

**Heartland Conference, New York, 8-10 March 2009**  
**'The Mother of All Scares'**  
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I think you should know that a university near where I live back in England was also having a conference on climate change this last weekend. Led by a professor, a group of psychotherapists, 'eco-psychologists' and 'climate activists' were solemnly discussing how they could get 'climate change denial' officially classified as a form of 'mental disorder'.

So, good morning, fellow lunatics. It is a great honour for me to be invited to speak at this historic conference. And what a delight it has been to hear and meet so many people whose good work I have been reporting on over the past year or two: Professor Lindzen, Dr Fred Singer, President Klaus to name but three - not forgetting those two heroes of our time Steve McIntyre of Climate Audit and Anthony Watts of What's Up With That.

As we are all aware, thanks to global warming, the world seems to be heading for an unprecedented catastrophe. But it is not, of course, the technicolor apocalypse we have so long been promised by the likes of Al Gore and Jim Hansen – melting ice-sheets, rising sea levels, hurricanes, droughts, mass-extinctions. The real disaster hanging over us through global warming lies in all those measures now being adopted by the world's politicians to meet a crisis which was never going to happen anyway. Never before in history have politicians come up with proposals so astronomically costly or potentially so damaging to their economies.

Some of us back in Britain thought our own politicians were crazy enough when last year they voted almost unanimously to make it the law of the land that within 40 years Britain must cut its carbon dioxide emissions by an insane 80 percent. And then you voted in President Obama who is pledged to do just the same, Stop breathing out Mr President!

Everyone speaking at this conference has their own individual angle on the great theme which has brought us all together. In my own case, I first came to this subject in a serious way when a year or two back my co-author Dr Richard North and I were putting together a book on a subject we knew quite a lot about.

For fifteen years we had found ourselves investigating a long succession of those 'scares' which became such a conspicuous feature of Western life in the closing decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Repeatedly we had seen supposed experts hitting the headlines by raising some new fear, some supposedly terrifying new threat to human health or wellbeing: food scares such as 'mad cow disease' which was soon going to be killing half a million people a year; the Asian bird 'flu that the WHO said in 2005 was soon going to kill 150 million people; 2YK, the 'Millennium Bug' which was going to bring civilised life to a halt by knocking out millions of computer systems; dioxins; lead in petrol; passive smoking, the deliberate confusion between different types of asbestos and many more. And again and again we had seen how these scares followed a remarkably similar pattern.

Each of these supposed threats had originated in what would eventually turn out to be a misreading of the scientific evidence. Usually this was because scientists had put two things together and guessed, incorrectly, that one was the cause of the other. The scare had then been picked up and magnified by the media and campaigning groups, to the point where eventually governments gave way. This was the tipping point of the scare, as they proceeded to mount a massive legislative response out of all

proportion to the reality of the threat. This had invariably resulted in huge financial and economic damage, often running into billions and even hundreds of billions of dollars. But finally in each case new evidence came to light to show how the supposed threat had been wildly exaggerated. The panic had been based not just on misreading the scientific data but even deliberately distorting it,

What struck us when we came to look into the history of the alarm over global warming was how uncannily it seemed to have echoed the pattern of all those other scares with which we were so familiar. There was the initial putting together of two things – the rise in CO<sub>2</sub> levels, the rise in global temperatures – leading to the assumption that one must have been the cause of the other. There was the way in which this scare had been obsessively promoted by the media and environmental lobby groups, Then there was the remarkable speed with which this cause was taken up by governments, as they rushed to propose a massive regulatory response.

When we examined all this in detail, we had no hesitation in making it the subject of the longest chapter in our book, which is called *Scared To Death: From BSE To Global Warming, How Scares Are Costing Us The Earth*. But we finished the book in 2007 and since then, of course, the story has moved on a long way. In fact we are now in the middle of writing a new book which seeks to reconstruct the whole story of the global warming panic in considerably greater detail.

The drama, as we see it, has unfolded in three parts. Part One, which takes the story up to the signing of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, we call 'The Forging of a Consensus'. This begins back in the 1970s with that brief panic over global cooling. Then, of course, temperatures began to rise, certain scientists began to ascribe this as due to the rise in greenhouse gas levels, and in 1988 two things happened to set the great scare on its way.

The first of these was Jim Hansen's carefully stage-managed testimony to a Senate committee, claiming that the five hottest years ever recorded had been in the 1980s, and that 1988 promised to be the hottest yet. The second, quite independently, was the setting up in Geneva by a small group of meteorologists of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC.

As we know, the IPCC was to become, through its series of reports, an absolutely key player in this story. Yet the more that comes to light about its workings, the more we see what a very odd body it is. It was always essentially a political rather than a scientific organisation. It was tightly controlled from the start by a little group of meteorologists, led by Bert Bolin and Dr John Houghton, who took what they called 'human-induced climate change' as an unarguable fact. Although its reports are still to this day described in the media as representing a 'consensus' of 'the world's top 2,500 climate scientists', only a few dozen of its contributors are strictly climate specialists and most are not really scientists at all

One of the characteristics of a scare is that, although there are usually experts who spot very early on that the science behind it has gone off the rails, such is the momentum generated by a scare that they can be safely brushed aside. When the IPCC produced its first report in 1990, for instance, Professor Richard Lindzen of MIT, a more knowledgeable climatologist than anyone on the IPCC, pointed out that the computer models on which it based its projections were fundamentally skewed by all the crucial factors they had missed out, such as the negative feedback effect of the greatest greenhouse gas of all, water vapour.

The IPCC's second report in 1996 provoked that magisterial blast from Professor Seitz, the former president of the National Academy of Sciences, who said in effect that

in all his 60 years as a scientist he had never known such a perversion of established scientific procedure. But the bandwagon was now unstoppable on its way, and the famous 1992 'Earth Summit', drawing up the up the UN Convention on Climate Change, led five years later to the Kyoto Protocol. This committed virtually all the governments in the world to what was now accepted as the 'consensus' view, that CO2-induced global warming was a major threat to the future of the planet.

Part Two of the story, lasting from 1998 to 2007, we call 'The Consensus Carries All Before It'. The official science grew even wilder, symbolised by the IPCC in 2001 adopting as its supreme icon Michael Mann's 'hockey stick', the graph which completely rewrote the historical record to make 1998 the hottest year in history.

No matter that within a few years Steve McIntyre and Ross McKittrick had turned the 'hockey stick' into one of the most discredited artefacts in the history of science. By now the scare was in full swing, as governments, led by the European Union, proposed ever more ambitious measures to change the world's climate, intended not just to meet their original Kyoto targets but to go far beyond them.

By 2005, as the EU launched its first 'cap and trade' scheme, while tens of thousands of highly-subsidised wind turbines rose uselessly over Europe's countryside, the hysteria was approaching its peak. 2006 saw Al Gore's celebrated Oscar-winning movie, so full of errors that scarcely a sentence in it was correct. By 2007 the potential bill for all the measures now being proposed by politicians across the world was so colossal that, if they were all put into effect, it would require such a drastic change in the way of life of billions of people that it is hard to imagine how modern civilisation could survive in any recognisable form.

Then, in the past two years, we have quite suddenly entered Part Three of the story, what we call 'The Consensus Begins To Crumble'. Firstly, although CO2 levels in the atmosphere have continued rising, it has become clearer than ever that global temperatures are no longer following suit. Far from continuing to hurtle inexorably upwards, the temperature curve since that El Nino year of 1998 first flattened out and then dropped, in a way none of those IPCC computer models had predicted.

As the past two years across the world have seen some of the heaviest snowfalls and coldest temperatures ever recorded, even the true believers in man-made warming have had to come up with new excuses to explain what is happening. We are told that, although the world is temporarily getting cooler, thanks to shifts in ocean currents which the computer models somehow didn't allow for, this is only 'masking the underlying warming trend'. In due course, we are assured - 10 years, 20 years, who knows - we can expect that dreadful warming to return worse than ever.

Secondly, it has also become increasingly clear how that much-vaunted scientific 'consensus' was never anything like so unanimous as the politicians and the media were led to believe. Despite the tireless efforts of Dr Mann, the evidence that the world was several times warmer in the few thousand years before the invention of SUVs remains overwhelming. Other theories to explain the temperature rise towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have become ever more convincing, notably those related to the activity of the sun.

With increasing force, a growing number of climatologists and other experts have shown how the evidence for a human link to such warming as has occurred in recent decades was not just being seriously exaggerated but even deliberately manipulated, to produce findings which the data simply did not justify.

In a sense it has been hilarious to see Steve McIntyre yet again tearing apart Mann's latest bid to resurrect his 'hockey stick' - just as it was to see McIntyre and

Anthony Watts catching out James Hansen's Goddard Institute for Space Studies fiddling its temperature figures, and forcing him to admit that US surface temperatures were higher in the 1930s than they were in the 1990s.

Despite the best efforts of Mann and Professor Steig to splice together the temperature records from various weather stations, real and imaginary, Antarctica stubbornly continues to get colder rather than warmer. That Arctic sea-ice cussedly failed to vanish in 2008, as the BBC and others so longingly predicted it should. Even Al Gore's favourite picture of those two polar bears on a melting iceberg about to drown turned out to have been shot only a short distance from land because the wind-sculpted ice looked so pretty. The bears weren't drowning, they were waving.

Desperate to make reality fit their theories, the more fanatical warmists have grown ever more reckless in their claims, as when Hansen talks of the 'death trains' which carry coal to the power plants which still supply the US with 50 percent of its electricity, and predicts that a single planned coal-fired power station in Britain will alone be responsible for the extinction of '400 species'.

But now another new factor has entered the equation. Since last autumn, as we are all keenly aware, the global economy has been plunging into its deepest recession for more than 70 years. As the clock ticks down towards next December, when 10,000 politicians, officials and environmentalist groupies converge on Copenhagen to agree a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, we have seen political attitudes towards global warming begin sharply to polarise. On the one hand, the majority of Western politicians, now led by your new President, are still firmly locked into their belief that the IPCC orthodoxy is correct. All those astronomically costly measures they have been talking about for years, from carbon taxes and 'cap and trade' to building thousands more useless windmills, are still as necessary as ever. But others, including several nations in the EU, have begun to argue that the immense economic sacrifices these would involve make them simply no longer affordable. Developing countries such as China and India continue to insist, as they have done ever since Kyoto, that, if they are expected to cut back on their 'carbon emissions', the bill for this must be picked up by those developed countries whose economies are now in meltdown.

Compared with where it was only a year or two back, the whole global warming picture, scientifically and politically, is now beginning to look like a total shambles. Quite how the story will unravel from here, without that gift for foreseeing the future which is vouchsafed to the IPCC, I would hesitate to predict. But I would certainly put money on Copenhagen as not being a very happy occasion for all our warmist friends, any more than was Jim Hansen's recent attempt to whip up the youth of the nation into a frenzy of protest against runaway global warming just after the Almighty had dumped six inches of snow all over Washington. I bet they were grateful for those coal-fired power stations when they got back in the warm.

As an epitaph for all that has happened in this story so far, I will only recall the words of the late great Professor Aaron Wildavsky of Berkeley, when he described the panic over global warming as 'the mother of all environmental scares'. And that was back in 1991.

Part of the message I hope we can take out from this conference is that what we are confronted with here is precisely that: something we have seen so often before in history that we should be much readier to recognise it for what it is. When people are in the grip of a scare they are carried away into a sentimental bubble of fear which not only detaches them from reality but makes them unreachable by reasoned argument. So armoured are they in their belief system that it is impossible to have dialogue with them.

They bristle with humourless indignation, intone their empty, well-worn mantras and fly off into personal abuse.

But even the most powerful of scares, as history teaches us, follow the same age-old pattern and eventually have their day. And in this battle, as I reminded Fred Singer a few months back when he was in rather a gloomy mood, we have two great allies. One is nature, The other is truth.

With allies like that, who can doubt that we shall prevail.