

CHRIS de FREITAS

I wish to draw your attention to this excellent article by my friend Chris de Freitas on the Website of the New Zealand Centre for Political Research, which I also recommend.



Chris de Freitas

Chris de Freitas is climate scientist and associate professor at the University of Auckland. He received his early education in Trinidad, West Indies. He completed Bachelors and Masters degrees at the University of Toronto and a PhD at the University of Queensland as a Commonwealth Doctoral Scholar. During his time at the University of Auckland he has served as Deputy Dean of Science, Head of Science and Technology at the Tamaki campus and four years as Pro Vice Chancellor. He has been Vice President of the Meteorological Society of New Zealand and is a founding member of the Australia New Zealand Climate Forum. For 10 years he was an editor of the international journal "Climate Research". He was an expert reviewer of the 1995 and the 2001 Scientific Assessment Reports of United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and the UK Department of the Environment 1996 Report "Potential Effects of Climate Change in the United Kingdom". He is an advocate of open and well informed reporting on scientific issues and has written extensively in newspapers and magazines and regularly gives public addresses on a variety of environment-related themes, including air quality, flood and drought hazards, environmental conservation and environmental change. In recognition of this, he has three times been the recipient of the NZ Association of Scientists (NZAS), Science Communicator Award, and once the recipient of a NZAS Science Communicator Merit Award.

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NZCPR Guest Forum

Prologue to Copenhagen

Chris de Freitas

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The Kyoto Protocol, an icon of the global environmental movement, is soon to be replaced by a more radical international accord to curb greenhouse gas emissions. What it will involve depends on the outcome of negotiations this December in Copenhagen. In preparation, the Government has committed New Zealand to cut up to a third of current emissions by 2020. The emissions trading scheme is a first step, but this alone cannot guarantee such a massive reduction. Sweeping legislation restricting the use of oil, coal and natural gas will be required, along with far-reaching reforms in pastoral farming to cut methane release. The economic and social implications for New Zealand are immense.

Labour and the Greens have accused the Government of not going far enough and, predictably, the debate has become focused on the size of the emissions target rather than justification for it. Given the enormity of the social and economic disruption associated with emissions reductions, we need to be convinced that the benefits are worth the enormous costs.

The US federal government has spent 80 billion US dollars on climate research on the assumption that human caused rise of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is a problem. Despite this, no one has yet found even a shred of objective scientific evidence that humans are causing damaging global climate change.

The so called evidence emanates from a vociferous group in the scientific community who, for a variety of reasons, are set on promoting predetermined conclusions not supported by empirical data or real-world observations. The science they rely on is all about the number of scientists who agree with them and claims of consensus to suppress quality control in climate research. "Taking a vote is a risky way to discover scientific truth", warned climatologist Reid Bryson.

The planet has warmed and cooled several times over the past 150 years, all within the range of natural climate variability.

There are no published scientific papers that show irrefutable proof that any of this is human-caused.

Proof is not to be mistaken for the output of hypothetical climate models, none of which has been shown to reliably predict climate. Proof is not merely evidence of warming coupled with the default conclusion "it must human-caused" when we don't know how else to explain it. This is nothing more than admission of ignorance. Even the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) acknowledges changes we have seen may be natural. The following statement appears in a major IPCC report "Climate Change 2001".

"The fact that the global mean temperature has increased since the late 19th century and that other trends have been observed does not necessarily mean that an anthropogenic effect on the climate has been identified. Climate has always varied on all time-scales, so the observed change may be natural."

The notion of an unchanging climate has been used to deceive us. It is a conveniently forgotten fact that most of the industrialised world went into hysterics during the forty years of global cooling beginning in the late 1930s. It has been replaced by global warming hysteria over a temperature rise over 100 years of less than one degree, a trend that started before modern industrialisation caused atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations to rise.

According to MIT atmospheric scientist, Professor Richard Lindzen, hysterics over changes in global mean temperature of a few tenths of a degree "will astound future generations". Lindzen says "such hysteria simply represents the scientific illiteracy of much of the public, the susceptibility of the public to the substitution of repetition for truth, and the exploitation of these weaknesses by politicians, environmental promoters, and, after 20 years of media drum beating, many others as well."

"Climate change" has become a pseudo religion, and much of the blame lies with the media. Rather than focus on hard climate science, the media have instead become enthusiastic advocates for scientifically unfounded alarmism. There are many well-documented examples of this.

In a letter to the New York Times, Dr. Martin Hertzberg, an atmospheric scientist who featured in the 2009 'U.S. Senate Report of More Than 700 Dissenting Scientists on Global Warming', accuses the newspaper of "continuously regurgitating fear-mongering, anecdotal clap trap of global warming propagandists". He said "your coverage of the climate issues is a reflection of either extreme negligence or simply scientific illiteracy". But the real reason may be simpler: talk of impending climate catastrophe is interesting, whereas sober analysis of climate data is boring.

The IPCC has been complicit in the scaremongering and exaggeration. The IPCC is a governmental institution that selectively accepts and rejects critical comments from expert reviewers of its reports, as my climate science colleagues and I can prove, having been part of the IPCC-managed review process. Surprisingly, given the great costs and social impacts of emissions reducing policies, there is no government "ombudsman" or any means to "audit" what is going on in the IPCC, or to tell if all the extravagantly funded research has been a good investment. The IPCC has been a major driver of global warming hysteria, which has overshadowed concern for real global-scale problems. It is a matter of social responsibility if limited resources could have been better spent on uncontroversial environmental problems such as air pollution, poor sanitation, provision of clean water and improved health services - which we know affect hundreds of millions of people.

Fifty years ago it became clear that global carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere were increasing. It was assumed that this was the prime contributor to an observed period of global temperature increase. On this basis, the carbon dioxide data were used in climate model projections for future global warming. By 2006, despite the ongoing rise in global carbon dioxide emissions, data showed that mean global temperature rise had slowed, and currently shows signs of falling. A similar thing happened from 1940 to 1980 during the post Second World War industrial boom when carbon dioxide increased rapidly, but was accompanied by 40 years of global cooling. In contrast, there was a distinct global warm period in medieval times when carbon dioxide levels were much lower than they are now.

Carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere is currently higher than at any time in the past 600,000 years, yet global temperature was much higher during all the major warm interglacial periods that occurred during this time, despite much lower levels of carbon dioxide.

Government decision-makers should have heard by now that the basis for the longstanding claim that carbon dioxide is a major driver of global climate is being questioned.

If they have not heard, one wonders where they obtain advice on climate matters. Apparently, much of it comes from the eight-member Climate Committee of the Royal Society of New Zealand. At least six of the eight members of that Committee are people with direct or indirect links to the IPCC, or have actually been part in the IPCC process of reporting. Thus, it is not surprising that the Committee's view coincides that of the IPCC, with no semblance of independence. The belief that science can be determined by "authorities" proclaiming to speak on behalf of entire scientific communities belongs to the medieval period.

That there is not one government scientist in New Zealand associated with climate issues who is willing to speak out against global warming alarmist claims says a lot about how the country is governed. This and the emissions trading scheme are proof that ideology has been permitted to trump science.

The United Nations is gearing up to create a sense of urgency about climate change in the hope that the meeting in Copenhagen can produce a solid agreement to replace the failed Kyoto treaty. But nature refuses to oblige. Eighteen years of global warming came to an end in 1998. Currently, we are in the eleventh year of a global temperature stasis. Sea levels, which have been rising for the past 300 years, show no sign of acceleration. Antarctica is cooling. Hurricane activity is down and does not appear to be connected to carbon dioxide emissions. Annual average Arctic sea ice extent, which is determined largely by wind and ocean currents, is increasing once again - the recent decline was hardly alarming as it was less than that which occurred in 1930s.

In the lead up to the December meeting in Copenhagen, what is needed is careful reflection on the consequences of actions taken as a result of widespread carbon phobia. If any good is to come from Copenhagen, it is that the anxiety about climate may allow the global community to see the need to pull together on truly pressing global problems. It is a wonderful opportunity to call for an era of global unity and the beginning of a new chapter international co-operation to address the planet's real and most pressing problems.

Online at: <http://www.nzcpr.com/guest166.htm>

Cheers

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"To kill an error is as good a service as, and sometimes better than, the establishing of a new truth or fact"
Charles Darwin"