

SCIENCE AD REM, NOT POLITICS AD HOMINEM

by The Viscount Monckton of Brenchley



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by The Viscount Monckton of Brenchley | December 20, 2009

Recently an enquirer wrote to a Doctor of Science who is a true-believer in the “global warming” theory, and drew his attention to some of my conclusions to the effect that the science is not as settled as we are being told. The Doctor replied with an *ad-hominem* attack on me, but also included some scientific argument. Here, I respond to that argument, giving an outline of the reasons why the official version of the science may be doubtful.

Dear enquirer, – A Doctor of Science has copied to me his email to you about climate change, in which he makes a number of *ad-hominem* points about me to which I propose not to respond. He also attaches a graph showing global temperature to have risen at a rate of 0.6 C/century since 1880, and an article drawing conclusions from a computer model and from a gravitational-anomaly satellite. To these I shall respond.

I have tried to keep abreast of – and remain skeptical of – scientific reports in the peer-reviewed literature on all sides of the climate argument. I neither believe nor disbelieve anything scientific unless it has been proven or disproven. The notion that an increase of 1 part in 2000 in the proportion of the atmosphere occupied by carbon dioxide will have a significant impact on the climate is coming close to being disproven.

We must first distinguish between causes and effects. Changes in global temperature, or in the ice-mass balance of Greenland, are effects. CO₂, it is suggested, is a cause of those effects. And so, of course, it is: but, as best I can make it out, not a substantial cause.

I begin, then, with an important general point. The late Edward Lorenz, the father of numerical weather forecasting using computers, published a paper in 1963 in which he proved that the very long-term evolution of a mathematically-chaotic object (and, with the climate, “very long-term” means “more than a few weeks ahead”) is impossible “by any method” unless the initial parameters that define the climate object are known to a precision that is and will forever be impossible. For this reason, one should be skeptical of any conclusions – in whatever direction – from climate models that seek to predict what will happen more than a few weeks away.

Next, I shall deal briefly with the two *effects* mentioned by the Doctor of Science who has written to you. First, temperature increase. The warming his graph describes is, of course, well within the natural variability of the climate, and it is simply not possible to draw any conclusion from it to the effect that humankind has been responsible for any significant warming. Indeed, I recently had a question put down in the House of Lords to confirm my own analysis showing that the *rate* of warming between 1975 and 1998 – a period during which we *might* in theory have had some influence over global temperature – was no greater

than the rate of warming from 1860-1880 and again from 1910-1940, two periods during which we could not, in theory or in practice, have had any measurable effect on global temperature. I conclude, for this and other reasons, that there is no discernible human influence on global temperature. That, indeed, was the conclusion of the 1995 IPCC report, as signed off by the participating scientists. However, a single scientist – Ben Santer – was asked by the IPCC substantially to alter the scientists' final draft. He did so, crossing out five references to the absence of any evidence of a human influence on climate, and substituting the directly opposite conclusion. That – notwithstanding the lack of any scientific evidence for it – has been the official line ever since, and it is based on the contrarian opinion of a single scientist who was willing to write what the IPCC's bureaucrats wanted.

Secondly, the Greenland ice sheet. The Doctor cites a single data source – the GRACE gravitational-anomaly satellite. Unfortunately, the resolution and calibration of that satellite continue to present formidable problems, as is readily established when one compares that satellite's output with the older and, frankly, more reliable method of laser or radar altimetry. Johannessen *et al.* (2005) found that between 1993 and 2003, for 11 full years, the mean thickness of the Greenland ice sheet increased by some 2 inches (5.4 cm) *per year*. The altimetry shows a similar spatial distribution to that of the later GRACE result – growing ice thickness in the high plateau and loss of ice around the coasts – but the net mass balance grows in Johannessen *et al.* and declines in the GRACE data (which start where Johannessen ends). To try to determine whether there had been a sudden phase-transition from positive to negative ice-mass balance on Greenland in 2003, I looked at the global temperature data and found that, from late 2001 onwards, there has been a rapid and statistically-significant *fall* in global temperatures. Therefore, if the GRACE result is accurate (which, for various reasons, I doubt), it is not short-run “global warming” that is the cause. Indeed, the climate of the Arctic and of Greenland is highly volatile and, according to Dr. Willie Soon of the Harvard-Smithsonian Institute for Astrophysics, in a paper published in 2004, the Arctic and Greenland were actually warmer in the 1930s and early 1940s than they are today – by 1-2 C in some places. Professor Cliff Ollier, whom I have also consulted, says that the vast bulk of the Greenland ice is in a bowl surrounded by mountains and that, therefore, changes in ice-mass balance are influenced very little indeed by short-run changes in Arctic temperature. A similar point is also made by Professor Niklas Moerner, the world's foremost expert on sea level, who reminds me that since 2003 there has been very little sea-level rise, suggesting that reports of substantial loss of ice-mass in Greenland (GRACE) and in Antarctica (British Antarctic Survey) in recent years may be perhaps rather fanciful. Certainly, the Viking burial-ground at Hvalsey, in south-western Greenland, remains under permafrost to this day, and it was certainly not under permafrost when the bodies were buried. Once again, I find it hard to discern anything to worry about in Greenland's ice – a view that is strongly endorsed by Professors Ollier and Moerner, who -in their younger days – climbed the glaciers in Greenland that others merely write models about.

So to the supposed *cause* of the supposedly-unusual warming of the past century. We know from sunspot records that the Sun was at an 11,400-year minimum of activity for 70 years between 1645 and 1715, the Maunder Climate Pessimism or Minimum. As the Sun began its recovery, in 1695, so the Earth began to warm, and the first of the world's instrumental

temperature records, that of Central England, showed a warming of 2.2 C in just 40 years to 1735 -a warming rate (albeit in one region, and using the earliest instruments) an order of magnitude greater than that of the 20th century. Gradually, sunspot activity and temperature rose for 300 years, culminating in the Solar Grand Maximum of the last 70 years of the 20th century, during which the Sun was almost at its most active in 11,400 years (Solanki *et al.*, 2005; and see Hathaway, 2004, and Usoskin, 2003). The correlation even between quite small changes in solar activity and changes in terrestrial climate is well established, though the IPCC does its best to pretend that no such connection exists. Scafetta & West (2008) find that some 69% of all warming since 1950 is attributable to the general increase in solar activity. It is notable that, during the recent three-year period of comparative solar inactivity, the planet cooled markedly. The Sun, therefore, together with major changes in ocean circulation over decades to centuries, appears to have a significant influence over temperature change in our own era.

Could CO₂ be the major climate driver? Not really. It is settled science that the direct radiative forcing from CO₂ could only cause around 1 C of warming if CO₂ concentration were doubled (and recent evidence suggests that even this is a considerable exaggeration: see, e.g., Kimoto, 2009). The IPCC only succeeds in suggesting that CO₂ is a major climate driver by imagining a number of net-positive temperature feedbacks that almost *triple* the original warming. As the climate warms in response to an external perturbation such as the Sun or CO₂, so the theory runs, the very fact of the warming triggers events in the climate that serve either to amplify or to diminish the original warming, with positive (or amplifying) feedbacks outweighing negative (or countervailing) feedbacks. Monckton (2008) points out that the sum of the maximal values attributed to the principal climate feedbacks by the IPCC is closer to the point of instability in the Bode mutual-amplification equation than is possible given the observed stability of the climate. Spencer (2009, in peer review) confirms empirically a theoretical analysis by me establishing beyond reasonable doubt that the cloud-albedo feedback, imagined by the IPCC to be strongly positive, is in fact strongly negative, a result also deducible by careful analysis of shortwave vs. longwave channels in the Earth Radiation Budget Experiment satellite (Lindzen & Choi, 2009). Likewise, Douglass *et al.* (2008) demonstrate that the IPCC's imagined strongly positive value for the water vapor feedback must be overstated, because the models are incorrectly schooled to imagine that if and only if humankind is responsible for "global warming" then the rate of warming in the tropical upper troposphere will be thrice that at the surface, though no such differential warming rate has ever been observed. The only contrary paper on this is by Ben Santer, he who tampered with the 1995 IPCC report. In that paper, he and his colleagues invented a non-existent tropical upper-troposphere dataset that appeared to fit the models' predictions: however, all that needs to be said about that paper is that, in the light of the Climategate emails, it is now the subject of a criminal investigation for scientific and financial fraud.

The paper by Lindzen and Choi is particularly interesting, in that it suggests that the radiation upwelling from the Earth's surface is escaping to outer space much as it always has, with remarkably little interruption from the extra greenhouse gases that we have been adding – albeit in barely-measurable quantities – to the atmospheric mix. Spencer (personal

communication, 2009) queries whether the ERBE data have been used as they should have been: however, even if he is right then the IPCC has exaggerated the warming effect of CO₂ threefold rather than – as Lindzen and Choi’s paper suggests – sixfold. This result confirms many other results now appearing in the literature, to the effect that the warming effect not only of CO₂ but of all greenhouse gases is many times smaller than the IPCC imagines. I am insufficiently expert to determine who is right: however, it is very clear that the IPCC’s value for the feedback-sum, which on its analysis accounts for very nearly two-thirds of all the warming from greenhouse gases, is highly speculative and, at a number of points, questionable.

For these and other reasons, I do not find the case for immediate and costly action to curb CO₂ emissions at all compelling. And I shall finish by explaining why there is no hurry. Let us suppose, *ad argumentum*, that the warming effect of CO₂ is every bit as large as the UN’s central estimate. In that event, simplifying the UN’s equations, the warming effect of a given proportionate increase in CO₂ concentration, in Kelvin or Celsius degrees, is simply 4.7[3.7, 5.7] times the natural logarithm of the proportionate increase. For the past decade, CO₂ concentration has risen linearly at 2 ppmv/year, and it now stands at 388 ppmv. Therefore the implicit central estimate of the warming that might arise if we were to do absolutely nothing for the next ten years but allow CO₂ concentration to continue to increase as it has in the past decade is $4.7 \ln [(388+20)/388]$ Celsius – less than a quarter of a degree. That, of course, is approximately how much warming there should have been in the last ten years – *but there has been none*. For that reason, given the massive economic damage that wholesale reductions in CO₂ concentration would inflict particularly on the poorest countries, who need cheap electricity to lift their people out of poverty, it is far better to wait and see whether the climate extremists – those who claim certainty when, on this analysis, there can be none – are right. In any event, adaptation as *and if necessary* is orders of magnitude cheaper than mitigation. The do-nothing option – which is what the world has followed ever since the Kyoto Protocol – is the right option. The Protocol required all nations to stabilize their carbon dioxide emissions at 1990 levels. Since the Protocol was agreed, worldwide CO₂ emissions have increased by 40%. And yet global temperatures have not risen, in any statistically-significant sense, for around a decade and a half.

Naturally, anyone who follows the scientific method must be open to the possibility that he has misunderstood matters. Therefore, I am always willing to stand corrected if I have gotten something wrong. However, mere *ad-hominem* attacks do not convince me that there is any error in my analysis. Science is not done *ad hominem* but *ad rem*, and it is in that spirit that I have attempted to answer the good Doctor’s email.



Source: <http://sppiblog.org/news/science-ad-rem-not-politics-ad-hominem>.

