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Chapter 1. Is Global Warming really happening?

Many people are confused about climate change because they are under the impression that the scientists are divided about it. If the scientists aren't sure as to the causes of global warming, then how can ordinary people be expected to know? The floods on the Somerset Levels and in the Thames Valley in England during the dreadful winter of 2014 are a good case in point. Were these catastrophes the first serious evidence of climate change in the UK or not? I doubt whether you could have found a single scientist who was prepared to say that this was incontrovertible evidence of man-made climate change and the inadequate dredging of the rivers had nothing to do with it. The whole subject of climate is so complicated, in fact, that there is no department of it in which controversial and often contradictory evidence cannot be found, and at least some scientists who support different views from those held by most of them. In science, after all, minorities have often been right.

In his challenging book *The Real Global Warming Disaster* Christopher Booker supplies us with plenty of evidence to show that this is the case. Take, for example, the notorious hockey stick graph produced by Michael Mann of the University of Massachusetts. It was so-called because it showed that instead of global temperatures gently rising and falling over the past thousand years, they had gently declined for nine hundred years until the twentieth century when they suddenly rise steeply, like the sharply curved end of a hockey stick. According to Booker this graph was very influential in the thinking of the United Nations International Panel for Climate Change, the I.P.C.C. But then two Canadians, Stephen McIntyre who was a statistical analyst and Ross McKittrick, who was an economist, subjected Mann's graph to a much more rigorous statistical analysis. An algorithm had been fed into Mann's computer model, they discovered, which searched for hockey stick phenomena wherever they could be found but was blind to other data. For instance, evidence from tree-rings in bristlecone pines in Northern California showed evidence of the hockey stick. But evidence from other ancient trees in other parts of America, such as Arkansas, did not. Because of Mann's chosen method of computer modelling, his graph gave '390 times as much weight' to the Californian evidence as it did to that from Arkansas.

We can find similar differences of opinion in virtually every department of global warming studies. In 2007 a minority report from the environment committee of the US Senate published a list of 400 scientists who seriously rejected the proposition that man-made global warming was responsible for recent phenomena observed in their particular departments of expertise. Dr Syun-ichi Akasofu, for example, a Japanese American who had been founding Director of the International Arctic Research Center at the University of Alaska, and one of the main authorities, if not the main, on melting Arctic Ice, differed sharply from the IPCC's position on the Arctic ice. Only eminent authorities are usually aware of how little they know, and Professor Akasofu understood how little we know about the many rises and falls in quantities and extents of Arctic sea ice during

vast geological ages, and still less about why they happened. He emphasized that receding sea ice has been a feature of the Arctic since around 1800. He was not convinced that the recent melting that has been observed was not part of that trend. In September 2013 *The Mail on Sunday* reported that 533,000 more square miles of ocean were covered with sea ice than had been the case in 2012. 'Some eminent scientists now believe that the world is heading for a period of cooling that will not end until the middle of this century'. No scientist could be found who was prepared to quarrel with the figures that *The Mail* produced.

The same differences of opinion can be found in relation to the Antarctic. In 2009 a number of scientists, including Mann, published a paper in *Nature*¹ claiming that the Antarctic is warming rapidly and the only possible cause is 'rising levels of greenhouse gas in the atmosphere'. But as in the case of the hockey stick graph, other scientists were soon claiming that the statistical analysis upon which the paper had been based was flawed. Because there are few weather stations in the Antarctic the study had been based on evidence from only two, and this evidence had been theoretically extrapolated to the rest of the continent, what even the paper itself called 'sparse data infilling'. Photographic evidence, moreover, showed that one of the weather stations had been buried in snow, which would have insulated its thermometer enough to record a falsely high temperature. The same sharp differences of opinion can be found when it comes to droughts. In 2006 the Hadley Centre at the Met Office published a study revealing that in the last decade of the twentieth century droughts had been 25% more widespread than in the previous forty years.² Yet another study of the twentieth century's most intensive droughts, published only a few months later, showed that 27 of these had occurred before 1980. Five had occurred between 1961 and 1980, during the period covered by the first study, but twenty-two in the decades before that.³

The IPCC claims that its findings are the result of work by 2,500 scientists. But Booker refers to a paper by an Australian IT analyst, John McLean, pointing out that the crucial Chapter 9 of the IPCC's 2007 report was written by only 53 scientists, and these were drawn from only four countries. No fewer than ten of them came from either the Hadley Centre at Exeter or the Climate Department in the University of East Anglia. Of the 534 papers cited in support of Chapter 9, nearly all had been written by members of a small in-group and only seven could be described as truly independent. 'The relationship between the authors of Chapter 9' wrote McLean 'demonstrates a disturbingly tight network of scientists with common research interests and opinions'. 'Not 2,500 but 53' comments Booker. This accusation of 'a tight network' of climate scientists with an agenda to promote was furthered by the e mail scandal at the climate department in the University of East Anglia. Shortly before the Climate

¹ *Warming of the Antarctic ice-sheet surface since the 1957 International Geophysical Year* by e.j. Steig, D.P. Schneider, S.D. Rutherford, M.E.Mann, J.C. Cosimo and D.T.Shindell, *Nature* 457,459-462.

² 'Extreme droughts will spread, say forecasters' *The Guardian* 3rd October 2008.

³ G.T. Narisma *et al.* 'Abrupt changes in rainfall during the twentieth century' *Geophysical Research Letters* 34,10.1029

Conference at Copenhagen in December 2009, sceptics released onto the internet evidence from private e mails they had hacked into. The crucial sentence was drawn from the head of the department, Phil Jones, who had written of “Mike’s nature trick to hide the decline in tree ring analysis”. Mike was Mike Hulme, Head of the Tyndall Centre, and the reference was to an embarrassing lack of conformation in tree ring analysis that climate change in past eras had happened as the consensus scientists said it had. “Trick”: what more evidence could you want of the chicanery of ‘the warmists’? A constant theme of the sceptical case is that scientists don’t exactly mislead, but they do highlight the evidence that favours their case and talk up the issue in order to get their hands on the vast amounts of funding provided by governments, for questionable research projects and cushy jobs in university climate departments.

According to some sceptics the whole supposed science of climate change is a giant ‘swindle’ that has been perpetrated on the public by ‘warmist’ scientists and politicians’. Is the obsession with “climate change” turning out to be the biggest scientific blunder in history ? asks Booker on the dust jacket of his book. The warmists won’t look dispassionately at the evidence disproving their case, although it is staring them in the face. The changes in climate that we are seeing have all happened before. There may have been severe floods in Somerset in 2014. But these were small compared with the far worse floods in East Anglia in 1953. Climate is always changing because of the orbits of the earth round the sun. Sometimes the sun is nearer, thus warming the earth more, and sometimes further away. In the Middle Ages there was the Medieval warm period when you could grow grapes in the North of England, but in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries people were roasting oxen on the frozen Thames. If this is not a good enough explanation for the phenomena we are observing now, although it is, for good measure sun spots also affect earth’s climate too. You’re surely not going to say that sun spots are caused by fossil fuels? Scientists are always talking nonsense on this subject. In the nineteen seventies they were predicting a mini-ice age. But as it hasn’t happened they have now had to invent something else. To cap it all, there is one really killer argument to which the sceptics come back again and again. Everybody agrees that carbon emissions have increased steeply since 1998. But global temperature has not. Could you want any better evidence that there is no connection between carbon emissions and global temperature?

The climate sceptics make out a good case, or what sounds like a good case, about almost every aspect of climate change, whether it’s disappearing rain forests or melting glaciers or flooding on the Somerset levels. But ever since I read an essay proving that Queen Victoria wrote *In Memoriam* by Ronald Knox, who wrote it to point out that if you’re clever enough you can make out an impressive case for just about any nonsense, I’ve been very suspicious of assessments that don’t give a reasonable account of both sides of any controversial issue. I think it’s fair to say that sceptical articles in newspapers rarely do. I’m also worried by the way the deniers so often write in a lofty, sneering tone, as if their opponents were not just wrong but complete idiots.

The impression is consistently given that the intellects of those who think that climate change is a great danger to mankind only do so because they have been overwhelmed by their emotions. Sections of Booker's book are headed: 'Hysteria reaches its height', 'A blizzard of Mad Proposals', 'Further Still into Carbon Cloud Cuckoo Land' and 'The Abyss of Unreality'. A sceptical programme put out by Channel 4 was called 'The Great Global Warming Swindle'. Booker refers to George Monbiot as "The Great Moonbat" as 'the revered environmental campaigner was affectionately known'. If I were Monbiot I'd regard that as pretty offensive.

All this worries me. If the case against climate change is so good, why do climate deniers so often adopt this kind of belittling tone (although I have to say that Nigel Lawson's book *An Appeal to Reason* is a model of respect and good manners, little as I agree with him)? When you set this kind of accent against the measured and rational and cautious approach of, say, The Royal Society's response to climate change in their answers to FAQ's on the society's website, the attempt to present consensus supporters as motivated not by reason but by emotion seems to me absurd, and makes me very suspicious indeed.