society needs to move past this adolescent phase into a more effective and mature period when, for the sake of accomplishing our common objective, we work even with those who, in other spheres, may be our opponents.

There will of course be endless arguments about what to do with the vast sums saved by cancelling wasteful programs to ‘stop climate change’, but, much as we worked with the Communists to defeat an even more deadly adversary 70 years ago, those from the left, right and center must work together today to put an end to the exceptionally dangerous climate scare. As long as opposition to the CO₂/dangerous global warming hypothesis is

seen to be primarily the domain of right of center, free enterprise, Republicans and other conservatives, as is usually the case today, then draconian and absurd laws will continue to menace society, wasting vast sums and destroying millions of jobs worldwide.

Encouraging this vitally needed strategic change is one of the primary purposes of the [International Climate Science Coalition](#) (ICSC) and the national affiliates we are helping found worldwide. The main project ICSC has focused on since early June is the [“Climate Scientists’ Register”](#), an apolitical, pure science statement that we expect will be endorsed by hundreds of experts (we now have 141 signatories who have significant expertise in understanding the causes of climate change). The Register statement is very simple:

“We, the undersigned, having assessed the relevant scientific evidence, do not find convincing support for the hypothesis that human emissions of carbon dioxide are causing, or will in the foreseeable future cause, dangerous global warming.”

In contrast to other public statements by scientists (see [here](#) for an overview of what ICSC is doing differently), this single sentence says nothing about the economic, moral or social implications of CO₂ controls and so should be acceptable to the many ‘pure’ (and often left-wing) scientists who have yet to publically express their views. It is a statement that, once endorsed by large numbers of leaders in the field, can be used by media and politicians of any political persuasion to justify a transfer of funds from enabling useless CO₂ controls to whatever other

programs they support or, who knows, perhaps even taxing us less.

Public uncertainty about the science backing the global warming scare is higher now than at any time in the past 20 years. However, this doubt may soon be quelled by well-funded, carefully orchestrated propaganda from the U.N., climate activists, governments and their allies in mainstream media and vested commercial interests unless new, more effective strategies are enabled to help average citizens understand that their scepticism is well founded—many professional scientists, highly qualified in the field, also do not support forecasts of human-caused climate disaster. For governments to really take notice of the arguments of these experts, it must become common knowledge in the public that literally thousands of climate experts, from many countries and from all political persuasions do not support the climate scare. Then, as government and media finally get off the climate change bandwagon, we can redirect our attention to solving real, and crucially important problems that we can actually impact. As the African delegates in Copenhagen reminded me, there are plenty.

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Further Reading

February 2010

Opportunism and Exploitation: Climate Change Activism and Hostility to Liberal Civilization

Ben Eisen

http://www.fcpp.org/publication_php/3182

May 2010

Environmental Policy and the Law of Unintended Consequences

Ben Eisen and Kenneth P. Green

http://www.fcpp.org/piblication_php/3303

For more see
www.fcpp.org

