

COMMENTARY

# Federal Climatologists Pen Fantasy Novel

By *Patrick J. Michaels*

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**D**espite his onerous duties as head of the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Rajenda Pauchari had the spare time to publish (in 2010) a bawdy sex novel called *Return to Almora*.

Going him one better, a team of 240 U.S. scientists (whose common bond is that they consume oodles of federal dollars) completed a manuscript for editorial review called "The Third National Climate Assessment Report" that is much more imaginative, with a climate hotter than Pauchari's steamiest scenes.

It, too, is the stuff of fantasy. In the Assessment's 1,200 horror-studded pages, almost everything that happens in our life — birth, death, hunger, war, and existential malaise, to name a few — is somehow made worse by pernicious emissions of carbon dioxide and the joggling of surface average temperature by a mere two degrees. Talk about creative writing!

Many successful novels flout convention, and the Assessment is no different. Virtually every one of its 30 chapters perseverates on "extreme" weather, despite the IPCC's statement that

There is medium evidence and high agreement that long-term trends in normalized losses have not been attributed to natural or anthropogenic climate change.

This comes from the IPCC's recent (2012) special report on "extremes." Apparently it was not penned by a writer with Pauchari's talents; nor does it seem that English was the author's primary language. Our in-house translator says that it really means that global warming isn't having any effect on the amount of damage caused by weather, after allowing for population and inflation.

But that's not what the Assessment says:

Some extreme weather and climate events have increased in recent decades, and there is new and stronger evidence that many of these increases are related to human activity.

The Assessment is blissfully ignorant of humanity's ability to adapt and prosper in response to challenges. The quintessence of this is in the truly dreadful chapter on human health and climate change.

It is the novelist's privilege to deny reality. Accordingly, there is not one mention, in the health chapter, of the fact that life expectancy in the U.S. is approximately twice what it was in the year 1900, or that per-capita income in real dollars is over ten times what it was then, or that energy use and per-capita GDP are two of the most coupled variables in resource economics.

Doubling life expectancy is the equivalent of saving lives that normally would have ended in their early 40s. In other words, if there are 200 million Americans whose life expectancy is doubled, that is the equivalent of saving 100 million. The society that achieved this powered itself on the combustion of fossil fuels.

Instead, it fantasizes that diseases tamed in the early 20th century, like the various water-borne trots, will reappear in big numbers because of warming, neglecting the fact that working sanitation systems and refrigeration largely have eliminated them. Or, maybe global warming will cause more Carnival cruises?

Speaking of cruises, a travelogue section is apparently missing from the Assessment. It seems, given the panoply of horrors due to start pronto, to think it would have been better if we had not emitted all that carbon dioxide in the first place. The Assessment should have then taken the reader to a society that didn't emit carbon dioxide. Chad, perhaps?

The Assessment's prose is a bit too sober in spots. For example, it opines that "Climate change... will also alter the stability of food supplies and create new food security challenges." But it neglected to mention that we currently burn up — in the form of ethanol — four times more food than is possibly lost to climate change. Not to put too fine a point on it, but we currently send 12 percent of the world's corn out our tailpipes.

There's even a happy ending for the authors, in which they strongly suggest that the taxpayers pay them billions for their next — new and improved, we are sure — work of fiction. Apparently there are a few loose ends to be tied up from the current trilogy.

The sequel might even explain, why, while we are in our sixteenth consecutive year without a warming trend, that the end is still nigh. That would be the stuff of great fiction!



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