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Forbes columnist & Prof. Larry Bell, 'How Climate Sanity Has Been Gored'

by Prof. Larry Bell | February 3, 2011

CLIMATE DEPOT EXCLUSIVE

Prof. Larry Bell's Response to RealClimate.org's Alleged "Debunking" of My Forbes Article titled "Hot Sensations vs. Cold Facts" (Bell is author of the new book: "Climate of Corruption: Politics and Power behind the Global Warming Hoax.")

Prof. Larry Bell: I have recently earned the special distinction afforded to such other global warming crisis skeptics as Senator James Inhofe; Steve McIntyre and Ross McKittrick who exposed the infamously flawed "hockey stick" graph that has been used to promote human-caused climate hysteria; writers Michael Crichton and George Will; and many others who take issue with their ideologically-based alarmism.

The RealClimate website which purports to represent "real climate science by real climate scientists" was, in fact, organized by such notables as ClimateGate luminary and hockey stick originator Michael Mann, and lead blogger Gavin Schmidt, subordinate colleague of leading global warming alarmist /Al Gore advisor/ NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies director James Hansen. Their resident propagandist, William Connolley, was recently expelled from an administrative position with Wikipedia where he routinely edited and deleted opposing information and smeared biographical information about skeptical scientists.

As observed by Israeli astrophysicist Nir Shaviv: "The aim of RealClimate.org is not to engage a sincere scientific debate. Their aim is to post a reply full of a straw man so their supporters can claim that your point 'has been refuted by real scientists at RealClimate.org' ". Shaviv, who calls the website "Wishfulclimate.org.", also noted that "writers [at RealClimate] try again and again to concoct what appears to be deep critiques against skeptic arguments, but end up doing a very shallow job. All in the name of saving the world. How gallant of them".

In response to accusations presented by some RealClimate representatives including Michael Mann, Gavin Schmidt and Kevin Trenberth in a blog letter titled "Forbes' rich list of nonsense" I am posting an open letter on a Climate Depot website. (Note: See Bell's latest Forbes column [here](#) to comment on this article.) Here, I have provided an extensive and highly nuanced accounting of facts supporting that article and broader perspectives on the matter. And while I recognize the agenda behind RealClimate's desperate hit and run tactic and seriously doubt that my response will satisfy them, the opportunity to address their invitation was too enticing to resist.

OPEN LETTER IN RESPONSE TO REALCLIMATE BLOG “FORBES' RICH LIST OF NONSENSE”

re: “Hot Sensations vs. Cold Facts” article

By Forbes Columnist Larry Bell

It is a rare opportunity to be invited by Mirik Smit to respond to statements regarding my recent article offered by Michael Tobis, Scott Mandia, Gavin Schmidt, Michael Mann and Kevin Trenberth in RealClimate. Given that I am not linked into the East Anglia CRU network it affords a convenient channel to communicate directly with two prominent figures attached to Climategate, along with a subordinate NASA-GISS colleague of leading global warming alarmist and Al Gore advisor James Hansen.

By way of brief introduction, my childhood home was Baraboo, Wisconsin, a beautiful area with 500 foot high bluffs surrounding a lake basin, and moraines at both ends. These formations were created by a massive glacier that melted there at the end of the last Ice Age. Presumably that melt was brought about by those damned wood fires set by our pre-Holocene ancestors? Either that, or maybe climate change occurs due to a variety of causes, and not necessarily all for the worse?

But I digress. My article and your responses to it aren't about climate changes that have occurred over the past hundreds or tens of thousands of years. They're also not about dramatic climate changes that have been recorded within the past 1,000 years ago such as during the Medieval Warm Period (dismissed in importance by Dr. Mann, but acknowledged by Dr. Trenberth)--- or the Little Ice Age that occurred but merely a cosmic blink ago. And we're not even dealing with comparatively very moderate and very recent warming from 1900-1940, followed by cooling until about 1975, replaced by warming until about 1998 --- periods when atmospheric CO₂ levels continued to rise. No, we're talking about last year. Or are we?

Let's go to the heart of the matter where you refer to my article as a “classic example” of an underlying strategy to pretend that there is no evidence that climate change exists. Gosh, I don't even know anyone who claims that climate change doesn't exist. Shame on them for being so unobservant! Then you go on to suggest that I and others are working to divert attention away from informed recognition of the fact that scientifically informed people believe that climate changes as a result of human intervention. Another big GOSH here.

I don't doubt that humans have some influence on climate, whether through agriculture, deforestation or any combination of numerous possible activities. I don't really know anyone else who doubts that either. The questions are which influences; how much, and are they even measurable; can they be sorted out from a variety of uncertain natural sensitivities; can they be realistically modeled or predicted; are they for better or worse over the long run; what can and should be done, if anything--- and at what cost?

Then the biggie. You go on to assert in your introduction that you know the answers. That “The longer we delay taking policy action, the more damage we will take and the more an

effective policy will cost. It is conceivable and increasingly foreseeable that we will delay long enough that useful policy becomes infeasible and both human civilization and the biosphere will be permanently damaged.” Yeah, I know lots of people who doubt your scientific basis for that claim. I am one of them, among many. The numbers are growing.

Regarding “useful policy”, what does that mean? Isn't that a political, vs. scientific priority? I seem to remember that former Senator Timothy Wirth, when serving as Clinton-Gore administration undersecretary for global affairs mentioned this matter when he addressed the U.N. sponsored Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and stated that “We have to ride the global warming issue. Even if the theory of global warming is wrong, we will be doing the right thing in terms of economic policy and environmental policy”.

Conference general secretary Maurice Strong was more specific, stating that “We may get to the point where the only way of saving the world will be for industrial civilization to collapse”. But it doesn't seem like that would be very useful for most of us.

And what, exactly does that have to do with challenging facts in my article anyway? Although the statement clearly expresses your ideological position, that pronouncement would appear to have no real bearing upon the subject addressed in my article, namely climate reporting and the media. Of course, if you wish to take credit for that, please don't hesitate. At least on this, you are undoubtedly correct.

REGARDING HURRICANES LINKED TO GLOBAL WARMING:

My article mentioned a lack of U.S. landfall hurricane events during 2009-2010 in reference to alarmist claims of global warming causing cyclonic disasters following the devastating 2004 season. It cited lack of scientific evidence to support that IPCC-linked assertion as stated at the time by Dr. Christopher Landsea, a top expert on that subject. Landsea objected to presentation of the claim in an open letter, and resigned from IPCC activities in protest.

Dr. Trenberth, who I referred to as the person who initiated and presented the global warming-hurricane link claim took issue with my characterization of events. He expressed doubt that Landsea had gone so far as to claim that “no research had been conducted to support the claim”; pointed out that he was not an IPCC spokesperson or advertised as such; stated that he did not call the press conference, but only participated; stated that a ton of research had been conducted, including Trenberth's own, although not tropical storm based, said that Landsea had not contacted IPCC once, let alone repeatedly; and stated that Landsea was not even part of IPCC, but had only been asked by him to write something as a contributing author.

My reporting of those events was taken from quotations of Dr. Landsea's letter published by Lawrence Solomon in the National Post, February 2, 2007 titled “The Deniers, Part III-The Hurricane Expert Who stood Up to UN Junk Science”. It stated that Landsea had been a contributing author to two previous IPCC reports, and an invited author for the 2007 AR4 report that had not yet been released.

Landsea was reportedly disturbed to learn that Trenberth was a key participant in a press conference titled “Experts to warn global warming to continue spurring more outbreaks of intense hurricane activity”. He had stated that there was no evidence to support this in the Atlantic Basin. Not in any basin. Accordingly, he wrote to top IPCC officials, imploring: “What scientific, refereed publications substantiate these pronouncements? What studies being alluded to have shown a connection between observed warming trends on Earth and long-term trends of cyclone activity?” Receiving no replies, he then requested the IPCC's assurance that the 2007 report would present true science, saying, “[Dr. Trenberth] seems to have come to a conclusion that global warming has altered hurricane activity, and has already stated so. This does not reflect consensus within the hurricane research community...Thus I would like assurances that what will be included in the IPCC report will reflect the best available information consensus within the scientific community most expert on the specific topic” After those assurances didn't come, he resigned from 2007 AR4 report activities and issued an open letter presenting his reasons.

RealClimate criticized the fact that this incident was old news anyway in the context of my article which focused on recent events. My point is that if hurricanes are indeed linked to a global warming trend (with Gavan's NASA-GISS boss touting 2010 as “the warmest year in since record-keeping began) then why wasn't the lack of correlation with U.S. hurricane landfall activity reported in the media?

One of RealClimate's article responders observed “some truth” in what I said when referring to cumulative records of U.S. hurricane landfalls. That was what the 2005 press conference alarmism was all about, and what I was obviously referencing.

NEW OCEAN COOLING PHASE:

I mentioned in my article that oceans appear to now be heading into one of their periodic cooling phases in accordance with a typical 55-to-70 year dipolar warm/cool pattern, citing two separate supportive NASA studies, one conducted by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and the other by the Langley Research Center. RealClimate took issue with my reference to the JPL conclusions, pointing out that JPL oceanographer Josh Willis corrected his original conclusion “on NASA's Earth Observation page this week” based upon new data. More recent calculations showed that the earlier data reflected cooling only relative to earlier data which erroneously indicated excessively high temperatures. So OK, the new results are warmer than they subsequently reported on the week after my article was released on December 27, 2010.

RealClimate also criticized the fact that I had cited information taken from a 2008 article, not 2010. Yet my reference to 2010 is taken from my introductory sentence “As 2010 draws to a close, do you remember...” It doesn't necessarily limit recent history to a 2010 timeline framework because current events carry over from overlapping previous ones. Here, the word “climate” comes to mind.

RISING OCEANS AND RESEARCH SPONSOR AGENDAS:

RealClimate took issue with my quotation of Nils-Axel Morner, head of the Paleogeophysics and Geodynamics department in Stockholm, Sweden who argued that any concerns regarding rising sea levels are unfounded, but that research sponsors want to get results that indicate otherwise. He stated that “So all this talk about sea level rising, this comes from computer modeling, not from observations...The new level, which has been stable, has not changed in the last 35 years...But they [IPCC] need a rise, because if there is no rise, there is no death threat...if you want a grant for a research project in climatology, it is written into the document that there 'must' be a focus on global warming...That is really bad, because you start asking for the answers you want to get”.

On the first matter, I could also have mentioned Hendrik Tennekes, former director of research at the Netherlands Royal National Meteorological Institute who believes that the sea level has flattened since 2006. He also disputes claims that there has been any statistically significant warming of the upper ocean surfaces since 2003. This assessment stands in stark contrast to claims by key RealClimate lead blogger Gavin Schmidt that “Our regular readers will hardly be surprised by key findings from physical climate science, most of which we have already discussed here. Some aspects of climate change are progressing faster than was expected a few years ago-such as rising sea levels, the increase of heat stored in the ocean and the shrinking Arctic sea ice”. Dr. Tennekes wrote a scathing review titled “RealClimate Suffers from Foggy Perception” for a blog released by the Pielke Research Group: News and Commentary in which he said he was “appalled” by Schmidt's “lack of knowledge” and added “Back to graduate school, Gavin!” Former Colorado State Climatologist and current University of Colorado-Boulder senior scientist Dr. Roger Pielke Sr. also publicly rebuked RealClimate's claim for “erroneously communicating the reality of how the climate system is actually behaving” in a June 30, 2009 article titled “RealClimate's Misinformation” that appeared on the Climate Depot website.

RealClimate didn't specifically reject the validity of my citing of research conclusions presented by the International Union for Quaternary Research indicating that some ocean levels have even fallen in recent years. For example, the Indian Ocean was higher between 1900 and 1970 than it is now. They simply argued that the water is “piling up somewhere else”. Perhaps that isn't all that is piling up.

Regarding the observation that science results often follow research sponsor agendas, such assertions have been made by numerous scientists, including public statements made by the distinguished MIT climate scientist Richard Lindzen. Even one of the RealClimate article commentators agreed that this assessment might be right...that while use of the term “global warming” might be rare in NSF and other solicitations, “climate change” is almost mandatory. “Even in NASA solicitations (which are expecting the use of satellite assets), addressing climate change is a must, which is nonsense, given the short life span (a few years) of most NASA satellites. I keep testing the idea of submitting proposals, without touching climate change without success so far. I guess I will need to write better proposals”.

THE MELTING GLACIERS:

RealClimate didn't like my reference to a globally viewed 2005 BBC feature that alarmingly reported that two massive glaciers in eastern Greenland were melting with water “racing to the sea”, whereas not reported was that only 18 months later, and despite slightly warmer temperatures, the melting rate of both stopped and one not only slowed down and stopped but actually reversed...with one advancing beyond its 1933 boundary. They claimed that this was not 2010 news since it happened in 2007. They didn't mention my reference to those “erratic” events that were recounted again in a dramatic November 13, 2010 New York Times article titled “As Glaciers Melt, Science Seeks Data on Rising Seas”. They also commented that while this occurrence may be of interest to glacier dynamicists, its “climatological importance is nil”, and stated that glaciers worldwide are in massive retreat.

I did mention in my article that the true extent of glacial expanses wasn't knowable prior to 1979 when satellites to measure them first came into existence. We can be pretty sure, however, that Greenland was at least as warm during the 1940s, and a lot warmer about 1,000 years ago when Icelandic Vikings sailed, settled and grew livestock there. (I can attest from an entire year I spent there in 1959-60 that those -60 degree F temperatures with high winds were not at all conducive to agriculture.)

I did not mention an IPCC report regarding glacial melts that was blatantly calibrated to promote man-made global warming alarm. The 2007 report for example, predicted that the Himalayan glacier would be gone by 2035. That inclusion was traced to a speculative magazine article authored by Indian glaciologist, Syed Hasain, who worked for a research company headed by IPCC's chairman, Rajendra Pachauri, with no supporting science behind it. IPCC author Marari Lai admitted to the London Mail, “We thought that if we can highlight it, it will impact policymakers and politicians and encourage them to take action”.

If reports about recessions and advances of Greenland glaciers are of climatologically “nil” importance, why did the IPCC find it necessary to skirt all peer-review processes to implant a bogus story about a melting Himalayan glacier in their report attributed to climate change evidence and danger?

THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE OPENING:

My article addressed alarmist reports that the Northwest Passage- a sea route between the U.K. and Asia across the top of the Arctic Circle- had opened up for the first time in recorded history (noting that “recorded history” in this context extends back only to 1979 when satellite monitoring first began). RealClimate countered that they didn't see what I was “complaining about”, pointing out that genuine shipping lanes opened up for the first time in 2007 and 2010. OK, my point was (and is), also noted, that the sea route froze up again a few months after the 2007 report. In fact, the average sea ice extent for the month of December 2008 (4.84 million square miles) was actually 54,000 square miles greater than in December 2007; worldwide the average sea ice coverage was about the same as it had been in 1979.

Is the main cause of these changes attributable to wind conditions? Sure, probably so. But that's not the impression pushed by alarmist AGW theory proponents.

I also noted that 1903 diary entries of the famous Norwegian arctic explorer Roald Amundsen and those of a Royal Canadian Royal Mounted Police Arctic crew that made regular trips there in the early 1940s clearly show that the route has certainly been open before. Not mentioned are records from another RCMP vessel in 2000 that made the crossing in only three weeks, where the crew reported seeing very little ice except for the occasional icebergs they passed.

For those who are interested, here's what Amundsen reported: "The Northwest Passage was done [had opened]. My boyhood dream- at the moment it was accomplished. A strange feeling welled up in my throat; I was over-strained and worn- it was weakness in me- but I felt tears in my eyes. Vessel in sight...Vessel in sight".

So what are you complaining about?

AND HERE'S WHAT I REALLY THINK:

Members of your RealClimate AGW cadre point out that I am not a climate scientist...a fact that I candidly emphasize in the preface of my book. Neither is IPCC chair Rajendra Pachuri, or Al Gore for that matter. Apparently according to your standards, anyone you classify as a "denier" (a term repeated six times in the draft recently released by Dr. Trenberth for his National Center for Atmospheric Research talk) doesn't qualify as a "real" climate scientist either. At least not like you at RealClimate blog which you characterize as "Climate science from climate scientists".

Since Kevin's NCAR address was in honor of the late Stephen Schneider, I can't help but wonder if there is such a thing as a "reverse denier". After all, Dr. Schneider was originally a leading global cooling alarmist during the 1970s - which essentially would have made him a global warming denier- that is if anyone had cared about that then. That was before he later became a leading IPCC AGW theory warrior a little more than a decade later. And by the way, while I'm admittedly not a climate scientist, aren't climate time frames generally associated with at least three decades or more? And weren't James Hansen's GISS climate models predicting global cooling during the 1970s too...prior to another reversal of deniership just in time for his famous 1988 Gore Senate hearing proclamations?

Whether or not I and others who disagree with you are real climate scientists is far less important in my view than those we have relied upon and trusted for reliable information and claim to be are worthy of that title. Clearly, some are not. As I have opined in my more recent Forbes article titled "The Climate Crisis Hoax", corruption of climate science by some who have used and abused that title has produced incalculably vast economic and social consequences. Yes, it truly does determine policies. It provides justification and cover for gross regulatory intrusions by the EPA, DoE and other government agencies into agriculture, energy, transportation and construction industries; escalates food, fuel and manufacturing

costs through unwarranted mandates and subsidies for otherwise uncompetitive “renewable” fuels; provokes legislation and legal suits that paralyze vital fossil energy exploration and infrastructure development; drives drilling operations and other job-supporting businesses overseas; politicizes and subverts science, education and media reporting; and defrauds hardworking taxpayers who pay many billions of dollars for honest information.

It should be mutually understood that good scientists are not immune from personal biases and make honest errors. No reasonable person should expect otherwise, regardless which side of the AGW debate they stand on. (Note here that I don't refer here to an AGW crisis...because I don't believe anyone can establish that there is one.) And as I pointed out in my recent articles on the topic, research sponsor agendas can and do contaminate objectivity as well.

Please be honest and recognize that much of the taxpayer-supported government-sponsored research that most of you rely upon to support your work and families comes from political agenda-driven sponsors that derive budgets based upon “hot button” issues. That doesn't make those who pursue that research or their work products corrupt. Yet many of your blogs and bloggers relentlessly attempt to link those who disagree with you (us “deniers”) with nefarious interests (BIG OIL, Tobacco, etc). I find open communications among some of you who try to target and tar me in this regard somewhat humorous, but consider viscous smears directed against distinguished scientists who deserve far better treatment reprehensible.

Finally, I will once again recall memories of my boyhood life in those Baraboo, Wisconsin glacially-formed bluffs, a time when a pal and I caught rattlesnakes for a local reptile farm. On one occasion when I was concentrating my attention on one particular timber rattler, I inadvertently stepped over another that very fortunately wasn't paying attention. I learned from that experience that it's much safer when they are all coiled tightly together in a den where you can keep your eyes on most all of them at one time. RealClimate is such a place, and affords the same benefit. Thank you for that service.

Larry Bell



Bell's Bio: University of Houston full/tenured Professor of Architecture; Endowed Professor of Space Architecture; Director of the Sasakawa International Center for Space Architecture; Head of the Graduate Program in Space Architecture; former full Professor/ Head of the University of Illinois Industrial Design Graduate Program; Associate Fellow, American Institute for Aeronautics and Astronautics; Fellow, Explorer's Club; weekly columnist, Forbes; non-energy affiliate; reformed (almost) cigar smoker; and author, *Climate of Corruption: Politics and Power behind the Global Warming Hoax* (which I will cheerfully sign with a very personal note for each of you at RealClimate who pay for a copy).

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