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'Climate-Gate' Scandal Should Be Wake-Up Call For Press, Politicians

By JOSEPH BAST

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Last week, someone (probably a whistle-blower at the Climate Research Unit at the University of East Anglia, England) released e-mails and other documents written by Phil Jones, Michael Mann and other leading scientists who edit and control the content of the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The e-mails appear to show a conspiracy to falsify data and suppress academic debate in order to exaggerate the possible threat of man-made global warming.

The misconduct exposed by the e-mails is so apparent that one scientist, Tim Ball, said it marked "the death blow to climate science." Another, Patrick Michaels, told the New York Times: "This is not a smoking gun; this is a mushroom cloud."

Although I am not a scientist, I know something about global warming, having written about the subject since 1993 and recently edited an 880-page comprehensive survey of the science and economics of global warming, titled "Climate Change Reconsidered," written by a team of nearly 40 scientists for the Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change.

The content of the e-mails doesn't surprise me or other skeptics in the warming debate. We have been saying for many years that the leading alarmists have engaged in academic fraud, do not speak for the larger scientific community, and are exaggerating the scientific certainty of their claims.

Tens of thousands of scientists share our views, including many whose credentials are far superior to those of the dozen or so alarmists the media quote and promote.

The implications of these e-mails are enormous: They mean the IPCC is not a reliable source of science on global warming.

And since the global movement to "do something" about global warming rests almost entirely on the IPCC's claim to represent the "consensus" of climate science, that entire movement stands discredited.

The release of these documents creates an opportunity for reporters, academics, politicians and others who relied on the IPCC to form their opinion about global warming to stop and reconsider their position.

The experts they trusted and quoted in the past have been caught red-handed plotting to conceal data, hide temperature trends that contradict their predictions and keep critics from appearing in peer-reviewed journals. This is real evidence they should examine and then comment on publicly.

It's possible that the e-mails and other documents aren't as damning as they appear to be on first look. (I've read about two dozen of them myself and find them appalling, but others may not.)

Looking at how past disclosures of fraud in the global warming debate have been dismissed or ignored by the mainstream media leads me to suspect that they'll try to sweep this, too, under the rug. But thanks to the Internet, millions of people will be able to read the e-mails and make up their own minds.

This incident, then, won't be forgotten. Journalists who attempt to spin it away and politicians who try to ignore it will further damage their own credibility, and perhaps see their careers shortened as a result.

Polls show that only a third of Americans believe global warming is the result of human activity, and even fewer think it is a major environmental problem. This new scandal, combined with a huge body of science and economics ignored or deliberately concealed by the alarmists, proves that the large majority of Americans were right all along.

How did the Average Joe, who knows so little about the real science of climate change, figure out that global warming is not a crisis when so many journalists were completely taken in by it? I think he saw some clues early on that most journalists, because of their liberal biases, missed.

Average Joe noticed how Al Gore and other Democratic politicians were quick to capitalize on the matter, even before the scientific community could speak with a unified voice on the issue.

He figured out, correctly, that politics rather than science was the force that put global warming on the front pages of the newspapers and on television every night.

He also probably noticed that spokespersons for liberal advocacy groups like Greenpeace and the Union of Concerned Scientists were suddenly being quoted in the press as experts on climate change, whereas just a few years earlier they were (rightly) considered radical fringe groups.

And Average Joe noticed how global warming "skeptics," even distinguished scientists and trusted people like former astronauts, were ignored, rejected or demonized by the press just for asking for proof, and for not going along with the latest and increasingly silly claims about all the things global warming was supposedly causing: droughts and floods, warming and cooling, "global warming refugees," and so on.

While the issue of global warming is complex, one needn't be a genius to figure out that man's role is small, that the effects of modest warming of the kind seen in the latter half of the 20th century were at least as positive as negative, and that scientists who can't predict next week's weather probably can't predict what climate conditions will be like one hundred years from now.

This isn't "denial," it's just common sense.

The executive summary of "Climate Change Reconsidered" makes these points and more, in plain English, and it's only eight pages long. The report itself contains more than 4,000 citations to peer-reviewed literature.

The IPCC e-mail scandal makes this a good time for reporters and other opinion leaders to take a serious look at the skeptics' case in the global warming debate and perhaps move to the middle, where serious journalists and honest elected officials should have been all along. A good place to start is the Heartland Institute's Web site devoted to global warming realism, at www.globalwarmingheartland.org.

It's not too late to regain some of the native skepticism that Average Joe had all along to see through the global warming scam.

• Bast is president of the Heartland Institute and editor of "Climate Change Reconsidered: The 2009 Report of the Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change," by Craig Idso and S. Fred Singer. The book's executive summary and contents can be downloaded for free from <http://www.nipccreport.org/>.

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