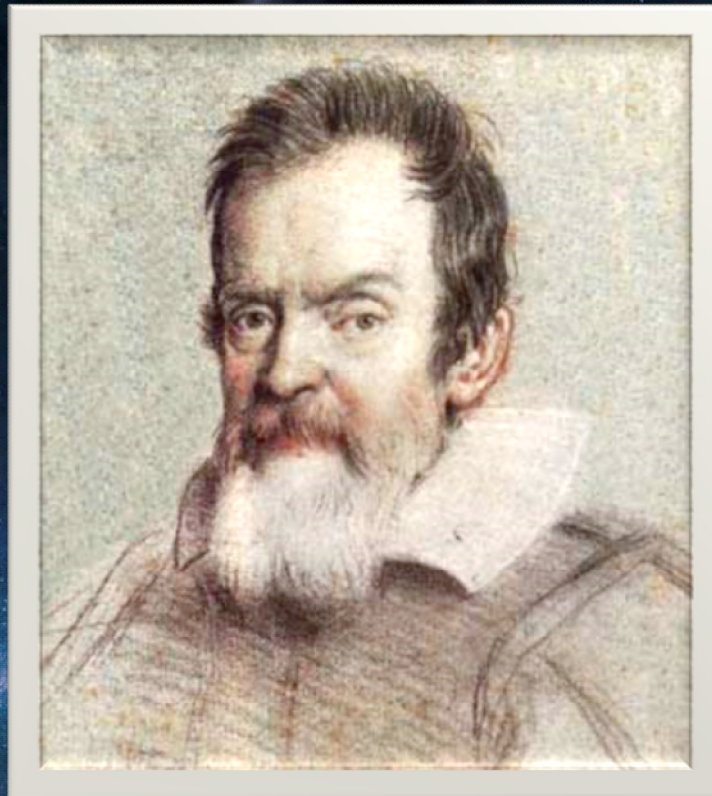


“‘UNEQUIVOCAL’ ‘CONSENSUS’ ON ‘GLOBAL WARMING’”

by Christopher Monckton



SPPI ORIGINAL PAPER ♦ May 22, 2009

*ALL TRUTHS ARE EASY TO UNDERSTAND ONCE
THEY ARE DISCOVERED; THE POINT IS TO
DISCOVER THEM.*

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The Claim

In mid-May, 2009, David Fahrenthold, a staff writer for the *Washington Post*, wrote: “Climate skeptics might well feel like polar bears on a shrinking ice floe. Scientists around the globe have rejected their main arguments -- which the climate isn't clearly warming, that humans aren't responsible for it, or that the whole thing doesn't amount to a problem. Public opinion has also shifted and even Exxon Mobil talks about greenhouse gases.”

The article admits that “doubt is not dead”, and that a growing number of Republican congressmen and party leaders have spoken out against the alarmist view. Michael S. Steele, the Republican National Committee Chairman Michael S. Steele is quoted as having said that the planet is cooling, not warming.

However, Mr. Fahrenthold concludes that scepticism is “at the margins, but trying to get back in the fight”, even though “most scientists now say there is a consensus about climate change: It is ‘unequivocal,’ concluded a United Nations report in 2007. It found that recent temperatures were about 1.3 degrees Fahrenheit higher than a century ago -- and that most of this is ‘very likely’ due to man-made greenhouse gases.”

The Truth

Science is not, repeat not, done by “consensus”, though politics is. The IPCC process, which aims at and then falsely claims “consensus”, is an explicitly political process, and not a scientific one.

Two and a half thousand years ago, Aristotle codified the most egregious and commonplace of logical fallacies – arguments that were by their very nature so irrational that no sound conclusion could be drawn from them. One of these arguments is the *argumentum ad populum*, the “head-count fallacy”, by which a claim of “consensus” is said to prove, but does not in fact prove, a given proposition.

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Every time the news media mention the imagined “consensus” about “global warming”, they are perpetrating – or merely perpetuating – a well-worn instance of the head-count fallacy.

Furthermore, the “consensus” they are so fond of clinging to is not merely imagined but imaginary. The IPCC’s conclusion that it is 90% likely that human activities caused most of the warming of the past century is not only unscientific, in that it is not possible to place a quantitative estimate on such a proposition, but is also by no means universally shared among the scientific community.

In fact, the crucial chapter of the IPCC’s 2007 report, attributing most of the warming that ended in 1998 to anthropogenic influences, was written by just 53 people, not all of them climate scientists. More than half of the

comments made on the chapter by some 60 official IPCC reviewers were negative and demanded changes, but the IPCC merely overruled them – and then tried to conceal the reviewers’ comments, burying them in a library that was closed for renovation, until a Freedom of Information Act request was filed and the truth emerged.

The decision to include the conclusion that it was 90% certain that humans caused most of the past half-century’s warming was not reached by scientists at all. It was taken by a show of hands at a meeting of the political representatives of governments at the IPCC. Most had wanted 95% certainty, but China objected, and 90% was decided upon, as a compromise. There is no scientific basis for either figure.

The crucial chapter of the IPCC’s 2007 report, attributing most of the warming that ended in 1998 to anthropogenic influences, was written by just 53 people, not all of them climate scientists.

In fact, there is no scientific basis for the conclusion at all. A recent Parliamentary Question in the House of Lords smoked out the fact – grudgingly admitted by the UK Government – that the rate of “global warming” that occurred from 1975-1998, a period during which humankind might in theory have had some influence over global temperature, was identical to the warming rates from 1860-1880 and

again from 1910-1940, two periods during which our influence was negligible in comparison.

Since the warming rate in the most recent period was no greater than that in the two previous periods, it cannot be said with any certainty – let alone 90% certainty – that there is any anthropogenic influence on global temperature whatsoever.

Furthermore, for almost one and a half decades since 1995 there has been no statistically-significant “global warming”; and for seven and a half years since late 2001 there has been statistically-significant global cooling, even though atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration has been rising inexorably throughout.

Mr. Fahrenhold has also mischaracterized the UN’s use of the word “unequivocal”. That word was not applied to the notion that humankind was significantly influencing global temperature: it was applied merely to the fact that warming had occurred. To assume that merely because warming has occurred it must be of human origin is another of Aristotle’s logical fallacies, the *argumentum ad ignorantiam*: “we don’t know why an event has occurred, but the event has occurred, so we shall attribute it to whatever causative agency we like.” No rational conclusion can be legitimately founded upon such transparently fallacious reasoning.

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The “global warming” that ended in 1998 had in fact commenced 300 years previously, towards the end of the 70-year solar Grand Minimum, known as the Maunder Minimum after the astronomer who first studied it. During the Grand Minimum, from 1645-1715, there were very few sunspots on the face of the Sun, and the rivers Thames and Hudson froze over each winter. During this period, the Sun was less active than for 10,000 years.

Towards the end of the Maunder Minimum, as solar activity began to recover, temperatures began to climb. The Central England Temperature Record, the oldest instrumental record in the world, showed that between 1695 and 1735 – well before the Industrial Revolution even began – temperature rose by 4

Fahrenheit degrees. That very rapid warming rate is eight or nine times the warming rate observed in the 20th century: yet humankind cannot have had anything whatsoever to do with it.

For 300 years, between 1695 and 1998, the activity of the Sun as measured by visible sunspots rose at a record rate, culminating in the 70-year solar Grand Maximum from 1925-1995, during which the Sun was at least as active as it had been in the previous 11,400 years.

During this 300-year period of rapid increase in solar activity, “global warming” was observed not only on Earth but also on Mars, on Jupiter, on Neptune’s largest moon, and even on distant Pluto. Humankind cannot have been responsible for the simultaneous warming of all those planetary bodies: inferentially, the large, hot, yellow object at the center of the system to which it gives its name had something to do with it.

***What, then, is the scientific “consensus”?
The answer is that no one knows, because no one has polled every scientist.***

In short, the warming of the past 300 years is indeed “unequivocal”, and – in the face of the instrumental temperature record and of the historical accounts of the intense cold during the Little Ice Age that reached its nadir during the Maunder Minimum – the warming is not at all surprising. However, the notion that humankind is responsible for any significant fraction of that warming is not in the least “unequivocal”. Indeed, the rates of warming that occurred during those 300 years provide no basis whatsoever for saying that the human influence is significant, as we can demonstrate with a simple calculation.

It is clear from the IPCC’s reports that carbon-dioxide emission is thought to be the primary anthropogenic influence on climate: indeed, a simple calculation based on the IPCC’s table of anthropogenic forcings indicates that all other anthropogenic influences (methane, other long-lived greenhouse gases, aerosols, etc.) are in aggregate slightly net-negative.

Even the IPCC’s scientists cannot be regarded as having unanimously supported the conclusions of the 2007 assessment report.

We calculate the anthropogenic influence on temperature from CO₂ thus, based on the proportionate increases in atmospheric CO₂ concentration that occurred in the 225 years

from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution until 1975, and then from 1975 to the present –

1750-1975: 225 years: $8.5 \ln(330/278) = 1.5 \text{ F}^\circ$

1975-2009: 34 years: $8.5 \ln(386/330) = 1.3 \text{ F}^\circ$.

This simple calculation, using the IPCC's own methodology, demonstrates that in the last one-third of a century humankind's influence on temperature is supposed to have been as great as it was in the whole of the previous two and a quarter centuries.

However, this is self-evidently not the case. In fact, global temperatures rose by 1.3 Fahrenheit degrees in the whole of the 20th century, and by considerably less than that over the past 34 years. If in that period humankind's influence had suddenly become as great as the UN's central estimate of the effect of CO₂ concentration changes on temperature implies, one would have expected global temperature to have shown a faster warming rate over the past 34 years than anything that had occurred previously. As we have already seen, that faster warming rate did not occur.

The notion that “2,500 scientists” personally agreed with every word of the IPCC’s document is nonsense.

What, then, is the scientific “consensus”? The answer is that no one knows, because no one has polled every scientist. However, a survey conducted by the Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine – the largest of its kind conducted to date – found more than 31,000 scientists, with B.Sc, M.Sc, or Ph.D qualifications, who signed a declaration that they did not consider the anthropogenic contribution to “global warming” to be significant enough to be dangerous.

Indeed, even after the scientific chapters had been finalized, signed off by the scientists and environmental campaigners, and submitted to the IPCC, its bureaucrats tampered with the draft immediately before publication.

Even the IPCC's scientists cannot be regarded as having unanimously supported the conclusions of the 2007 assessment report. This is because each sub-chapter was written by as few as one or two scientists (if they were scientists at all: a number of sub-chapters, even in the scientific part of the IPCC's report, were written by environmental campaigners with no particular scientific qualifications in the fields they were writing about).

The sub-chapters were reviewed and co-ordinated by the lead authors of the

chapters, who, however, concentrated exclusively on their own chapters. The notion that “2,500 scientists” personally agreed with every word of the IPCC’s document is nonsense.

Indeed, even after the scientific chapters had been finalized, signed off by the scientists and environmental campaigners, and submitted to the IPCC, its bureaucrats tampered with the draft immediately before publication, so that it is not possible to know which parts of the draft were written by scientists, which by environmental campaigners, and which by bureaucrats with no particular knowledge of the climate.

For instance, the IPCC’s bureaucracy, at the last minute, inserted into the *Summary for Policymakers* a table of observed contributions to sea-level rise that had not been included in the scientists’ final draft (or in any previous draft, for that matter). However, the bureaucrats’ subterfuge was identified when it became clear that the table of figures had been tampered with so that the contributions of the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets to sea-level rise were overstated tenfold. This overstatement was achieved by the simple expedient of moving four decimal points rightward by one decimal place. However, the bureaucrats – presumably intending to lend some support to Al Gore’s fantasies about sea-level rise – failed to adjust the totals at the foot of the table, so that it did not add up to within a factor of two of the correct answer. This error exposed the bureaucrats’ manipulation and the IPCC was forced to make a furtive and humiliating correction on its website just days after its supposedly “scientific” report had been published.

There is, therefore, no sound or scientific basis for the notion, peddled by the Washington Post, that there is a scientific “consensus” to the effect that anthropogenic “global warming” has occurred, is occurring, will occur, or, even if eventually it does occur, will be significant enough to be dangerous.

There is, therefore, no sound or scientific basis for the notion, peddled by the *Washington Post*, that there is a scientific “consensus” to the effect that anthropogenic “global warming” has occurred, is occurring, will occur, or, even if eventually it does occur, will be significant enough to be dangerous.



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