Defense of Climate-Change Consensus Continues

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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The latest mainstream media coverage on Climate Changegate might indicate at first glance that the scientific research might have been hopelessly compromised. Millions of people saw this widely syndicated headline: "UK University to probe integrity of climate data" (Associated Press, Dec. 3, London)

The East Anglia University's Climatic Research Unit has been embarrassed and attacked after leaked emails showed its head, Phil Jones, discussing strategy to deal with fossil-fuel industry-funded climate-science skeptics.
In the wake of media bashing, Jones stepped aside Tuesday pending the result of the University's investigation.

Congressman James Sensenbrenner claimed in the U.S. House of Representatives that in the alleged emails Jones wrote about a "trick of adding in the real temps" in an exchange about long-term climate trends. Another of Jones' e-mails reads, according to the Associated Press (AP), "I would like to see the climate change happen so the science could be proved right."

Sensenbrenner argued that the e-mails show the world needs to re-examine experts' claims that the science on warming is settled. Nevertheless, the AP story seemed to settle the issue by defending the science-consensus as the last word in its coverage:

"Scientists called before the House's climate change committee countered that the e-mails don't change the fact that the earth is warming.

"'The e-mails do nothing to undermine the very strong scientific consensus ... that tells us the earth is warming, that warming is largely a result of human activity,' said Jane Lubchenco, head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"She said the e-mails don't negate or even deal with data from her agency or the U.S. space agency NASA, which keep independent climate records that show dramatic global warming."

In a press conference by telephone, climate scientists answered questions from the press on the climate changegate flap. Read the whole transcript at
americanprogress.org

News Release from Center for American Progress

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Setting the Record Straight on Global Warming

Today, the Center for American Progress hosted a press conference call with renowned scientists to set the record straight on global warming. Michael Mann, a leading climate scientist and professor of meteorology at Pennsylvania State University whose hacked personal emails have recently become the source of media attention was joined by NASA climate scientist Dr. Gavin Schmidt, Princeton's Dr. Michael Oppenheimer, and CAP Senior Fellow Dr. Joseph Romm to discuss the overwhelming scientific understanding of the danger posed by unmitigated global warming pollution, and that the stolen emails reveal nothing that changes our extensive understanding of climate science.

Professor Michael Mann said:

"Decades of research [has been conducted.] There is a very robust consensus that humans are warming the planet and changing the Earth's climate."

"There are a handful of people and organizations who have tried to cloud the debate…they have engaged in this 11th-hour smear campaign, where they have stolen personal emails from scientists, mined them for single words or phrases that can be taken out of context to twist their words, and I think this is rather telling…Those advocating inaction don't have the science on their side, so they turn to this last minute smear campaign."

Dr. Michael Oppenheimer said:

"From my point of view, the most important issue is whether anything has been added to or subtracted from the scientific picture of global warming that's emerged gradually over several decades of careful analysis by thousands of experts . The answer is simple. From a scientific point of view, nothing has changed. It remains true that Earth has warmed more than 1 degree farenheit degrees over last century largely due to the buildup of human-made greenhouse gases...it remains the case that the projections of future climate change are every bit of discouraging as they were before the recent flap began."

Dr. Gavin Schmidt said:

"When you add up what [humans] have done, and what impact that is likely to have, we end up with scenarios for climate change in the future that put our planet in a position it hasn't been in for, maybe, million of years."

Dr. Joseph Romm said:

"As NOAA's climate monitoring chief pointed out in October, the last ten years are the warmest ten year period in the modern record. Even if you analyze the trend during those years, the trend is positive, which means warming."

"These observations are unequivocal, and the question is, what will happen in our future, and that is still in our hands…the latest science tells us one thing with high confidence: if we stay on our current emissions path, of more and more emissions, then greenhouse gases will stay on high levels."

Listen to audio of the call: click here.

To speak with climate experts on this topic, please contact:

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Culture Change caution: as we have made clear previously, the Center for American Progress is one of the many organizations accurately warning of the danger of climate change while suggesting completely unworkable techno-fix "solutions."

We received this email as soon as the above report went out to our email subscription list:

As a former Director of CRU, I'd be pleased if you could get the name right ...

Climatic Research Unit. [corrected]

Further, whenever you repeat the "trick" criticism, please point out the that the word was used in the following way ....

... with the meaning, “the best way of doing or dealing with something” (Thorndike-Barnhart Comprehensive Desk Dictionary).

Thanks,

Tom Wigley

[with University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR) that manages The National Center for Atmospheric Research, Boulder, Colorado]

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Further reading:

Culture Change's recent coverage: Climate Changegate: Setting the Record Straight by Michael Poremba and Jan Lundberg, Nov. 30, 2009.

"UK University to probe integrity of climate data",

Associated Press, Dec. 3, London