



Written by on March 2, 2010

Global Warming Causes Blizzards. Really?!

Item: “There is some evidence that climate change could in fact make such massive snowstorms more common, even as the world continues to warm,” Bryan Walsh wrote in a February 10 Time magazine online article, commenting on the twin blizzards that buried Washington, D.C., within a few days of each other. He went on: “As the meteorologist Jeff Masters points out in his excellent blog at Weather Underground, the two major storms that hit Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, D.C., this winter — in December and during the first weekend of February — are already among the 10 heaviest snowfalls those cities have ever recorded. The chance of that happening in the same winter is incredibly unlikely.”



Item: *John M. Broder reported in the New York Times of February 10:*

A federal government report issued last year ... pointed to the likelihood of more frequent snowstorms in the Northeast and less frequent snow in the South and Southeast as a result of long-term temperature and precipitation patterns. The Climate Impacts report, from the multiagency United States Global Change Research Program, also projected more intense drought in the Southwest and more powerful Gulf Coast hurricanes because of warming.

Item: *“Deniers have long taken advantage of scientists’ cautious statements, and ‘Climategate’ breathed new life into the movement, but the science stands: warming is real, and it’s caused by human actions” — so said David A. Graham on February 12 for Newsweek online, under the heading “Anthropogenic Global Warming Is a Hoax,” one of several allegedly false conspiracy theories detailed in “Know Your Conspiracies: Newsweek’s guide to today’s trendiest, hippest, and least likely fringe beliefs.”*

Correction: According to the very latest wisdom from the climate-change clique, the epochal blizzards that have hit the Northeast this winter in rapid succession are a likely consequence of global warming.

Really? As I was writing the first draft of this article, blizzard number two raged outside my window, combining wind and heavy snow to eventually deposit more than a foot of new white stuff on top of the nearly two feet visited on my zip code by the first storm. And these figures, coming from west-central Pennsylvania, are benign in comparison to the quantities of snow dumped on portions of Maryland and the Philadelphia and D.C. metropolitan areas during that same unforgettable stretch. The First Great Blizzard of 2010 set all kinds of snowfall records, including in the D.C. area. By the time the second had vented its wrath, parts of the Baltimore metropolitan area had received up to 50 inches of total snowfall from the two storms, amounts not seen in the mid-Atlantic since the Great Blizzard of 1888. Baltimore



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has already set new records for total winter snowfall, and many weeks of potential winter precipitation still lie ahead.

And it hasn't just been the snow. December and January were unusually cold. In the wake of the first blizzard, temperatures plunged into the single digits for several nights in a row, ascending (in the bright sun) into the upper teens or low twenties by day. In short, if this is global warming, I'd hate to see what global cooling might entail!

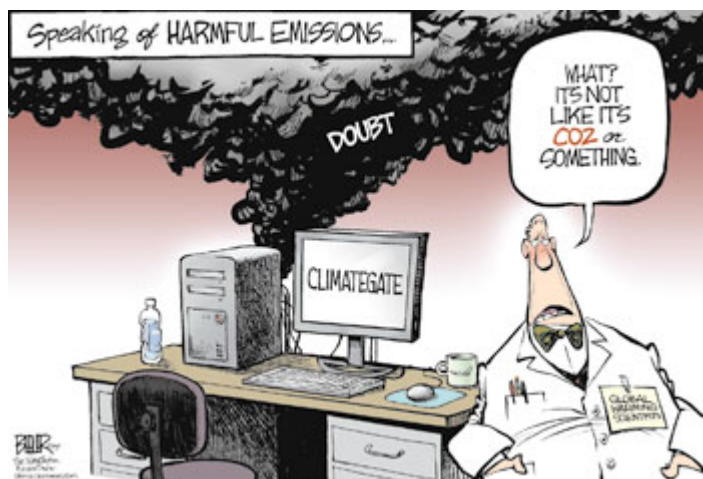
Yet Time and the New York Times, among others, haven't missed a beat in their latest contribution to what must be regarded as one of the most persistent mistaken orthodoxies in the history of science and politics. The argument, as Bryan Walsh explains, is that any spate of statistically anomalous severe weather is likely due to what is now being coyly styled "climate change." The odds, argue global-warming acolytes, militate against unlikely events such as two record-breaking blizzards in rapid succession being caused by anything besides global warming.

Oh, so? What if the climate were in a cooling cycle? Or were the people who experienced the Little Ice Age a few hundred years ago (or the Big Ice Age a few millennia back, for that matter!) merely being vexed by persistent flurries? What, in point of fact, produced those massive glaciers that overwhelmed the northern portions of what is now the continental United States and all of Canada, if not snow, and lots of it? While it is true that warmer temperatures can produce heavier snow — as anyone who lives within range of lake-effect snow, which mostly falls before the Great Lakes freeze over or become too cold to generate the condensation responsible for heavy snow, can attest — we have been seeing both heavier snow *and* colder temperatures, both in the United States and in Europe, and not merely this winter, but for a number of winters running. No less an authority than Professor Phil Jones, former director of the Climate Research Unit of the University of East Anglia, has admitted, according to the *Daily Mail*, that "for the past 15 years there has been no 'statistically significant' warming."

Ah, but weather and climate are two different things, insist the global-warming gurus. "It's a mistake to use any one storm — or even a season's worth of storms — to disprove climate change (or to prove it; some environmentalists have wrongly tied the lack of snow in Vancouver, the site of [this year's] Winter Olympic Games ... to global warming)," Walsh reminds his readers, in that infuriating way that global-warming pseudoscience has of avoiding falsifiability. "Weather is what will happen next weekend; climate is what will happen over the next decades and centuries."

In other words, weather really isn't a reliable indicator of long-term climate trends — but that isn't going to stop Walsh and his ilk from making sweeping predictions and (which is much more important) insisting upon sweeping policy changes just in case they turn out to be right one of these millennia.

But quite aside from the vexing refusal of recent weather trends to cooperate with the gloomy prognoses of global-warming models, the credibility of the entire climate-change creed has been severely undermined by a cascade of recent revelations that climatologists have systematically massaged data and cooked statistics to produce politically desirable models. From the "Climategate" scandal — which has exposed the nauseating hypocrisy and duplicity of a whole gang of climatologists





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manufacturing “science” to fit the agenda of UN-connected environmental extremists — to the embarrassing disclosure that data on allegedly vanishing Himalayan glaciers was almost completely fabricated, the pseudoscience is finally being laid bare to public scrutiny.

None of which is to say that climate change is not occurring and has not occurred in the past. Quite the contrary: the historical and geological record both show incontrovertibly that climate and weather patterns are in more or less constant flux, sometimes verging into drastic long-term shifts that create ice ages and warming epochs. At issue is whether such changes can be driven by human activity — as opposed to, say, sunspot cycles or other natural factors. The near-total absence of sunspot activity over the last decade has coincided with a return of significantly cooler winters both in North America and in Europe — in stark contrast to the active cyclicality of the eighties and nineties that coincided with a stretch of mild winters and hot summers. While correlation does not necessarily signify causation, the mass of evidence suggesting a link between sunspot activity and climate cycles certainly does not warrant the dismissive treatment of many climatologists determined to indict the human race for melting ice caps and sizzling summers. Whatever the case, the world’s climate is nowhere near either of the extremes attested by the geologic record; no glaciers are spilling across Eurasia and North America (as they did during the last Ice Age), nor do lush forests (or any trees at all) now grow on Ellesmere Island in the High Arctic (as they did several million years ago during the late Tertiary, when the climate was up to 10 degrees C warmer than it is now). Not even the comparatively recent extremes of the Medieval Warming Period and the subsequent Little Ice Age have been breached (just ask any Dutchman whether any winter in living memory has produced wintry scenes like Pieter Brueghel’s famous ice skating tableau painted in the early 16th century).

In a word: Climate change happens. But with all due respect to the arrogant asseverations of Al Gore, *Newsweek*, and their Ph.D.-accredited epigones, the so-called science of anthropogenic or manmade global warming is *far* from settled.

President Obama, probably dismayed by the capacity of Mother Nature to shut down Washington, called the storms “Snowmageddon,” which media pundits were quick to seize upon. In a similar vein, the ancient Norse — drawing, perhaps, on some racial memory of climate change in the prehistoric past — insisted in their eschatology that the end of the world (Ragnarok, marked by warring among gods and men and great natural disasters) would be preceded by three great winters or “fimbulwinters.” The attribution of such forces of nature to divine wrath, while not scientific, at least has an internal logic that the doctrine of anthropogenic global warming — driven more by ideology than by level-headed science — lacks absolutely.

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