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CRU's Climate Tricksters-Context is Everything

Posted By [Myron Ebell](#) On November 21, 2009 @ 3:49 pm In [Blog](#), [Politics](#), [Science](#) | [7 Comments](#)

In the case of the [apparently scandalous leaked e-mails](#) ^[1] from the Climatic Research Unit in England, it's all a matter of getting the context right. That's what Professor Michael E Mann, the fabricator of the celebrated hockey stick graph, told the Washington Post. Here's what he said in [Juliet Eilperin's story today](#) ^[2]:

Michael E. Mann, who directs the Earth System Science Center at Pennsylvania State University, said in a telephone interview from Paris that skeptics "are taking these words totally out of context to make something trivial appear nefarious."

I agree with Professor Mann that the context in which something is written or said or done is always critical. So let's look at the context of a couple of these e-mails. Here's one that looks pretty bad until you understand the context:

From: Ben Santer

To: P.Jones

Subject: Re: CEI formal petition to derail EPA GHG endangerment finding with charge that destruction of CRU raw data undermines integrity of global temperature record

Date: Fri, 09 Oct 2009 11:07:56 -0700

I'm really sorry that you have to go through all this stuff, Phil. Next time I see Pat Michaels at a scientific meeting, I'll be tempted to beat the crap out of him. Very tempted.

Now let's put that in context. Dr. Ben Santer is a researcher at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California. In the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Second Assessment Report (1995), he was the lead author of a chapter and cleverly cut off the early and later years of a dataset, so that the resulting graph would show that global temperatures were only going in one direction in recent years—rapidly upwards. In fact, temperatures were just as high in earlier years and had declined in the most recent years, but that data at both ends was cleverly deleted. This made the graph much easier to understand correctly. So the first bit of context is that Dr. Santer is an outstanding scientist of fine and upstanding character.

The next bit of context is that CEI—the Competitive Enterprise Institute (which is where I work)—had filed a petition with the Environmental Protection Agency to re-open a regulatory decision that greenhouse gas emissions endanger public health and welfare on the basis of an affidavit by Dr. Patrick Michaels of the Cato Institute. Michaels explained that it had recently been revealed that Professor Phil Jones, director of the CRU, had destroyed much of the original raw data he used to compile the global mean temperature record. EPA relied on the CRU global temperature record, but the lack of underlying data means that the CRU record cannot be analyzed or reproduced. That means that EPA must take Professor Jones's work on trust, which of course is standard operating procedure in all good climate research. Dr. Michaels is clearly just being disagreeable. Everyone knows that we can trust Professor Jones's honesty and utter scientific competence.

Now, what is Dr. Santer writing in this e-mail to Professor Jones? Clearly this is the sort of high level scientific communication that ordinary people often can't understand or de-code. It contains the kind of innocent remark that tip-top scientists are always making. And you can see that Dr. Santer is a real wit. I bet Professor Jones couldn't stop laughing. The phrase "beat the crap out of him" is a common pleasantry among this tip-top scientific crowd. It merely means that the next time Dr. Santer runs into Dr. Michaels, he'll be sure to greet him heartily and say something like, "Pat, my dear esteemed colleague, it's so good to see you. Phil and I were just a tiny bit annoyed that you would be so silly as to call attention to the lack of data, but all is forgiven. You know that you can always trust us."

So now that we know the context, we can plainly see that the appearance—that Dr. Santer is a nasty

bully who is too cowardly to say in person to Dr. Michaels what he wrote in an e-mail—is completely misleading. Dr. Santer is transparently a prince of a fellow. Score one for Professor Michael Mann.

Here's another e-mail where the appearance looks bad. You've just got to understand it in context:

From: Phil Jones

To: ray bradley, mann@xxxxx.xxx, mhughes@xxxx.xxx

Subject: Diagram for WMO Statement

Date: Tue, 16 Nov 1999 13:31:15 +0000

Cc: k.briffa@xxx.xx.xx ,t.osborn@xxxx.xxx

Dear Ray, Mike and Malcolm,

Once Tim's got a diagram here we'll send that either later today or first thing tomorrow.

I've just completed Mike's Nature trick of adding in the real temps to each series for the last 20 years (ie from 1981 onwards) and from 1961 for Keith's to hide the decline. Mike's series got the annual land and marine values while the other two got April-Sept for NH land N of 20N. The latter two are real for 1999, while the estimate for 1999 for NH combined is +0.44C wrt 61-90. The Global estimate for 1999 with data through Oct is +0.35C cf. 0.57 for 1998.

Thanks for the comments, Ray.

Cheers

Phil

Now let's quickly put that in context before anyone draws the wrong conclusions. For people who don't know any better, this looks like Professor Phil Jones, director of the CRU, is saying that he has used a "trick" that he got from Professor Michael Mann in order to "hide the decline." First of all, we know that Professor Jones is a man of high integrity (as well as high competence in his field), so he would never do anything dishonest, sneaky, or duplicitous. Second, "trick" is a technical term often employed by the cream of climate scientists. It simply means employing a clever (or "slick") method to accomplish some technical goal (in this case, "to hide the decline"). Anyone can see that "trick" is a much shorter and more elegant way to say that. And you've got to admire the verbal facility of these tip-top scientists. They are as articulate and literate as they are scientifically tip-top.

What is the clever method that Professor Jones learned from Professor Mann? I think he is referring to the way Professor Mann constructed his celebrated hockey stick graph. His proxy records showed flat temperatures for the past thousand years, including the past century. But everyone knows that temperatures have gone up rapidly in the past few decades. That's what the surface temperature record compiled by Professor Jones at CRU shows. And everyone knows that Professor Jones's temperature record is irreproachable, even though he destroyed the raw data. So what Professor Mann did was splice the last few decades of surface temperature records onto his proxy record. Voila!—the hockey stick. Over nine centuries of flat temperatures and then rapid warming in the late twentieth century. What Professor Mann did was simply make sure that ordinary people weren't misled by the proxy data.

What does Professor Jones mean, then, by "to hide the decline"? I'm not sure, but I expect he's just doing what Professor Mann did. He's got some obviously misleading data, which he doesn't want people to see so they won't get confused and draw the wrong conclusion. So he's hiding it for our own good. This just shows what a chivalrous and deeply caring man Professor Jones is.

There you have it. Context is everything. And you've got to hand it to Professor Michael E. Mann. He sure knows his context. Pennsylvania State University can be just as proud of him as the University of East Anglia undoubtedly is of their Climatic Research Unit and its head, Professor Phil Jones.

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URLs in this post:

[1] apparently scandalous leaked e-mails: **<http://www.globalwarming.org/2009/11/20/the-global-warming-alarmist-establishment-bare-naked/>**

[2] Juliet Eilperin's story today: **<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/20/AR2009112004093.html>**

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