

Climate Change: Concocting the “Consensus”

By [Andrew Gavin Marshall](#)

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The debate is over! There is a consensus! The time for discussion has ended and the need for action is paramount!

We have all heard this before.

Yet it is important to keep in mind that these types of statements are inherently inimical to scientific inquiry; the debate and discussion should never be over. As new information surfaces, it should be taken into consideration, analyzed, discussed, debated and ultimately it will aid in the advancement of knowledge and scientific understanding. To declare the debate as over is to declare information and knowledge as irrelevant. Progress has never come from holding onto antiquated ideas. The attainment of knowledge does not come from the refusal to reflect. Climate change is no exception. In light of events of the past year, it has become clear that there was a concerted effort on the part of a small clique of elite scientists at the UN and in supporting institutions, governments and universities to concoct the climate change “consensus” to pressure governments and public opinion into supporting the political, economic and social agenda of elites.

This article is a brief examination of the transformation of a political consensus into a scientific consensus, and thus we see that the scientific realm of inquiry and pursuit of knowledge and truth is not, itself, outside the influence of political, economic and social power structures. Indeed, science being a comparatively new concept in the human experience (roughly 350 years old) has historically been co-opted by entrenched elites to further their own interests and to strengthen their own power. The scientific technique becomes the elite technique; discovery becomes domination; knowledge becomes power; and truth becomes trite.

In November of 2009, the Climategate scandal broke, in which thousands of emails written by scientists at the University of East Anglia’s Climatic Research Unit (CRU) were leaked and revealed a concocted effort to skew the data and prevent dissenting views from getting into peer reviewed academic journals. In short, it was institutionalized intellectual dishonesty. The academics involved in the scandal were “the small group of scientists who have for years been more influential in driving the worldwide alarm over global warming than any others, not least through the role they play at the heart of the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)”:

Professor Philip Jones, the CRU’s director, is in charge of the two key sets of data used by the IPCC to draw up its reports. Through its link to the Hadley Centre, part of the UK Met Office, which selects most of the IPCC’s key scientific contributors, his global temperature record is the most important of the four sets of temperature data on which the IPCC and governments rely – not least for their predictions that the world will warm to catastrophic

levels unless trillions of dollars are spent to avert it.

Dr Jones is also a key part of the closely knit group of American and British scientists responsible for promoting that picture of world temperatures conveyed by Michael Mann's "hockey stick" graph which 10 years ago turned climate history on its head by showing that, after 1,000 years of decline, global temperatures have recently shot up to their highest level in recorded history.

Given star billing by the IPCC, not least for the way it appeared to eliminate the long-accepted Mediaeval Warm Period when temperatures were higher they are today, the graph became the central icon of the entire man-made global warming movement.[1]

Further, these scientists (as the emails revealed) conspired to prevent their data from being released through freedom of information laws, and "have come up with every possible excuse for concealing the background data on which their findings and temperature records were based." [2]

Many of the emails revealed "strenuous efforts by the mainstream climate scientists to do what outside observers would regard as censoring their critics. And the correspondence raises awkward questions about the effectiveness of peer review - the supposed gold standard of scientific merit - and the operation of the UN's top climate body, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)." Professor Jones had written emails in 2004 to climate scientist Michael Mann (who pioneered the "hockey stick graph") explaining that he rejected two articles he was peer reviewing that had called into question conclusions made by the Climatic Research Unit he ran at East Anglia. Emails were also sent back and forth lambasting the journal 'Climate Research' for publishing skeptical articles, suggesting that they encourage colleagues to no longer submit papers to, or cite papers in the journal. Michael Mann made this suggestion in 2003 following the journal's publication of an article which refuted his "hockey stick" graph, written by two Harvard astrophysicists, who wrote that, "the 20th century is neither the warmest century over the last 1,000 years, nor is it the most extreme." Phil Jones and Trenberth, another scientist at the CRU, were joint lead authors for a major chapter in the IPCC report, and as one email revealed, they were planning to keep skeptic articles out of the report, "I can't see either of these papers being in the next IPCC report. Kevin [Trenberth] and I will keep them out somehow - even if we have to redefine what the peer review literature is!" [3] So much for intellectual honesty and 'consensus'.

Following the Climategate controversy, one scandal after another revealed the poor record of intellectual honesty and extreme lack of scientific documentation that was put into the UN's IPCC report, which was (along with Al Gore) the recipient of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize, and when published led to the media and governments around the world proclaiming the debate to be over and the science settled. The falsities range from incorrectly stating that over 55% of the Netherlands is under sea level (and thus susceptible to flooding), when in fact only 26% is below seal level,[4] to more serious and relevant claims upon which the whole consensus is built, such as the notion of the climate warming.

Phil Jones, the scientist at the center of the Climategate scandal and head of the University of East Anglia's Climatic Research Unit (CRU), admitted in February of 2010 that, "he has trouble 'keeping track' of the information," and that his data for the vital "hockey-stick graph" showing increasing warming may have "gone missing." He further had to concede that the earth "may have" been warmer in the medieval warm period than it is today, and

that “for the past 15 years there has been no ‘statistically significant’ warming.” Jones continued in explaining the warming issue with the employment of Orwellian double-speak:

He also agreed that there had been two periods which experienced similar warming, from 1910 to 1940 and from 1975 to 1998, but said these could be explained by natural phenomena whereas more recent warming could not.

He further admitted that in the last 15 years there had been no ‘statistically significant’ warming, although he argued this was a blip rather than the long-term trend.[5]

So, while he admits that “similar” warming periods in the past were caused by natural phenomena, the current warming is caused by man, and yet he concedes that there has been “no statistically significant” current warming. In other words, past warming can be attributed to natural changes, while the warming that hasn’t taken place can be attributed to man.

While the 2007 UN IPCC report stated that the evidence of warming is “unequivocal,” John Christy, professor of atmospheric science at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, and a former lead author on the IPCC, stated that, “The temperature records cannot be relied on as indicators of global change.” Why is this the case?

The doubts of Christy and a number of other researchers focus on the thousands of weather stations around the world, which have been used to collect temperature data over the past 150 years.

These stations, they believe, have been seriously compromised by factors such as urbanisation, changes in land use and, in many cases, being moved from site to site.[6]

Christy, who has published several papers on this subject, looking at various weather stations around the world, concluded that, “the popular data sets show a lot of warming but the apparent temperature rise was actually caused by local factors affecting the weather stations, such as land development.” Ross McKittrick, professor of economics at the University of Guelph, Canada, who was invited by the IPCC to review its last report, stated that, “We concluded, with overwhelming statistical significance, that the IPCC’s climate data are contaminated with surface effects from industrialisation and data quality problems. These add up to a large warming bias.”[7] Even more scandals broke out in regards to the UN IPCC report:

The report falsely claimed that Himalayan glaciers would disappear by 2035 when evidence suggests that they will survive for another 300 years. It also claimed that global warming could cut rain-fed North African crop production by up to 50 per cent by 2020. A senior IPCC contributor has since admitted that there is no evidence to support this claim.[8]

Further, Rajendra Pachauri, the Chairman of the IPCC, “was told that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change assessment that the glaciers would disappear by 2035 was wrong, but he waited two months to correct it. He failed to act despite learning that the claim had been refuted by several leading glaciologists.”[9] The scientist at the IPCC who was behind the glacier claim was “well aware” that the claim “did not rest on peer-reviewed scientific research,” and that, “it was included purely to put political pressure on world leaders.”[10]

Robert Watson, former Chairman of the IPCC stated that, “The mistakes all appear to have

gone in the direction of making it seem like climate change is more serious by overstating the impact. That is worrying. The IPCC needs to look at this trend in the errors and ask why it happened.”[11]

The IPCC report had “stated that observed reductions in mountain ice in the Andes, Alps and Africa was being caused by global warming, citing two papers as the source of the information.” However, as was later revealed, “one of the sources quoted was a feature article published in a popular magazine for climbers which was based on anecdotal evidence from mountaineers about the changes they were witnessing on the mountainsides around them,” and “the other was a dissertation written by a geography student, studying for the equivalent of a master’s degree, at the University of Berne in Switzerland that quoted interviews with mountain guides in the Alps.” As for the source of information regarding the Himalayas melting, the citation indicated a non-peer reviewed report put out by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and further, “the IPCC report made use of 16 non-peer reviewed WWF reports.”[12]

Dr. Andrew Lacis, a physicist with the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, submitted a comment to the IPCC in regards to the Executive Summary of Chapter 9, which was the chapter that concluded that climate change is man-made. His comment was ultimately rejected to be included in the IPCC report. He wrote:

There is no scientific merit to be found in the Executive Summary. The presentation sounds like something put together by Greenpeace activists and their legal department. The points being made are made arbitrarily with legal sounding caveats without having established any foundation or basis in fact. The Executive Summary seems to be a political statement that is only designed to annoy greenhouse skeptics. Wasn’t the IPCC Assessment Report intended to be a scientific document that would merit solid backing from the climate science community – instead of forcing many climate scientists into having to agree with greenhouse skeptic criticisms that this is indeed a report with a clear and obvious political agenda. Attribution can not happen until understanding has been clearly demonstrated. Once the facts of climate change have been established and understood, attribution will become self-evident to all. The Executive Summary as it stands is beyond redemption and should simply be deleted.[13]

Dr. John Christy, the former lead author of the IPCC in 2001 for the 3rd assessment report (the fourth was the recent one released in 2007), stated that he personally witnessed UN scientists scheming to exaggerate claims, “I was at the table with three Europeans, and we were having lunch. And they were talking about their role as lead authors. And they were talking about how they were trying to make the report so dramatic that the United States would just have to sign that Kyoto Protocol.”[14] In other words, the plan was to use fear tactics to manipulate reluctant nations (and presumably public opinion) into supporting the UN’s political agenda.

Australian climate policy analyst and editor of the journal, Energy & Environment, Sonja Boehmer-Christiansen, spoke at length to the British Parliamentary inquiry into the climategate scandal, in which she explained how climate science was corrupted by money:

I was peer reviewer for IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)... Since 1998 I have been the editor of the journal, Energy & Environment (E&E) published by Multi-science, where I published my first papers on the IPCC. I interpreted the IPCC “consensus” as politically created in order to support energy technology and scientific agendas that in

essence pre-existed the “warming-as -man-made catastrophe alarm.”

Scientific research as advocacy for an agenda (a coalition of interests, not a conspiracy,) was presented to the public and governments as protection of the planet... CRU, working for the UK government and hence the IPCC, was expected to support the hypothesis of man-made, dangerous warming caused by carbon dioxide, a hypothesis it had helped to formulate in the late 1980s...

In persuading policy makers and the public of this danger, the “hockey stick” became a major tool of persuasion, giving CRU a major role in the policy process at the national, EU and international level. This led to the growing politicisation of science in the interest, allegedly, of protecting the “the environment” and the planet. I observed and documented this phenomenon as the UK Government, European Commission, and World Bank increasingly needed the climate threat to justify their anti-carbon (and pro-nuclear) policies. In return climate science was generously funded and required to support rather than to question these policy objectives... Opponents were gradually starved of research opportunities or persuaded into silence. The apparent “scientific consensus” thus generated became a major tool of public persuasion...

The CRU case is not unique. Recent exposures have taken the lid off similar issues in the USA, the Netherlands, Australia, and possibly in Germany and Canada... It is at least arguable that the real culprit is the theme- and project-based research funding system put in place in the 1980s and subsequently strengthened and tightened in the name of “policy relevance”. This system, in making research funding conditional on demonstrating such relevance, has encouraged close ties with central Government bureaucracy. Some university research units have almost become wholly-owned subsidiaries of Government Departments. Their survival, and the livelihoods of their employees, depends on delivering what policy makers think they want. It becomes hazardous to speak truth to power.[15]

While this is not by any means a conclusive or expansive analysis of the problems with climate science and the manufacture of consensus, let alone the facts of climate change itself, it is indicative of a directed effort on the part of political and economic powers to influence and shape a scientific “consensus” to fit in with their own political and economic agenda. This is the dangerous road taken when the state legitimizes particular sciences and more importantly, particular scientific views. When the state has decided upon its position (not to mention major financial and philanthropic interests), money flows only to those that support the state’s position. President Eisenhower warned the world about this in his 1961 farewell address to the nation, in which he not only warned about the dangerous threat to democracy posed by the “military-industrial complex”, but also of another grave threat:

Today, the solitary inventor, tinkering in his shop, has been overshadowed by task forces of scientists in laboratories and testing fields. In the same fashion, the free university, historically the fountainhead of free ideas and scientific discovery, has experienced a revolution in the conduct of research. Partly because of the huge costs involved, **a government contract becomes virtually a substitute for intellectual curiosity.** For every old blackboard there are now hundreds of new electronic computers.

The prospect of domination of the nation’s scholars by Federal employment, project allocations, and the power of money is ever present - and is gravely to be regarded.

Yet, in holding scientific research and discovery in respect, as we should, **we must also be alert to the equal and opposite danger that public policy could itself become the captive of a scientific-technological elite.**[16]

While science can reveal great truths and important knowledge to be used in the advancement of the human species and human society, so too can it be used against human society and the human species. So long as the malevolent power structures of the political, economic and social world remain and grow, scientific technique and discovery will be co-opted by the elites that control the global apparatus of power in an effort to better secure and strengthen their power. Without a change in the global power structures and nature of human civilization, science will be used against the people. We cannot expect truth and progress from a deceptive and oppressive global system. To find truth in the scientific world, we must simultaneously seek truth in the political, economic and social worlds. Progress in one sphere must entail progress in all spheres; without that, we leave ourselves vulnerable to the same weaknesses prevalent in all human institutions. Science is subject to human interpretation, and if we have learned one thing about human nature from all of our collective history, it can be said that humans are deeply flawed, most especially when power comes into play. The quest for all truth is the quest to challenge all power.

Andrew Gavin Marshall is a Research Associate with the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), and is studying Political Economy and History in Canada. He is co-editor, with Michel Chossudovsky, of the recent book, "[The Global Economic Crisis: The Great Depression of the XXI Century](#)," available to order at [Globalresearch.ca](#).

Notes

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Michel Chossudovsky
Andrew G. Marshall (editors)

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