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## The National Academy of Blacklists

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### **The National Academy of Sciences creates virtual blacklists of scientists who dare to disagree with ‘the consensus.’**

While most people understand that governmental entities are politicized, there are some we like to think maintain enough integrity to serve the public good. We hope, for example, that the Centers for Disease Control would be free of politicized determinations for what to do about swine flu. And we hope that the Food and Drug Administration were more concerned about whether a drug were beneficial than about how the cost of that drug might influence new healthcare legislation.

One such entity we have relied upon for non-politicized information is the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), which Congress has turned to many times over the years to help work through the ramifications of highly complex issues. Unfortunately, the National Academy seems to have lost its way, and is morphing into a climate-alarm propaganda organ of the U.S. government.

There is no lack of evidence that the NAS has gone off the science reservation and into the government’s pocket. As I pointed out in May, science reporter Seth Borenstein wrote:

Ditching its past cautious tone, the nation’s top scientists urged the government Wednesday to take drastic action to raise the cost of using coal and oil to slow global warming.

The NAS specifically called for a carbon tax on fossil fuels or a cap-and-trade system for curbing greenhouse gas emissions, calling global warming an urgent threat.

The academy, which advises the government on scientific matters, said the nation needs to cut the pollution that causes global warming by about 57 percent to 83 percent by 2050. That’s close to President Obama’s goal.

“We really need to get started right away. It’s not opinion, it’s what the science tells you,”

said Robert Fri, who chaired one of the three panels producing separate climate reports.

But it gets worse. With a recent publication in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), the NAS seems to have comprehensively studied history and decided the proper role model for their institution is...Joseph McCarthy. The NAS has published a new "study" in the PNAS attempting to boost public trust in catastrophic climate predictions, which have been undermined recently by reports of scientific corruption, partisanship, skullduggery, and worse. Specifically, the "study" seeks to marginalize scientists who have dared to dissent from the "consensus" the United Nations (UN) asserts on climate science.

The study, entitled "Expert Credibility in Climate Change," examines the publications and other activities related to climate science and the climate policy of 1,372 climate researchers (me included), then sorts those scholars into two bins. In one bin the researchers placed scholars supposedly "convinced by the evidence" (CE) which led the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to conclude that anthropogenic greenhouse gases have "very likely" been responsible for "most" of the "unequivocal" warming of the Earth's average global temperature in the second half of the twentieth century." In the other bin lie those scholars "unconvinced by the evidence (UE)." One qualifies for the "unconvinced group" by having "signed statements strongly dissenting from the views of the IPCC."

The PNAS study was coauthored by climate-panic rationalizer-in-chief Stephen H. Schneider, the Stanford biologist who famously told Discover Magazine that, in order to prompt action on climate change, "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."

My *personal* objection to the study is that they didn't give me my proper: I'm much more widely published than the PNAS study gives me credit for, and the data they used in judging me doesn't accurately reflect the reality of what I've published, nor in what quantity I've published it (and I'm sure I'm not alone). Granted, I don't fit too readily in the simplistic bins they set up in the study: I'm skeptical of computerized climate models, projections of future climate conditions, and most climate policy prescriptions, but I accept the validity of fundamental greenhouse theory.

But setting aside my personal beef, there are fundamental problems with this study-cum-propaganda-poster, namely, the approach used to create its sample of "unconvinced" scientists, and using Google Scholar to rank the scientists in terms of "expertise" and "prominence."

Let's look at the selection process first. The selection process can be found in the "supporting materials" the PNAS study references, and here is how they describe the process by which they picked the scientists worthy of examination:

We compiled these CE researchers comprehensively (i.e., all names listed) from the following lists: IPCC AR4 Working Group I Contributors (coordinating lead authors, lead authors, and contributing authors; 619 names listed), 2007 Bali Declaration (212 signers listed), Canadian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society (CMOS) 2006 statement (120 names listed), CMOS 2008 statement (130 names listed), and 37 signers of open letter protesting The Great Global Warming Swindle film errors. After removing duplicate names across these lists, we had a total of 903 names.

For UE researchers they relied on 12 lists, ranging from the Science and Environmental 1995 Leipzig Declaration (80 names) to the 2009 newspaper ad by the Cato Institute challenging President Obama's stance on climate change (115 signers), for a total of 472 names.

The lists themselves appear here, and problems are easy to spot. (Readers who access the lists will notice that the list repository itself has issues. They claim to have 15 lists, but a quick count shows 16.) For example, the various lists and petitions used to compile the names of the unconvinced include researchers skeptical of the underlying science as well as those only skeptical of climate policy recommendations. As a result, scholars were categorized as "unconvinced by the evidence" if they had done so much as object to a proposed policy by governments or express lack of agreement with some aspect of the IPCC. That's how, for example, Roger Pielke Sr.—a highly esteemed scientist who believes climate change a potentially catastrophic threat—got thrown into the "unconvinced by the evidence" group.

Or consider the Cato ad mentioned above, of which I was a signatory. That was primarily a policy statement responding to President Obama, who said, "Few challenges facing America and the world are more urgent than combating climate change. The science is beyond dispute and the facts are clear." The Cato advertisement says virtually nothing about the IPCC's verdict on climate science. It simply argues that the signatories were not convinced that the evidence of climate change is *cause for alarm* (which is a subjective judgment). And even by the IPCC's own standards, the science is not "beyond dispute." After all, if the "science was beyond dispute," the IPCC would have said that they were "absolutely certain," rather than that it was only "very likely" that mankind's greenhouse-gas emissions "mostly" caused observed warming.

The Canadian Open Letter to Stephen Harper (2002) was another case of mixed policy and science, but had little relevance to whether one would be convinced or unconvinced about the current IPCC assessment of climate science. The thrust of the open letter (which I signed) was that the scientific evidence of climate change did not warrant adopting greenhouse-gas controls under the Kyoto Protocol.

Another problem with the methods used in collecting scientists' names for the study regards timing. The hunt for the unconvinced uses petitions that date back to 1992, well before the IPCC was making statements suggesting high confidence that humanity was changing the climate. A person's expressed belief about climate science in 1992, based on the data available in 1992, sheds no light at all on whether that person is, today, in the "convinced" or "unconvinced" category as defined by current knowledge. Let's look at a few examples.

The 1992 Statement mixed policy judgment and science assessment, reporting on a 1991 survey of scientists which showed "there is no consensus about the cause of the slight warming observed during the past century." At that time, the IPCC had only published its First Assessment report, which did not come close to matching the most recent levels of confidence the IPCC expresses. In fact, the preface to the report's overview admits that "there are many uncertainties in our predictions particularly with regard to the timing, magnitude and regional patterns of climate change, especially changes in precipitation," and that "these uncertainties are due to our incomplete understanding of sources and sinks of greenhouse gases and the responses of clouds, oceans and polar ice sheets to a change of the radiative forcing caused by increasing greenhouse gas concentrations." Signing a petition in 1992 has little relevance with regard to whether one is "convinced" or "unconvinced" by the data accumulated over the subsequent 18 years (or whether one is still alive, for that matter).

The 1995 Leipzig declaration stated: "There does not exist today a general scientific consensus about the importance of greenhouse warming from rising levels of carbon dioxide. On the contrary, most scientists now accept the fact that actual observations from earth satellites show no climate warming whatsoever." By 1995, the IPCC had only completed its Second Assessment Report, stating that "the balance of evidence suggests a discernible human influence on climate," and also that "there are still many uncertainties." Again, how does signing a petition that evaluates climate science and policy in 1995 allow one to be categorized as "unconvinced" by data that only became available more than a decade later?

Now, let's consider whether Google Scholar is the right way to rank scientists in terms of expertise or prominence. As Lawrence Solomon points out in the National Post, Google Scholar isn't up to the job:

Does Google Scholar really limit itself to scholars? No. Search "Al Gore" on Google Scholar and you will find some 33,200 Scholar hits, almost 10 times as many as obtained by searching "James Hansen," a true scientist and easily the best known of those endorsed by Prall as a bona fide believer. Neither does Google Scholar limit itself to "just the scientific literature." Google Scholar finds articles in newspapers and magazines around the world: 113,000 in the New York Times, 22,000 in Economist, 21,000 in Le Monde, 16,000 in The Guardian.

This latest NAS slide into politicization should send a serious wakeup call. This disease's progression has become clear. A few years ago, the NAS shamelessly defended the thoroughly demolished "hockey stick" graph which claimed to show that current temperatures lack a historical precedent. Early this year, the NAS issued a blatant call for a specific climate policy, going far beyond serving as an objective voice of scientific explication. And now it has allowed a badly flawed study in its flagship publication that effectively creates a blacklist, in order to delegitimize scientists who might disagree with a vague "consensus" position on climate-change science. With such antics, the NAS risks losing its credibility, which is really all it has to offer. Someone needs to publicly clean house at the NAS, washing the institution's hands of public policy pronouncements and renouncing efforts to turn them into a propaganda organ for climate alarmists. The alternative will be declining trust in the NAS, and the further erosion of the public's belief in scientific pronouncements in general.

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***FURTHER READING:*** Green also discusses how creationists are "Creating a Problem for Climate Skeptics" and explores "The Meaning of Motley CRU." He and Aparna Mathur question "A Green Future for Just Pennies a Day?" and with Mark Milke he reveals "One More Thing America Must Learn From Europe." Elsewhere, he explores "Lessons from the Gulf," "The Dangers of Overreacting to the Deepwater Horizon Disaster," and "Does the U.S. Have a Realistic Energy Policy?"

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