

CLIMATE CHANGE AND CLIMATE MODIFICATION

W. Hall (Athens, Greece)
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Last year a public lecture on Climate Change was presented at the Athens Concert Hall. The visiting speaker was Dr. Matthew Collins from Britain's Hadley Centre on Climate Change. He told a story about a group of journalists who visited the Centre to speak to the scientists about Climate Change. When they had interviewed a number of scientists they asked to see representatives of the climate-change-sceptic viewpoint. Their hosts told them that there were no representatives at the Hadley Centre of the viewpoint that climate change is imaginary or that it is not due at least in part to human activity. The journalists said that they couldn't present just one side of the story and that they wouldn't be screening the interviews they had taken.

Dr. Matthew Collins told us this story to illustrate the perversity of the lobby supporting the refusal of President Bush and his advisors to sign the Treaty of Kyoto. But it is inevitable that journalists will look for both sides of a story. If they are told that the climate change sceptics are the other side of the story, they will go looking for climate change sceptics.

In fact the climate change sceptics are NOT the other side of the story. The debate about whether or not climate change exists, or whether it is anthropogenic, is a DIVERSION. And it is a diversion that puts climate change scientists and activists eternally on the defensive. As with the controversy surrounding Michael Mann's "hockey stick" graph, our side of the debate is accused of manipulating statistics to remove non-anthropogenic factors from the climate change equation so as to overemphasise the factors stemming from human activity.

The debate should not be about whether climate change is or is not anthropogenic. The debate should be about whether climate mitigation or modification should be legalized. Various techniques for mitigating the effects of climate change, such as the spraying of aerosols into the atmosphere from aircraft to reduce the levels of sunlight reaching the earth are openly discussed in the official documents of the IPCC. What is not admitted, and what very large numbers of people throughout the world have concluded, is that mitigation projects of this kind are already being implemented, and on a very large scale. This claim is not being allowed to intrude into the official climate change debate. The result is that the climate change sceptics continue to have the psychological advantage and the ability to put climate change activists and scientists on the defensive.

It seems that there are great political and legal obstacles to climate change mitigation being carried out openly, transparently and publicly. The present situation of illegality suits the oil lobbies and their spokesmen very well. They know they can mobilize hysterical mobs whenever they want to, and illegal climate change mitigation is an activity that is very well suited for triggering public hysteria, and for channeling it against ecologists and climate scientists. To understand something of the dynamics of this, just read Michael Crichton's best-selling novel "State of Fear", which is structured around the hypothesis of ecologist terrorists

artificially inducing tsunamis which they then blame on climate change in order to secure grant monies for their ecological projects.

Crichton's book is a best-seller. People who have a different mentality to us read it. And there are a lot of them.

Nothing would be easier in Greece than to whip up hysteria against the Protocol of Kyoto. Although Greece signed the Protocol, it has done next to nothing to comply with its demands for reduction of dependence on fossil fuels. As a result just for the first nine months of 2005 Greece's Public Power Company has been required to pay 69 million euros in pollution credits. The conclusion that a reader of Michael Crichton would draw from this is that Kyoto is a racket!

Apart from the threat of whipping up public hysteria there is also the threat of litigation. While ever something is illegal, those who are implicated in it can be accused of being criminals.

Some critics will say that because governments do not admit that climate change mitigation projects are in progress and because we cannot prove that they are, (since the evidence of our senses is not enough), it is futile to imagine that we can out-manoeuvre the oil lobbies. But this is not true. All that is necessary is for us to argue, and argue persistently, that the question is not whether climate change is a reality or not, or is anthropogenic or not. The question is whether climate change mitigation should be legalized or banned. This places no onus on us to prove that climate change mitigation is actually occurring. But it does allow us to turn the tables on the climate change sceptics and put THEM on the defensive. If we can get them to say that climate change mitigation is a bad idea, we can then demand that they prove climate change mitigation is NOT occurring. If we can get them to say that climate change mitigation should be legalized then we have deprived them of any further ability to argue that climate change is not something that governments should try to influence. And of any ability to argue that climate change is not a problem.

The stance of climate change skeptics is an updated version of the Cold Warrior mentality. In its deviousness it has the personality of the late Edward Teller stamped all over it. Teller personally and his Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in general played a central role in the process of "moving on" from Cold War Soviet- threat-and-nuclear-deterrence scenarios to the post-Cold War variant of Climate Change and Climate Modification/Climate as Weapon. Teller had a tremendous consciousness of the power of the Big Lie to generate cognitive dissonance, false debate and social disorganization. Having built the hydrogen bomb, the second US nuclear weapons laboratory and his own subsequent brilliant career through projection of the lie of an immensely powerful, relentless and implacable Soviet enemy, he had the flexibility in the era of Gorbachev and the subsequent Soviet collapse to invent new threat scenarios with new inbuilt dilemmas and traps for his opponents. The disorganizing principle that Teller inserted into the climate discussion involved positing uncertainty ("Society's emissions of carbon dioxide may or may not turn out to have something significant to do with global warming. As a scientist I must stand silent on this issue until it's solved scientifically") while at the same time asserting the superiority of his own proposed solution to the perhaps non-existent problem. ("Contemporary technology offers considerably more realistic options for addressing any global warming than politicians and environmental activists are considering. Some of these may be far less burdensome than even a system of market-allocated emissions permits. One particularly attractive approach involves diminishing slightly - by about one percent - the amount of sunlight reaching the earth's surface in order to counteract any warming effect of greenhouse gases." ([Edward Teller: Sunscreen for Planet Earth](#)))

Some scientists and activists have tried to avoid the necessity for a full-scale confrontation with the climate change sceptics by resorting to the hypothesis of Global Dimming. A BBC documentary on this subject by David Sington was screened last year in Britain and in Australia, and another more recently in Canada. The Global Dimming thesis acknowledges the role of atmospheric aerosols in reducing incoming sunlight and reducing climate change. What it avoids acknowledging is that for precisely this reason, programmes of deliberately introducing aerosols into the atmosphere have been advocated and apparently also implemented. David Sington's compromise solution is really no solution at all. He was attacked from two directions after the first screening of his Global Dimming documentary. He was accused by the climate scientist Gavin Schmidt of being over-sensational in his handling of the scientific evidence - indeed a number of the scientists who appeared in the Global Dimming documentary admitted to having mixed feelings about the programme's scare-mongering approach - and he was attacked by climate change sceptics who accused him of giving tacit support to the "chemtrails" conspiracy theorists. When he tried to dissociate himself from this charge in a private e-mail, the e-mail was leaked onto the internet and David Sington came over looking like a politically naïve wimp.

We should not underestimate the extent to which the oil lobby funded climate change sceptics can intimidate climate scientists and activists by brandishing the "conspiracy theorist" label. I have seen even so distinguished a person as Ross Gelbspan succumb to pressure of this kind.

Climate change politics has joined the mainstream in many ways. Even Time magazine can run front covers telling us to "Be Worried, Be Very Worried". I don't for a moment believe that this means we should not take climate change seriously. What I want to say is that the climate change movement can be manipulated, just as the anti-nuclear movement has been manipulated for decades. And at the present moment when there are so many signs that in sixty years of existence the anti-nuclear movement has achieved extremely little, this is a precedent we should beware of following.

The climate change movement has to confront the reality of climate modification, and decide, in dialogue with our opponents, whether we want it to be legalized or banned.

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