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Shocker: Climate scientists are petty, vindictive

Climate-change deniers will make much of **the hacked emails at the University of Anglia** showing global-warming researchers deprecating their opponents and expressing frustration that data show planetary temperatures temporarily declining. Like anybody with a cause, scientists worried about climate change want to press their views as aggressively and persuasively as possible. Can't wait to see the image of (presumably) Pat Michaels and other skeptics stranded on an iceberg after the polar caps have melted. Couldn't find it on the Web so far.

For example, in one of **the emails**, not cited in the New York Times piece referenced above, Michael Mann, then at the University of Virginia, now at Penn State, says "we need to cover our behinds on what was done here, lest we be vulnerable to the snipings of the Idsos and co (i.e., that non-climatic influences on recent growth were nominally dealt w/, as in MBH99)." (Craig Idso and his relatives run the **Center for the Study of Carbon Dioxide and Global Change**, which says: "Tired of alarmist global warming propaganda?")

To put this in a fair light, we should have somebody hack the deniers' emails. Of course their correspondence would show only honest and faithful guidance by the data, wherever it might lead, and dignified respect for their opponents!

Climate change is not a continuous upward curve. If temperatures showed a long, unbroken upward slope, that really would be proof of a conspiracy. There are fluctuations. Sometimes temperatures go down for a year or few, which gives fodder to the talk radio blabbers. For climate scientists to be frustrated that this hurts the case for political action against climate change is natural.

The Times piece gives Michaels a \$10 quote up high in the story. "This is not a smoking gun; this is a mushroom cloud," he tells the Times's Andrew Revkin. But what he seems to be saying, as becomes apparent lower down, is not that it's a mushroom cloud indicating climate change is a hoax. It's an alleged mushroom cloud about academic protocols, an "effort to block the release of data for independent review." At first, Michaels thought, the emails just showed "this is the way scientists talk."

Trying to draw any conclusion from imperfect data often produces a sales job from those pushing one course of action or another. But that doesn't change reality. There is a scientific consensus that humans are changing the planet's climate. The emails' disclosure does nothing to change that. The effects of global warming are uncertain, but they represent a huge risk to future generations. To ignore that risk, to do nothing, would be the real outrage.