Bias in Media Coverage

A lot has changed since then. In the past seven years, forecasters of human-caused catastrophic global warming have won over the press and a majority of the public to what is now described as the "consensus view." Global-warming skeptics not only are not listened to; they are considered lunatics and are ridiculed. Reporters have adopted a view that, like the dangers of smoking, global warming is a reality caused by human consumption and something must be done. Alternative viewpoints are no longer sought nor listened to. The media compare global-warming "deniers" to holocaust deniers and deride them in the mainstream press.

Media March to the Same Drum

Household names: Only a few of the many scientists who openly dispute catastrophic global-warming theory, such as Danish statistician Bjorn Lomborg, who wrote the book entitled *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, get any positive media attention. Lomborg may be an exception because he accepts that human-caused global warming is real, and disputes only that many of the catastrophic claims are not supported by evidence.

In August 2007, *Newsweek* ran a cover story by Sharon Begley that was meant to debunk the myth of an alternative viewpoint once and for all, so that society can get on to finding solutions to man-made climate change. Instead, bloggers responded with stories "debunking the debunkers." The next week *Newsweek* ran a rebuttal claiming that "self-righteous indignation can undermine good journalism" and "viewing the world as 'good guys vs. bad guys' can lead to a vast oversimplification of a messy story." In the rebuttal Newsweek author Robert Samuelson admitted that *Newsweek* had gotten its facts wrong on a number of counts and had proposed a solution that was simplistic at best.

Newsweek is not alone in its one-sided coverage of global warming. A study of mine published in the 2007 Competition Forum shows the number of articles in the 2006 *New York Times* and *Toronto Globe*

and Mail and compares these with *New York Times* coverage from 2000. An overwhelming majority of the articles from the *New York Times* (94 percent) and the *Globe and Mail* (96 percent) were identified as accepting catastrophic global warming as a reality. No articles were found to be against and only a small proportion, often industry-based, were neutral in their reporting of global warming. In 2006, the *New York Times* published 146 articles about global warming, almost four times greater than in 2000 when it published 37. In 2000, 16 articles supported global warming, six were against, and 15 reported both positions. The number of articles in the Globe and Mail during 2006 was 533, almost four times greater than in the *New York Times* during the same year. A study done by the Business & Media Institute (BMI) confirmed these findings. Of 205 network news stories analyzed about "global warming" or "climate change" between July 1, 2007 and December 31, 2007, a "meager" 20 percent even mentioned alternative opinions to the so-called "consensus" position.

Catastrophic global-warming forecasters overwhelmingly outnumbered those with alternative viewpoints. What was obviously missing from the network reports was dissenting voices. For every skeptic there were 13 advocates for global warming. On all three networks, 80 percent of the stories (167 out of 205) didn't provide alternative viewpoints to human-caused global warming. CBS did the worst job with 97 percent of its stories (34 out of 35) reporting only the global-warming side. NBC excluded dissenting voices in 85 percent (76 out of 89) of its stories. Although more balanced, 64 percent (34 out of 53) of ABC stories didn't include other views.

Very few scientists, either pro or con, were interviewed. Only 15 percent of the global-warming forecasters were scientists. The remaining 85 percent of them were politicians, celebrities, other journalists, and even ordinary men and women. Among the politicians the networks called on, the foremost was former Vice President Al Gore. Journalists practically "drooled" over Al Gore while they insulted or asked hostile questions of people with alternative views. On November 18, 2007 during "Good Morning America," Bill Weir even attacked the motives of his guest Democratic Kentucky State Rep. Jim Gooch, a global-warming skeptic, because Gooch's family was in business with the coal industry.

Name-calling and Feigned Objectivity

Name-calling is a favorite tactic of the media and global-warming doomsayers. Meredith Vieira interviewed Al Gore for *Today's* November 5 and 6 "Ends of the Earth" program. She didn't challenge Gore when he claimed scientist John Christy was an "outlier" for his challenge to the UN's climate-change report. She let Gore compare people critical of human-caused global warming to people who think the Earth is flat. The same analogy by California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger on the July 16, 2007 *Early Show* on CBS went unchallenged. The cost of "fixing" global warming was rarely discussed on the network news. Only 22 stories (11 percent) mentioned cost. Typically it was skeptics like Gooch who talked about cost. Gooch said one climate-change bill in Congress would cost $6 trillion.

While journalists claim to be unbiased in their reporting, networks like CBS are far from objective in covering global warming. On the August 7, 2007 *Early Show*, host Harry Smith declared: "There is, in fact, global-warming change." CBS journalist Scott Pelley admitted his bias, arguing in 2006 that he wasn't required to include skeptics in global-warming stories any more than he would be required to include holocaust deniers in a story about the holocaust. In latter 2007, CBS permitted only four opponents to global warming on the network. Not one of the four was a scientist. This compares to 151 people used to promote global warming.

Pelley, reporting for an October 21, 2007 *60 Minutes* episode about "mega-wildfires," claimed that

global warming is largely responsible for the "bigger, hotter fires" in the American West. Although he had time to include alternative viewpoints, he chose not to interview some of the principal authorities on the topic, like Anthony Westerling, a University of California Merced professor who claims there are other reasons for the wildfires rather than climate change. Reporters like Pelley have become advocates for a theory rather than onlookers in the global-warming debate. NBC's Ann Curry considered it her "mission" to "find evidence of climate change" in the "Ends of the Earth" series broadcast November 5-6, 2007.

Although ABC allowed more alternative viewpoints than the other networks, it still showed a strong bias toward global warming. Typical was Bill Weir's claim on November 18, 2007 that "all these scientists" urge immediate action to stop global warming. Additionally, weather personality Sam Champion referred to the most recent UN climate report as "unequivocal" and "definitive" in its proof of global warming.

Dissent From Nonexistent Consensus

The dictionary definition of "consensus" is a general agreement or unanimity of opinion. When former Vice President and global-warming prophesier Al Gore says "consensus," it means a general agreement or unanimity of opinion of people who agree with him. However, a consensus doesn't exist.

Despite years of complaints from the media and global-warming alarmists like Gore, scientists continue to question climate-change "consensus." The U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee released a report on December 20, 2007, in which more than 400 prominent scientists questioned the hype about global warming. The 400-plus scientists from more than two dozen countries voiced "significant objections to major aspects of the so-called 'consensus' on man-made global warming." Many of the scientists are current or former participants in the UN IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). They criticized the climate claims made by the UN report and former Vice President Al Gore.

A study by Dr. Klaus-Martin Schulte of 528 global-warming papers puts the number of studies explicitly endorsing the "consensus" view at only seven percent. When combined with studies that implicitly accept global warming, the figure rises to 45 percent; however, the largest group of studies is neutral (48 percent), neither accepting nor rejecting the hypothesis. Six percent reject global warming outright. This study and a similar one by Benny Peiser in 2005 rebutted earlier claims by California historian Naomi Oreskes that showed "an unanimous, scientific consensus on the anthropogenic causes of recent global warming." However, to most journalists human-caused global warming is a fact. This has given them license to ignore journalistic conventions of objectivity and balance in reporting.

One commentator who is a global-warming skeptic is CNN's Glenn Beck. Many of his comments deride other journalists for their lack of balance. In April, he mocked a BBC reporter who had tried to report objectively, but who later added a global-warming slant to his story when he was threatened by an environmental activist. After an exchange of e-mails between the BBC reporter and the activist about the slant of the story, the activist threatened to get other people to harass the reporter, so the reporter changed his story. The original story had said, "This would mean global temperatures have not risen since 1998, prompting some to question climate change theories." After bowing to pressure the reporter wrote, "But this year's temperatures would still be way above the average and would soon exceed the record year of 1998 because of global warming induced by greenhouse gases."

Beck has pointed out how much the environmentalist lobby funds political campaigns. The top 10

recipients of environmental special-interest cash from 2000-2004 included John Kerry, Al Gore, and — no surprise — Barack Obama. In his book entitled *An Inconvenient Book* Beck quotes Stephen Schneider, a lead author of the 2007 UN climate-change report, who in 1989 said, "To capture the public imagination, we have to offer up some scary scenarios, make simplified dramatic statements and little mention of any doubts one might have. Each of us has to decide the right balance between being effective and being honest."

It's this kind of pressure and this kind of strategy that has led the media to abandon their journalistic principles and cave in to the environmental lobby and alarmist politicians. The lack of impartiality in media coverage is dangerous. Closure of the press debate on global warming has led to a failure to discuss viable alternatives that could promote economic growth, versus policies that discourage industry and competitiveness. The Lieberman-Warner bill under consideration in Congress, according to some estimates, will cost U.S. taxpayers $4 to $6 trillion. Supported by the elite media and both the Republican and Democratic presidential candidates, the bill would dramatically increase the price of energy and create a new bureaucratic cap-and-trade scheme to reduce the consumption of carbon based fuels to 1990s levels. As the Heritage Foundation suggests, "a cap and trade policy would pose a grave threat to the U.S. economy," particularly at this time of recession and rising costs of energy and transportation.

In 2006, Richard Lindzen, professor of atmospheric science at MIT, warned in the *Wall Street Journal* that a climate of alarmism has developed to support the funding of global-warming research which has become a billion-dollar industry. He states: "Ambiguous scientific statements about climate are hyped by those with a vested interest in alarm, thus raising the political stakes for policy makers who provide funds for more science research to feed more alarm to increase the political stakes." The consequence is that funds have disappeared for scientists who dissent from the alarmism. Their work is derided, and they are libeled as industry stooges, scientific hacks or worse. "Only the most senior scientists today can stand up against this alarmist gale, and defy the iron triangle of climate scientists, advocates and policymakers," writes Lindzen.

Insist on Responsible Reporting

The solution, according to the BMI report, is for the public to hold journalists responsible for their reporting. "Reporters have a professional responsibility to remain objective and avoid inserting their own opinions into their reports." "It is the media's job to inform the public, not persuade them by leaving out alternative viewpoints," says the report. With legislation pending to address global warming, the media need to be asking about costs of climate change "solutions."

By adopting a certain viewpoint, the news media become advocates for that position. The media's adoption of the position that global warming is man-made means they no longer can be trusted to report objectively on the issue of climate change. Industry and the public should be wary of the media message about global warming, particularly when it is alarmist. Under pressure, business and government are being pushed to make decisions that may affect the long-term competitiveness and economic well-being of the United States and the world. Industry needs to make decisions based on balanced information, not on pressure by politicians, interest groups, or the media. It is important that all sides of the global-warming issue be reported.

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