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SEARCH

Cato Institute Helpfully Makes Its Fake Climate Report Look Like Actual Government Climate Report, Except Fake

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Remember a few months ago when hilariously titled [fake ripoffs of bestsellers](#) were all over Amazon's e-book store — *35 Shades of Grey*, or *I am the Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, that sort of thing? The playful jokesters of the Cato Institute are using their Koch Industries Megabux to top that! They will soon release a delightful “spoof” of a 2009 US Government report on climate change, except that where the *real* report looks at real science, the fake “Addendum” contains the reassuring news that climate change is no big deal, hooray!

The shrill Marxists at [Scientific American](#) have the story:

The addendum matches the layout and design of the original, published by the U.S. Global Change Research Program: Cover art, “key message” sections, table of contents are all virtually identical, down to the chapter heads, fonts and footnotes....

“It’s not an addendum. It’s a counterfeit,” said John Abraham, an associate professor at the University of Saint Thomas in Minnesota who studies clean power sources. “It’s a continued effort to kick the can down the road: A steady drip, drip, drip of fake reports by false scientists to create a false sense of debate.”

The 2009 report, [available online](#), was prepared for Congress as “the most comprehensive and authoritative report of its kind” by scientists at the U.S. Global Change Research Program, and its findings are regularly updated by that group (spoiler alert: They have not decided they were wrong).

Cato claims its “Addendum” was driven by “the recognition that the original document was lacking in scope and relevant scientific detail.” For instance, the original report suggested that climate change was already having significant effects, and that we should maybe consider doing something about that, because c’mon, *that* can’t be right. And they’ve had a fair degree of success getting that message out, as PBS’s [Frontline recently explored](#).

The unflattering imitations start right on the cover of the Cato version, which has the same font, color, and general design, including even a very scientific looking bar graph with global mean temperatures.

Of course, where the real report has a graph covering 108 years of data, showing a sharp rise over time, the Cato graph covers only the last 19 years, and reassuringly shows a random pattern, and not an upward trend. Stop worrying your little heads, you nervous nellies!

[Climate Science Watch](#) (the source of the illustration above, before our single improvement) details other subtle adjustments in the Cato presentation of climate science. Notably, not even the Cato Institute seems to feel it can get away with outright denial of global warming; now, it admits “Climate change is unequivocal and human activity plays some part in it,” so instead they mostly just downplay the extent and significance of climate change:

- Where the 2009 report says “Global temperature has increased over the past 50 years,” the Cato version says there were two periods of warming in the last century. One was absolutely not due to human activity, and OK, maybe the other “has characteristics that are consistent in part with a changed greenhouse effect.”
- Where the original says, “Climate changes are already affecting water, energy, transportation, agriculture, ecosystems, and health,” the Cato version insists “There is no significant long-term change in US economic output that can be attributed to climate change.”
- The government scientists say that human health will be affected by “heat stress, waterborne diseases, poor air quality, extreme weather events, and diseases transmitted by insects and rodents,” while Cato’s relentless optimists are quite certain that “There is little relationship between life expectancy, wealth and climate. Even under the most dire scenarios, people will be much wealthier and healthier than they are today in the year 2100.”
- The capitalism-hating government report thinks compliance with the Kyoto treaty might slow or reduce global warming. The Libertarians at Cato are certain that cheating by China and India means that nothing the developed world does will have any global effect, so let’s not bother.

So, sure, maybe the Cato version deliberately apes the design, layout, and overall feel of a government report, but is anyone likely to be snowed by these deliberate similarities? One [climate change denial blogger](#) is quite certain that’s impossible, because if readers “can’t read ‘Cato Institute’ clearly printed on the front and back cover, then they

probably aren't capable of reading and interpreting the original report either." We guess that settles it!

Scientific American also notes that this isn't the first attempt by deniers to pass off fake science by making it look like the real thing. In 1998, a petition questioning the science underlying the Kyoto treaty "copied the format and style of a peer-reviewed article" in the very real *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, and in 2009 the Heartland Institute (recently notorious for those "Derp derp the Unabomber believed in global warming" [murder billboards](#)) published a fake-science report by the "Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change" (NIPCC), a denialist group which just happens to sound a hell of a lot like the UN's real science committee, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Considering how much wingnuts [hate evolutionary theory](#), this is a remarkable use of the classic evolutionary strategy of [adaptive mimicry](#). (Even creationist Ray Comfort has tried this, releasing [an abridged edition](#) of *On the Origin of Species* with a [largely-plagiarized](#) 50-page introduction explaining how evolution is fake.)

Rather than simply pointing out and correcting these shams, though, we think it might be more effective to just join in the fun. We look forward to advertising on conservative websites the newest release from Wonkette Books: Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, revised and extended by K. Marx and F. Engels.