Global Warming: Science vs. Activism

by Jason Lomberg, Technical Editor

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In 2007, Al Gore shared the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to [1] "build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change." In his Oscar-winning documentary, An Inconvenient Truth [2], Gore screeched, "The scientists are virtually screaming from the rooftops now. The debate is over! There's no longer any debate in the scientific community about this." Similarly, President Obama stated [3], "The science is beyond dispute and the facts are clear." One would think that divergent thinkers are wearing tinfoil hats and bloviating about fake moon landings.

The theory of global warming has become heavily politicized, devoid of sound scientific debate. Actually, according to alarmists, there is no debate. It’s all cut and dry, and the opposition is certifiably insane. In an interview with CNN’s Anderson Cooper, Gore said [4], “The people who say global warming isn't real, they must get together on Saturday nights and party with the ones who think the moon landing was staged on a movie lot in Arizona.”

The scientists, economists, policy advisors, and activists who attended the 2009 International Conference On Climate Change [5] would dispute that the science is “above dispute.” Sponsored by The Heartland Institute, the conference is billed as the “world’s largest-ever gathering of global warming skeptics.” Note the importance of the term “skeptic.” While alarmists are 100% positive, and howl breathlessly about the looming catastrophe, skeptics are merely unsure. That’s why Joseph L. Bast, President of The Heartland Institute, can state [6], “Skeptics are the winners of EVERY scientific debate, always, everywhere.” There’s no definite yes or no answer to the question of global warming.

There is, however, plenty of doubt. Don J. Easterbrook, Professor Emeritus of Geology at Western Washington University, states emphatically [7], “Global warming (i.e, the warming since 1977) is over.” He believes we’ve entered a 20-30 year global cooling period. As evidence, he cites fluctuations in the Pacific Decadal Oscillation. A 2008 NASA report states [8], “The latest image of sea-surface height measurements from the U.S./French Jason-1 oceanography satellite shows the Pacific Ocean remains locked in a strong, cool phase of the Pacific Decadal Oscillation.”

The Goddard Institute for Space Studies, a NASA subsidiary, concluded that [9] “2008 is the ninth warmest year in the period of instrumental measurements.” However, it also claimed that “Calendar year 2008 was the coolest year since 2000.” This is certainly consistent with global cooling trends. If “global warming” was nothing but a phase, then it’s doubtful we’ve contributed significantly to climate change.

I find it the height of hubris to suggest that human beings are capable of influencing global climate trends to the extent alarmists suggest. Besides, “global warming” is, at its core, an indictment of industry. This puts it squarely in the realm of politics. Despite politicians’ claims, scientists have not come to a consensus. The “debate” is far from over.

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