

How Climate-Change Fanatics Corrupted Science

Michael Barone | Washington Examiner

February 03, 2010



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Quick, name the most distrusted occupations. Trial lawyers? Pretty scuzzy, as witness the disgraced John Edwards, kept from the vice presidency in 2004 by the electoral votes of Ohio. Used car dealers? Always near the bottom of the list, as witness the universal understanding of the word "clunker."

But over the last three months a new profession has moved smartly up the list and threatens to overtake all. Climate scientist.

First came the Climategate e-mails made public in November that showed how top-level climate scientists distorted research, plotted to destroy data and conspired to prevent publication of dissenting views. The British government concluded last week that the University of East Anglia's Climate Research Unit violated the nation's freedom of information act, although the violations occurred too long ago for prosecution.

The CRU has been a major source of data for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which for 20 years has issued alarms about supposed global warming. The e-mails conclusively establish the intellectual dishonesty of the climate scientists at the CRU and their co-conspirators.

Recently there have been even more shocking revelations. The IPCC has claimed that warming will cause the Himalayan glaciers to disappear by 2035. It turns out that that claim was based solely on a pamphlet published by the World Wildlife Federation, based on no science at all. The head of the IPCC was informed that a 1996 report said those glaciers could melt significantly by 2350, not 2035, but he let the claim stand.

As Christopher Booker writes in the Telegraph of London, "A Canadian analyst has identified more than 20 passages in the IPCC's report which cite similarly non-peer-reviews WWF or Greenpeace reports as their authority." Similarly, the Times of London reports that a claim that warming could endanger "up to 40 percent" of the Amazon rain forest came from an anti-smoking activist and had no scientific basis whatever.

"The global warming movement as we have known it is dead," writes Walter Russell Mead of the Council on Foreign Relations in The American Interest. "The movement died from two causes: bad science and bad politics."

Some decades hence, I suspect, people will look back and wonder why so many government, corporate and media elites were taken in by propaganda that was based on such shoddy and dishonest evidence. And taken in to the point that they advocated devoting trillions of dollars to a cause that was based on flagrant dishonesty and dissembling.

There was some basis for concern. If carbon dioxide emissions were the only factor affecting global climate, it is clear that increased emissions would tend to produce warmer temperatures over time. Those temperatures could create problems that rational societies would want to address.

Unfortunately, the cadre of climate scientists who have dominated public discussion and have controlled the IPCC have been demonstrated to be far, far less than trustworthy.

But carbon dioxide emissions are not the only factor affecting global climate. Solar activity and water evaporation and countless other things do too. Climate scientists do not fully understand those things, and how they interact. It is rational for society to want to learn more.

Unfortunately, the cadre of climate scientists who have dominated public discussion and have controlled the IPCC have been demonstrated to be far, far less than trustworthy. Like the theorists who invented epicycles to explain away the failure of Ptolemaic theory to account for astronomical observations, they have distorted science in the interest of something that resembles religious dogma.

The secular religion of global warming has all the elements of a religious faith: original sin (we are polluting the planet), ritual (separate your waste for recycling), redemption (renounce economic growth) and the sale of indulgences (carbon offsets). We are told that we must have faith (all argument must end, as Al Gore likes to say) and must persecute heretics (global warming skeptics are like Holocaust deniers, we are told).

People in the grip of such a religious frenzy evidently feel justified in lying, concealing good evidence and plucking bad evidence from whatever flimsy source may be at hand.

The rest of us, and judging from polls that includes most of the American people, are free to follow a more rational path. In his State of the Union address, Barack Obama alluded to "the overwhelming evidence on climate change." But he felt obliged to add, "even if you doubt the evidence" -- an admission that the evidence is less than overwhelming. On a par with, it seems, the claims of trial lawyers and the assurances of used car salesmen.

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