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Global warming: the bogus religion of our age

by PROF. RICHARD LINDZEN - [More by this author »](#) Last updated at 11:16am on 8th March 2007

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The world is heading for environmental catastrophe — or so we are constantly being told by the politicians and self-appointed experts.

They warn us that unless we take drastic action, the earth will soon be devastated by climate change and global warming.

Entire species will be lost, crops will be obliterated, floods and famine will sweep across the planet, and western economies will slide into depression.

Tonight, Channel 4 will broadcast *The Great Global Warming Swindle*, which suggests that the whole subject has become such a political hot potato that other explanations for climate change are not being properly examined.

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Polar bears cling precariously to the top of what is left of the ice floe. But is it due to global warming?

Certainly, there have been many sweeping predictions of global ruin, few more emphatic than the report from Sir Nicholas Stern into the economics of climate change, which states with an air of unchallengeable conviction: 'The scientific evidence is now overwhelming. Climate change presents very serious global risks and it demands an urgent global response.'

His study, commissioned by the Government in July 2005 and published amid much Whitehall hype in October 2006, seemed to carry all the more weight because Stern is one of the most senior civil servants in Britain, the head of the Government's economic service.

His conclusions appeared to be based on powerful scientific authority, since his team of 20 or so officials had drawn on a wide range of published papers and data.

Tony Blair has described it as the most important document produced during his ten years as Prime Minister, and urged that the Stern blueprint, with its calls for more regulation and taxation, be adopted in full.

'The disaster is not set to happen in some science fiction future, but in our lifetimes,' said Blair, who went on to claim that the 'the world faces nothing more serious, more urgent and more demanding of its leadership than climate change.'

All this has helped put the Stern report at the very forefront of the debate. The central theme of it is that there is a near universal consensus of opinion within the scientific community about the dangers of climate change. But this is not true.

There is no such unanimity among scientists.

Throughout the 550 pages of his document, Stern continually strikes a confident note, as if there were no dispute about the issues.

Completely divorced from scientific reality

Yet this self-assured stance is completely divorced from scientific reality. It is an inconvenient truth for Stern and his political allies that there is, in fact, precious little hard evidence to back up his sweeping claims.

In a revealing recent comment, Stern admitted that when he was appointed by the Government, he 'had an idea what the greenhouse effect was but wasn't really sure'.

This lack of understanding of science shines through every chapter of his report.

He is guilty of misreading the data, of distorting the evidence to suit his political masters' dogma, of throwing numbers about with reckless abandon, of promoting alarmism in place of rational discussion, and of reinventing climate history.

There are fundamental misconceptions throughout the document. He seems to think that climate prediction is a mature science stretching back to the early 19th century, hence the confident tone science stretching back to the early century, hence the confident tone of his pronouncements.

But in reality climate prediction is a relatively modern science, which has emerged only in recent decades thanks partly to the emergence of computers.

So there are no easy certainties about the past — or the future.

Stern states boldly that the scale of global warming has been unprecedented for at least the past 1,000 years, but he cannot possibly be sure on this point because data from previous centuries is unreliable.

At most, we have a 50-year span of accurate measurements. The only genuine global records of temperature come from weather balloons, since 1958, and from microwave sounding units, since 1978.

What they indicate is a very gently warming trend, nothing approaching the apocalyptic vision of Sir Nicholas.

Moreover, this minor trend could have easily have been caused by irregularities such as volcanic eruptions or El Nino events (major fluctuations in ocean temperatures in the Pacific which affect climate).

Stern's report 'ignores the evidence that does not suit his ideology'

In support of his gloomy thesis, Stern, like all global warming enthusiasts, ignores the evidence that does not suit his ideology. He glosses over the fact that, according to a host of historical accounts, Europe was far warmer in the Middle Ages than it is today, or that the 17th century was much colder, prompting what was known as 'The Little Ice Age', when the Thames was often frozen over for months at a time.

Stern also refers to 'significant melting of and an acceleration of ice floes' near the coast of Greenland because of global warming.

Yet several reputable scientific studies have shown that the mass of the Greenland ice sheet is actually expanding, while Stern also fails to note that the temperature of Greenland is now lower than it was in 1940 and little changed from the first measurements in the 1780s.

Environmentalists are fond of jerking heartstrings with pictures of polar bears struggling on supposedly melting icebergs, but it is estimated that there are now 22,000 polar bears compared with 5,000 in 1940.

Nor can we be sure that any long-term changes in our climate are due to mankind. There are any number of other possibilities and the programme tonight examines the possibility that the sun's radiation is primarily responsible for climate change.

Indeed, the climate can fluctuate without any external cause at all — something again ignored by Stern, who wants only to indulge in the fashionable notion that western capitalism is entirely to blame for every drought and disaster.

Further, Stern takes no account of the capacity of mankind to adapt to, and improve his, environment.

There can be little dispute that, more than a century after the peak of the 19th-century industrial revolution, Britain is a cleaner, healthier, less polluted country than it was in the late Victorian age, when smog, disease and slums were rife.

Genuine science is about gathering evidence and testing the veracity of theories, not cheerleading for a particular ideology.

That is what is so disturbing about the current debate on global warming. Healthy scepticism, which should be at the heart of all scientific inquiry, is treated with contempt.

Far from being the powerful masterpiece that Blair claimed, Stern's report is manifestly incompetent.

It is another dodgy dossier, where assertions are presented as facts and data is twisted to suit a political purpose.

I agree with the economist critic who noted: 'If a student of mine were to hand in this report as a masters thesis, perhaps if I were in a good mood, I would give him D for diligence, but more likely I would give him an F for fail.' We are shifting away from science and into the realm of religious fanaticism, where the followers of the creed, brimming with self-righteous fury, believe that they are in possession of a higher truth.

Like a religion, environmentalism is suffused with hatred for the material world and again, like religion, it requires devotion rather than intellectual rigour from its adherents.

It is intolerant of dissent; those who question the message of doom are regarded as heretics, or 'climate change deniers', to use green parlance.

And, just as in many religions, the route to personal salvation lies in the performance of superstitious rituals, such as changing a lightbulb or arranging for a tree to be planted after every plane journey.

What is so tragic is the way that this dubious ideology has achieved such dominance in our public life.

Politicians love the green agenda, of course, because it means more control, more regulation, more taxes, more summits, and more opportunities for displays of self-important zeal.

The tragedy is that the likes of Sir Nicholas Stern are using bogus science to push forward this agenda.

Richard Lindzen is Professor of Meteorology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

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44 people have commented on this story so far. Tell us what you think below.

Here's a sample of the latest comments published. You can click [view all](#) to read all comments that readers have sent in.

Someone forgot to tell the Canadian Prairie about "Global Warming" Winnipeg endured - 35 to -40 this winter.

- Osvaldo, Eanada

Tim from Newbury: For every one of the ostriches you see, there are many who can see that the Emporer's new clothes are an illusion.

- A.W., Lewes, England

No Tim, not ostriches out in force! Just realistic people who are fed up to the back teeth with yet another excuse for higher taxation. You can't 'beat' Mother Nature by grabbing more tax, and at the end of the day which one of us really gives a damn about what's going to happen in 300 years time.

- Olderbird, Northants

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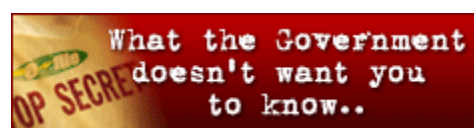
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[Superwoman vs the Yummy Mummy](#)

So there she was the other day, standing at the counter in the Peter Jones store buying a Chanel lip gloss with a carrier bag from Harvey Nichols plonked down beside her. The Yummy Mummy we all supposedly aspire to be

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