

Another Side to GLOBAL WARMING

Ice water: Rain clouds gather over a fisherman on India's Brahmaputra River. The river is one of many in India fed by meltwater from Himalayan glaciers.

Environmentalists and the UN want you to believe that the science of global warming is settled and that the globe is heating. In fact, the science is anything but settled.

by **Dennis Behreandt**

One of the oft-repeated mantras of the global-warming crowd is that there is no longer any debate in the scientific community about the threat of global warming. And why not think that

the debate is over? No less a body than the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), one of the nation's preeminent scientific organizations, on February 17 released a "consensus report" calling global warming "a growing threat to society." In fact, the AAAS

report, following the lead of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), stated that global warming is real, that it's caused by human activity, and that it is an unprecedented threat.

But what if the scientific "consensus" on climate change is wrong? In fact, what if there is no consensus? Though they get little press, and what media attention they do get is often unfavorable, there are many scientists who disagree with the "consensus" view of global warming. Moreover, there have been substantial scientific findings that significantly undercut the standard model of global warming.

The Skeptics

One of the most important critics of the standard model of global warming is MIT professor of meteorology Richard S. Lindzen. A giant in the world of climate science, Lindzen has published literally hundreds of scientific papers. In an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* in 2001, writing about a National Academy of Sciences report on climate change in which he participated, Lindzen noted: "We are quite confident (1) that global mean temperature is about 0.5 degrees Celsius higher than it was a century ago; (2) that atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide have risen over the past two centuries; and (3) that carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas whose increase is likely to warm the earth (one of many, the most important being water vapor and clouds). But — and I cannot stress this enough — we are not in a position to confidently attribute past climate change to carbon dioxide or to forecast what the climate will be in the future. That is to say, contrary to media impressions, agreement with the three basic statements tells us almost nothing relevant to policy discussions."

Lindzen again addressed the issue in the *Wall Street Journal* in 2006. Pointing out that everything from heat waves in Paris to heavy snows in Buffalo have been "blamed on people burning gasoline to fuel their cars, and coal and natural gas to heat, cool and electrify their homes" and that scientists who challenge such contentions have paid a heavy price, he noted: "Scientists who dissent from the alarmism have seen their grant funds disappear, their work derided, and themselves libeled as industry stooges, scientific hacks or worse."



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Skeptical scientist: Famed hurricane forecaster William Gray, professor emeritus at Colorado State University, is just one of many scientists who disagree with the standard model of global warming.

Lindzen wrote. “Consequently, lies about climate change gain credence even when they fly in the face of the science that supposedly is their basis.”

Lest this be derided as mere rhetoric, Lindzen names some of those whose careers have been disrupted in global-warming related purges. “In Europe, Henk Tennekes was dismissed as research director of the Royal Dutch Meteorological Society after questioning the scientific underpinnings of global warming. Aksel Winn-Nielsen, former director of the U.N.’s World Meteorological Organization, was tarred by Bert Bolin, first head of the IPCC, as a tool of the coal industry for questioning climate alarmism. Respected Italian professors Alfonso Sutera and Antonio Speranza disappeared from the debate in 1991, apparently losing climate-research funding for raising

questions.” According to Lindzen, the purge has been nearly complete: “Only the most senior scientists today can stand up against this alarmist gale, and defy the iron triangle of climate scientists, advocates and policymakers.”

One of the senior scientists who has remained a skeptic is noted hurricane expert William Gray, longtime head of the Tropical Meteorology Project at Colorado State University. Long recognized as the world’s foremost expert on tropical cyclones, Gray spoke to *Discover* magazine in 2005 about his work and about global warming. During the discussion, *Discover*’s Kathy A. Svitil asked: “You don’t believe global warming is causing climate change?” Gray responded:

No. If it is, it is causing such a small part that it is negligible. I’m not disputing that there has been global warming. There was a lot of global warming in the 1930s and ’40s, and then there was a slight global cooling from the middle ’40s to the early ’70s. And there has been warming since the middle ’70s, especially in the last 10 years. But this is natural, due to ocean circulation changes and other factors. It is not human induced.

Moreover, Gray noted that many of his colleagues agree with him. “Nearly all of my colleagues who have been around 40 or 50 years are skeptical as hell about this whole global-warming thing,” Gray told *Discover*. “But no one asks us. If you don’t know anything about how the atmosphere functions, you will of course say, ‘Look, greenhouse gases are going up, the globe is warming, they must be related.’ Well, just because there are two associations, changing with the same sign, doesn’t mean that one is causing the other.”

Yet another climate scientist who is a global-warming skeptic is Dr. Timothy Ball of the Natural Resources Stewardship Project in Canada. Dr. Ball describes himself as “one of the first Canadian

Ph.Ds. in Climatology” and points out that he served as a climatology professor at the University of Winnipeg. Ball is blunt in his assessment of global warming. “Believe it or not, Global Warming is not due to human contribution of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂),” he wrote in the *Canada Free Press* on February 5. “This in fact is the greatest deception in the history of science. We are wasting time, energy and trillions of dollars while creating unnecessary fear and consternation over an issue with no scientific justification.” According to Ball, the changes in climate that have been observed so far have not deviated from what can be expected as part of natural variation. “These climate changes are well within natural variability and explained quite easily by changes in the sun. But there is nothing unusual going on.”

There are countless other scientists who take issue with the supposed consensus on global warming, but the one who makes some of the most trenchant observations on the controversy may be Phillip Stott, professor emeritus of biogeography at the University of London. In the online journal *Spiked* in 2004, Stott pointed out: “In any discussion of climate change, it is essential to distinguish between the complex science of climate and the myth ... of ‘global warming.’” According to Stott, “The latter is a politico-pseudoscientific construct, developed since the late 1980s,

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in which the human emission of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide and methane, is unquestioningly taken as the prime driver of a new and dramatic type of climate change.”

For Stott, this pseudoscientific construct smacks of a new authoritarian religion “involving the use of what the physicist PH Borchers has termed the ‘hysterical subjunctive.’ Indeed, for many, the myth has become an article of a secular faith that exhibits all the characteristics of a premodern religion, above all demanding sacrifice to the Earth.”

Inconvenient Observations

Part of the reason why these and many other scientists are skeptical of the claims made by proponents of the standard model of global warming is that some observed phenomena are not accounted for by that model. Another reason is that the standard model does not account for other causes of climate change.

One of the claims made to support the idea that humans are causing global warming is that glaciers are disappearing across the globe. That was reported by *National Geographic* in 2002: “New surveys from satellites and aircraft document an alarming acceleration in the melting of glaciers around the world.” It is, of course, true that some glaciers are melting. It is also true that some glaciers are not melting. One of the places that melt water from glaciers has caused the greatest concern is Greenland. The prospect that Greenland might lose its huge ice sheet led Al Gore in *An Inconvenient Truth* to suggest that, should that happen, sea levels would rise by 20 feet. That would truly be catastrophic, but is Greenland really about to lose all its ice?

Maybe. But maybe not. A recently published study found that two significant glaciers in Greenland that had recently experienced an accelerated loss of mass have now returned to their previous rate of discharge. The study was led by Ian Howat of the University of

Colorado’s Snow and Ice Data Center and the University of Washington’s Applied Physics Laboratory. According to Howat, the study indicates that it is inadvisable to base predictions of glacial melting and sea level increases on observations spanning just a few years. “Our main point is that the behavior of these glaciers can change a lot from year to year, so we can’t assume to know the future behavior from short records of recent changes,” he said. “Future warming may lead to rapid pulses of retreat and increased discharge rather than a long, steady drawdown.”

Among the glaciers whose disappearance has been frequently cited as evidence that global warming is fast changing the planet is one that once graced the majestic peak of Africa’s Mt. Kilimanjaro. “If current climatic conditions persist, the legendary glaciers, icing the peaks of Africa’s highest summit for nearly 12,000 years, could be gone entirely by 2020,” *National Geographic* reported in 2003. But despite the reports that the snows of Kilimanjaro are melting because of global warming, there are other possible causes.

One of these comes from a study led by Thomas Mölg of the Tropical Glaciology Group, Department of Geography at the University of Innsbruck in Austria. In a paper published in the *Journal of Geophysical Research* in 2003, Mölg and his fellow researchers argued that their study “qualitatively demonstrates that solar radiation

is the main climatic parameter maintaining modern glacier recession on Kilimanjaro summit, but also suggests that retreat on the inner ice cap margin might have been supported by a secondary energy source.” In other words, the sun is the main cause of melting on Kilimanjaro. As for the secondary cause, some like George Kerevan, associate editor of the *Scotsman* newspaper, point to deforestation and equatorial atmospheric drying caused by changes in wind and ocean current patterns.

There are other counterindications worth noting as well. One is that the oceans have not been heating up and have, in fact, undergone periods of recent cooling. That cooling was discussed in a paper by a team of researchers led by John P. Lyman of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that was published in *Geophysical Research Letters* in September 2006. In their paper, the researchers noted that there was a cooling anomaly detected in the oceans of the world that lasted from 1980 to 1983 and that appears to be occurring again. “We have detected a new cooling event that began in 2003 and is comparable in magnitude to the one in the early 1980s,” they wrote. Moreover, the cooling is not just consigned to certain ocean strata, but occurs at all depths. According to the paper, “The cooling signal is distributed over the water column with most depths experiencing some cooling. A small amount of cooling is observed at

It’s gospel to him: Al Gore’s *Inconvenient Truth* argues that global warming will lead to catastrophe. There are many scientists, though, who take another view.



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the surface, although much less than the cooling at depth... The maximum cooling occurs at about 400 m and substantial cooling is still observed at 750 m.”

If the ocean is cooling, where did the heat go? According to the researchers, it was lost to space. They point out that “previous work suggests that the scale of the heat loss is too large to be stored in any single component of the Earth’s climate system.” They conclude that the heat was probably radiated out into space. “These findings suggest that the observed decrease in upper ocean heat content from 2003 to 2005 could be the result of a net loss of heat from the Earth to space.” If so, then the Earth has lost heat during the same time it was supposed to have been

warming according to the anthropogenic (human-caused) warming model.

What else? A researcher with Ohio State University’s Byrd Polar Research Center recently reported to the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science that temperatures in the Antarctic have not been rising as predicted. “It’s hard to see a global warming signal from the mainland of Antarctica right now,” professor David Bromwich told the AAAS meeting according to the online science news site *PhysOrg.com*. “Part of the reason is that there is a lot of variability there. It’s very hard in these polar latitudes to demonstrate a global warming signal. This is in marked contrast to the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula that is one of the most rapidly warming parts of the Earth.” Even so, Bromwich emphasized it was hard to find evidence of man-made global warming in Antarctica as a whole. “The best we can say right now is that the climate models are somewhat inconsistent with the evidence that we have for the last 50 years from continental Antarctica,” Bromwich said. “We’re looking for a small signal that


represents the impact of human activity and it is hard to find it at the moment.”

Theories and Consequences

Clearly, despite protestations that there is a consensus that humans are causing catastrophic global warming, the debate, in fact, still rages. For many policymakers, though, the debate is over and it is now time to take legislative action. That, for instance, is the opinion of Republican Senator Olympia Snowe of Maine. “We have reached a scientific critical mass, the question now is how do we reach a political critical mass,” Snowe told a World Bank-sponsored conference in February. In Washington, according to a Reuters report at tech Website *ZDNet.com*, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi is hoping to see “a ‘substantial package’ of global warming legislation by June 1.”

Such legislation, if signed into law, would undoubtedly contain severe taxes or outright restrictions on carbon emissions that would almost certainly cause economic disruption, at minimum, in important manufacturing industries. Probably, that disruption would ripple through the economy as a whole. If that happens, the destruction will be based on a theory that does not account for many climatic observations. ■

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Snows of Kilimanjaro: The glaciers of the African peak, made famous by Hemingway, have been receding. Some claim global warming is at fault, but others argue, persuasively, that other factors are to blame.