

Planet Gore

[The hot blog.](#)

[ABOUT](#) | [ARCHIVE](#) | [E-MAIL](#) | [LOG IN TO COMMENT](#)

Global Warming's Corrupt Science

By [Patrick J. Michaels](#)

Posted on October 20, 2010 12:00 PM

Climate science has painted itself into a corner, seriously damaging the public's faith in the field — as precious a commodity as there is in civil society. Like lab rats that will do anything to keep the cocaine flowing, climate scientists, universities, and federal laboratories are addicted to the public's money.

The latest illustration of this sad new reality is the letter of resignation from the American Physical Society (APS) of one of the lions of science, Harold Lewis, emeritus professor at University of California–Santa Barbara.

In his letter, Lewis rightly states that it is the global-warming-research industry, “with the (literally) trillions of dollars driving it, that has corrupted so many scientists, and has carried APS with it like a rogue wave.” Specifically, Lewis objects to the heavy-handed way in which APS quashed and impeded any attempt to modify its outrageous 2007 “national policy” statement on climate change.

The statement is remarkably misleading, and commits the same rhetorical mayhem as similar statements from the American Geophysical Union and the American Meteorological Society. APS's solemn declaration — “The evidence is incontrovertible. Global warming is occurring.” — has recently been part and parcel of all such statements.

But to a scientist, to declare that the planet is warming is like announcing that the sun will rise tomorrow. One fact of the matter is that we are still emerging from an ice age, as evinced by the massive glaciers and ice fields on Greenland. Ice ages are defined by large accretions of ice being displaced abnormally equatorward. Eventually, most of Greenland should look like Scotland, which suffered a similarly lingering glaciation from which it eventually escaped. The other fact is that we are putting carbon dioxide in the air and, everything else being equal (dangerous words in science), there should be some additional warming.

The important word is “some.” The real questions are, “how much, and how fast?”

Computer models often predict doom and gloom, but APS ignores the fact that these models are failing. Only about 5 percent of hundreds of runs of these simulations predict the lack of a significant warming trend that has been observed in the last 14 years — even in the ClimatedUniversity of East Anglia

temperature history. In other words, the earth's climate is behaving in a way that would normally compel scientists to reject, on statistical grounds, the hypothesis that these models are predictive.

APS isn't interested in publicizing such details. Instead, it shakes the public down for even more money. The statement continues: "The APS urges an enhanced effort to understand the effects of human activity on the Earth's climate."

And why should APS say otherwise? What Lewis has uncovered is that climate scientists are behaving normally. They are responding to the incentives of financial and professional security and advancement.

The 1980s — the period in which global-warming money began to flow — saw the rise of scientists as environmental activists, hand in glove with the political process, soaring along with the fortunes of Al Gore, who very nearly rode his climate hysteria to the White House. The most prominent and clever of them all was the late Steven Schneider, a plasma physicist who wrote the book on how scientists can game policy and enrich themselves at the same time.

Schneider started his own refereed journal, *Climatic Change*. As the journal's editor, he was able to define the paradigm, because that's what the refereed literature does. In 1989, he rejected a very straightforward paper of mine showing that temperatures after 1980 were actually quite similar to those seen in the early part of the 20th century. He wrote to me that he had to hold my paper to a higher standard of review because it was "counter-paradigm," which it was not; it was just counter to the paradigm he wanted to establish.

At the same time, he shamelessly promoted global-warming hysteria, exhorting his colleagues (over whom he held the power of a major journal editor) in *Discover* magazine in 1989 that

we are not just scientists but human beings as well. And like most people we'd like to see our world a better place, which in this context translates into our working to reduce the risk of potentially disastrous climate change. To do that we have to get some broad-based public support, to capture the public's imagination. That, of course, entails getting loads of media coverage. So we have to offer up scary scenarios, make simplified, dramatic statements, and make little mention of any doubts we might have. . . . Each of us has to decide what the right balance is between being effective and being honest.

Schneider and his ilk got their way. An incredible outlay of money to academic researchers has ensued. And any incentive to write a paper describing the exaggeration of global warming all but disappeared — indeed, the disincentive to publish such a finding became, and remains, strong indeed. And so, APS has no incentive to do anything but flog global warming.

Professor Lewis is, of course, right, and so is Schneider: "We are not just scientist but human beings as well." It is important that the public come to realize this.

People often ask me how to stop the hysteria. It's simple: Stop feeding our addiction. How many of us were once wringing our hands over acid rain? When it finally became obvious that it, too, was real but overhyped

by its proponents, the issue left the public consciousness.

The public can certainly make the same thing happen to global warming. But rest assured that scientists will find something else to worry you over.

P.S.: The next hysteria will be something called “ocean acidification.” Stay tuned.

– Patrick J. Michaels is senior fellow in environmental studies at the Cato Institute and was Virginia State Climatologist from 1980 to 2007.

PERMALINK