



2008 Climate Debate

He must be right, many people conclude, since he has received a Nobel Prize and an Oscar for his global-warming documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*. And many scientists and scientific bodies appear to back him up with endorsements and impressive-looking studies. The media reports repeatedly insist that there is a scientific consensus in favor of the Gore view of climate change.



However, for many of the world's leading scientists in the fields of meteorology, climatology, physics, astrophysics, and related sciences, the science is far from settled, Al Gore's media accolades notwithstanding. Over the past few years, more than 19,000 American scientists have signed a dissenting petition coauthored by Dr. Frederick Seitz, renowned physicist and former president of the National Academy of Sciences, and Dr. Arthur Robinson, president of the Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine (www.oism.org/pproject). The petition urges political leaders to reject the Gore-supported Kyoto Protocol or other similar proposals that would mandate draconian tax and regulatory measures aimed at virtually all human economic activity.

Kyoto and similar proposals are not based on convincing scientific evidence, the petition claims, and "the proposed limits on greenhouse gases would harm the environment, hinder the advance of science and technology, and damage the health and welfare of mankind."

The advocates of Kyoto and other schemes to super-regulate the planet frequently try to portray the scientists who dispute their claims of global warming peril as irrelevant fringies, fogies, and "nut cases" who shouldn't be taken seriously. However, as brutal scientific facts have poked holes in their hypothetical global-warming models, the Gore camp has become more strident and abusive. Rather than answer the scientific critiques, they have tended simply to accuse opposition scientists of being in the pay of the energy companies. Even worse, they have adopted the tactic of labeling scientists who dispute their claims as being "climate-change deniers," on a par with "Holocaust deniers." The more radical elements of the climate-change alarmist movement have targeted dissenting scientists for vilification and harassment, even trying to deprive them of their jobs, research grants, and tenure. The most virulent "Greens" call for them to be tried as "traitors."



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According to a January 1, 2007 *New York Times* article by Andrew C. Revkin, "A New Middle Stance Emerges in Debate over Climate," more scientists are distancing themselves from the extreme fear mongering and exaggerated claims of the climate-change alarmists.

Much of this movement toward the center is the result of the gradual dissemination and percolation through the scientific community of careful research by the scientists who have been denounced as "climate-change deniers." These scientists prefer to call themselves "climate-change realists." Far from denying climate change, they point out that climate is a very complex, *dynamic* thing that is *constantly* in a state of change. They note that the Earth's climate has gone through repeated natural warming and cooling periods, many of which have been far more radical than what we are experiencing now or are likely to experience in the next couple centuries.

Jim Martin, executive director of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, recently scorned these climate realists, telling the *Denver Post*, "You could have a convention of all the scientists who dispute climate change in a relatively small phone booth."

On March 2-4, scientists from around the world came to New York City for the "2008 International Conference on Climate Change" sponsored by the Heartland Institute, a research and education organization devoted to promoting free-market solutions to social and economic problems. They didn't meet in a phone booth. The convention was held in the ballroom and conference rooms of the Marriott Marquis Hotel in Times Square. The spacious venue was filled with over 400 delegates, including more than one hundred scientists, many of considerable renown.

RealClimate.org, a website of militant climate alarmists, had predicted that no real scientists would show up at this conference. At the opening of the conference, Heartland Institute president Joseph L. Bast noted that the scientists and policy experts came from Australia, Canada, England, France, Hungary, New Zealand, Poland, Russia, and Sweden, as well as the United States. They came from, among other places, the University of Alabama, Arizona State, Carleton, Central Queensland, Delaware, George Mason, Harvard, The Institute Pasteur in Paris, James Cook, John Moores, Johns Hopkins, the London School of Economics, Ohio State, Oslo, the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, the Russian Academy of Sciences, Suffolk University, and the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

"These scientists and economists have been published thousands of times in the world's leading scientific journals and have written hundreds of books," noted Mr. Bast. "If you call this the fringe, where's the center?"

Among the many distinguished scientists who participated in the conference were Dr. Roy Spencer, principal research scientist for the University of Alabama in Huntsville and the U.S. Science Team Leader for the Advanced Microwave Scanning Radiometer on NASA's Aqua satellite; Dr. Mitch Taylor, one of the premier-polar bear researchers and a continuing member of the IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group; Dr. William Gray, a pioneer in hurricane forecasting; Dr. Willie Soon, astrophysicist and geoscientist at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics; and meteorologist John Coleman, original weathercaster on ABC's *Good Morning America* and founder of The Weather Channel. (See his interview in "Weather Channel Founder's Forecast".)

One of the stars of the conference was Vaclav Klaus, recently reelected president of the Czech Republic. Dr. Klaus, a distinguished economist and an admiring student of America's Founding Fathers, pointed out, as he has in many previous speeches at the European Union and elsewhere, that the frightening



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crisis scenarios and draconian “solutions” offered by the climate alarmists are based not on science, but on computer models.

“I think that many people are misled by the argument that the debate about climate is a scientific debate in the field of climatology,” Dr. Klaus said in an exclusive interview with THE NEW AMERICAN. “I don’t believe that’s the case. What all are talking about is the attempt to influence human society, and in this respect it’s much more about the social sciences — my own, economics — not so much about the details of physics and other scientific disciplines.”

President Klaus noted that he spent 10 to 15 years of his professional life doing modeling with complex econometric time-series data that is similar in many ways to the modeling done in climate studies. As an economist, he says, he is very unhappy with the simplistic analysis and the “misuse of data, misuse of statistical techniques, misuse of accounting principles” in the climate models and projections produced by the climate alarmists.

“The Kyoto Protocol will have *minuscule* impact upon climate,” he observed, so much so that it’s “difficult to find statistical significance.” However, he points out, “the costs are very, very heavy, and I don’t think it’s worthwhile to do that.”

Another star of the conference was Dr. S. Fred Singer, professor emeritus of environmental sciences at the University of Virginia and the founder and first director of the U.S. Weather Satellite Service. Dr. Singer, who served for five years as the vice chairman of the National Advisory Committee for Oceans and Atmosphere (NACOA), is the author of *Unstoppable Global Warming — Every 1,500 Years*, which has become a New York Times bestseller. He edited the Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change (NIPCC) report entitled, *Nature, Not Human Activity, Rules the Climate*, which was released at the conference.

The Singer-edited NIPCC report boasts a stellar international lineup of scientist contributors, including Robert Carter (Australia), Richard Courtney (United Kingdom), Fred Goldberg (Sweden), Vincent Gray (New Zealand), Zbigniew Jaworowski (Poland), Thomas Segalstad (Norway), and Gerd Weber (Germany). *Nature, Not Human Activity, Rules the Climate* (hereafter referred to as the NIPCC report) takes aim primarily at the series of shrill doomsday reports that have been issued over the past decade and a half by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a body established by the United Nations Environmental Program in 1988.

The IPCC issued its First Assessment Report on global climate change in 1990. The release of that report can be viewed as the main launch of the current global campaign to mobilize people and governments in support of political and economic policies that will reduce anthropogenic (human-caused) “greenhouse” gases. Failure to radically reduce our emissions, especially of carbon dioxide (CO₂), they warned, would soon lead to catastrophic global warming, with horrendous consequences: enormous sea level rises and flooding of coastal areas; increasing incidence and severity of killer storms, hurricanes, and droughts; extinction of plant and animal species; and increased disease, pestilence, and famine, with massive loss of human life.

The major media in the United States and many other countries irresponsibly hyped the unproven hypotheses and wild forecasts of the IPCC report and gave short shrift to accomplished scientists who credibly challenged the IPCC’s computer models, methodologies, and conclusions. The IPCC’s prophecies of a coming global-warming apocalypse received a huge send-off in 1992 at the United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, and the release of each of the IPCC’s subsequent reports



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(1995, 2001, 2007) has provided opportunities for media frenzies retailing ever more sensational and exaggerated alarms of impending doom.

The new NIPCC report takes withering aim at the IPCC's errors, false claims, and fear mongering. The foreword to the NIPCC report is written by Frederick Seitz, president emeritus of Rockefeller University and a former president of the National Academy of Sciences. Dr. Seitz, a legend in the field of modern physics, was to have been one of the speakers at the Heartland conference. Tragically, however, he was unable to attend, and died on March 2, the opening day of the conference. (See sidebar "Courageous Pursuit of Truth.")

Professor Seitz wrote in his foreword that the IPCC "is pre-programmed to produce reports to support the hypotheses of anthropogenic warming and the control of greenhouse gases, as envisioned in the Global Climate Treaty." The 1990 IPCC Summary, he notes, "completely ignored satellite data, since they showed no warming. The 1995 IPCC report was notorious for the significant alterations made to the text *after* it was approved by the scientists — in order to convey the impression of a human influence. The 2001 IPCC report claimed the twentieth century showed 'unusual warming' based on the now-discredited hockey stick graph. The latest IPCC report, published in 2007, completely devaluates the climate contributions from changes in solar activities, which are likely to dominate any human influence."

"It is one thing to impose drastic measures and harsh economic penalties when an environmental problem is clear-cut and severe," noted Seitz. But, he continued, "It is foolish to do so when the problem is largely hypothetical and not substantiated by observations. As NIPCC shows by offering an independent, non-governmental 'second opinion' on the 'global warming' issue, we do not currently have any convincing evidence or observations of significant climate change from other than natural causes."

In the face of overwhelming and steadily mounting evidence to the contrary, the IPCC's 2007 report claimed that "most of the observed increase in global average temperatures since the mid-20th century is *very likely* due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations." (Emphasis in the original.)

The NIPCC report hotly contests this IPCC claim. "NIPCC reaches the opposite conclusion — namely that natural causes are very likely to be the dominant cause," writes Dr. Singer. He goes on to note: "We do not say anthropogenic greenhouse (GH) gases cannot produce some warming. Our conclusion is that evidence shows they are not playing a significant role."

Participants at the conference, in their speeches and panel presentations, provided the evidence from long-term and recent data and recently published research to back their claims.

A large part of the problem, says Singer, stems from the fact that "from the very beginning, the IPCC was a political rather than a scientific entity, with its leading scientists reflecting the positions of their governments or seeking to induce their governments to adopt the IPCC position. In particular, a small group of activists wrote the all-important Summary for Policymakers (SPM) for each of the four IPCC reports."

Real Inconvenient Truths

The NIPCC report charges that the IPCC "continues to undervalue the overwhelming evidence that, on decadal and century-long time scales, the Sun and associated atmospheric cloud effects are responsible for much of past climate change. It is therefore highly likely that the Sun is also a major cause of



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twentieth-century warming, with anthropogenic GH gases making only a minor contribution.”

The IPCC and its computer modelers insist they have identified “fingerprints” that show anthropogenic global warming (AGW). All the models predict AGW based upon projections of increasing temperatures in the troposphere (the lower layer of the Earth’s atmosphere) above the tropical zone, peaking at an altitude of around 10 kilometers, with a temperature double that of the global mean surface temperature. According to the modelers, human-caused GH gases must be responsible for any warming trend in the troposphere, as solar variability and other natural factors will only impact the surface temperatures.

The brutal facts have repeatedly murdered that theory. As the NIPCC report, *Nature, Not Human Activity, Rules the Climate*, points out, the hard data from satellites and weather balloons shows the exact *opposite* of the predictions of the IPCC and the climate alarmist choir: a slight cooling with altitude in the troposphere and slight warming on the surface.

The main premise of the IPCC hypothesis that global warming is driven by anthropogenic CO₂ is one of the alarmists’ weakest legs. The IPCC cites correlation between a global mean temperature rise and an increase in atmospheric CO₂ in the 20th century to support its conclusion. But correlation does not prove causation, and the IPCC has not been able to reconcile its conclusion with certain inconvenient facts, such as the fact that the climate cooled during 1940-1975 while CO₂ was rising rapidly.

However, even if anthropogenic CO₂ were to turn out to have a measurable impact on the climate, would that be a bad thing? The alarmists answer with an emphatic “Yes!” But many experts argue that moderate global warming should be viewed as a good thing. Howard Maccabee, Ph.D., M.D., clinical instructor at the Stanford University School of Medicine and president of Doctors for Disaster Preparedness, in his presentation, argued that evidence shows conclusively that current and future warming of the climate will be good for health, prosperity, and longevity.

The most recently released data from the National Bureau of Economic Research, notes Dr. Maccabee, confirms older studies in Europe and the United States showing that colder temperatures are far more deadly than warmer temperatures. Maccabee presented graphs and figures showing that the highest daily mortality occurs during the colder months of November, December, January, February, while the lowest daily mortality rates are during August, just the reverse of what many people think is the case. During colder temperatures we especially see an increase in mortality from cardiac, respiratory, and cerebral vascular problems. The research indicates that we might expect a 1-2 percent mortality decrease with each degree centigrade increase in climate temperature. We are experiencing 45,000 fewer deaths per year as a result of the recent modest warming. If the warming alarmists’ “worst case” predictions occur, says Maccabee, we can expect to see a savings of 150,000 lives per year in the United States. Not bad for a catastrophe!

But what about massive sea-level rises? Even while Al Gore and NASA’s James Hansen pander to hysteria with ludicrous scenarios of sea-level rises of 20 to 80 feet, successive IPCC reports have steadily reduced their estimates in order to maintain some semblance of scientific credibility. Global average sea-level figures are meaningless, as local relative sea-level change is what matters to coastal communities, and that is principally determined by tectonic uplift or subsidence, not melting ice. Contrary to the IPCC’s earlier predictions, the Maldives, which were said to be in danger of disappearing under the sea, have instead seen their sea level *drop* 30 centimeters in the past 30 years! Sea levels have been gradually rising *18 centimeters per century* for the last several hundred years, and



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there is no indication that this has been accelerating. The IPCC's 2007 projected sea-level rise has dropped back near the generally accepted 18 centimeters/century value (about seven inches). However, the hysteria continues to live on in ridiculous reports on network television and the mainstream press depicting New York, Los Angeles, and the Pacific islands disappearing under a warming ocean.

Most of the scientists and policy experts interviewed by THE NEW AMERICAN at the conference said they felt energized by this unique opportunity to meet with many world-class scientists and discuss the intricacies and latest developments of climate research. Astrophysicist Willie Soon of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics said one bonus from the conference was the opportunity to meet with scientists with whom he had coauthored papers but had not previously met in person. Also, he noted, "there was important new scientific data presented here that has not been published or presented anywhere else. Dr. Roy Spencer's new information, for instance, was especially interesting, and I, myself, presented two new things publicly for the first time."

The conference participants also expressed a sense of encouragement and optimism that real science and climate realism are making some gains against the tide of misinformation and disinformation that has dominated the topic. Hurricane expert Dr. Stanley B. Goldenberg, a meteorologist with the Hurricane Research Division of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, was visibly buoyed by the conference experience and said he was anxious to share what he had learned from experts in other disciplines with his colleagues and the public, a sentiment expressed by other conferees as well. Many of the speeches and presentations of the conference, along with the just-released NIPCC report, are or soon will be available from the Heartland Institute's website, www.heartland.org.

Photo of Al Gore: AP Images

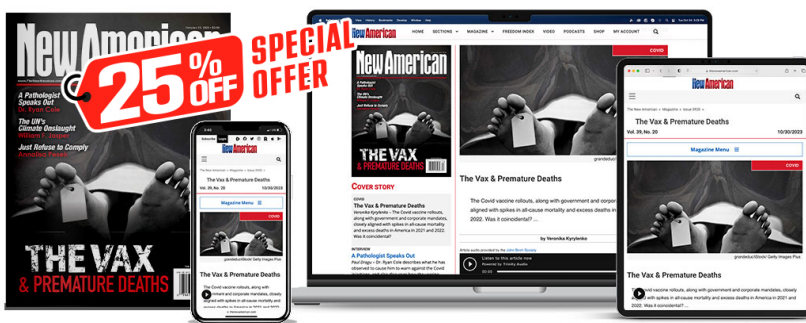


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