

Matt Yglesias

Today at 11:27 am

A Conspiracy So Vast...



I don't have a great deal to say about the [alleged scandal](#) revealed by emails stolen from the University of East Anglia's Climate Research Unit. Anyone who's [read their Kuhn](#) will know that there's some politicking in science, particularly regarding scientific issues that have important political implications, but the fact of the matter is that the natural sciences and the institutions associated with them have been enormously successful in expanding humanity's capabilities. And they are telling us quite clearly that human activity is creating higher-and-higher concentrations of atmospheric greenhouse gases and this higher gas concentrations are driving problematic shifts in the global climate.

What I wonder for those, like Senator James Inhof and Cato Institute Vice President Roger Pilon, who [seem to think](#) these emails prove the existence of a nefarious conspiracy to defraud the public about the evidence for anthropogenic climate change is what's the *purpose* of this conspiracy? You can see why, having decided that he really wants to pass a clean energy bill, John Kerry might be well-motivated to fudge the facts around the edges about various things. But what's the upside for Kerry in taking this issue up in the first place? Or Barbara Boxer or Henry Waxman? How is it that the government of China, which is clearly reluctant to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, doesn't seem to have any qualms with this science? Maybe political parties from across the spectrum in France endorse consensus climate science because they're under the influence of the nuclear energy industry, but why does this political consensus extend to the U.K. and all across continental Europe? Are David Cameron and Angela Merkel in the grips of growth-hating socialist ideology? And what about the scientists themselves? Where's the upside? Normally to posit a giant conspiracy you need some plausible account of the motives.

It shouldn't take a genius to note that opposition to the scientific consensus is extremely concentrated among political movements with strong ties to the coal and oil industry. You can easily see where the upside is for *them* in getting this wrong. But adopting the view that the IPCC is correct really is "inconvenient" from a political point of view. Indeed, even political leaders who accept the basic outline of this climate consensus rarely actually argue in favor of reductions that are sufficiently sweeping to meet IPCC guidelines specifically because doing so is so politically problematic. This just isn't a "good issue" to take on. But it happens to be a real problem and so, reluctantly, leaders around the world are trying to take it on.

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Filed under: [climate](#), [Energy](#),

62 Responses to “A Conspiracy So Vast...”

1. *JM* Says:

[November 30th, 2009 at 11:30 am](#)

what’s the purpose of this conspiracy?

Judging by the chatter among those dim enough to think there’s a there there with the CRU emails, it seems to be assumed that AGW is a hoax, used by “Marxists” to take over the world.

Specifics are scarce.

2. *lgm* Says:

[November 30th, 2009 at 11:35 am](#)

I’ve read enough conservative blogs to answer your question about motives. Some say global warming projects are pork for people like Al Gore, who have invested in green technology. Some say that the real agenda is to slow economic growth, or maybe to show growth of the developed world in the interest of China (and India?). Climate scientists are said to be agents of foreign powers trying to weaken America.

You can find this on an ongoing basis at [MichelleMalkin.com](#).

3. *Paulie Carbone* Says:

[November 30th, 2009 at 11:36 am](#)

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This is more irrelevant name dropping by MY. I’ve read *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* and it has nothing to do with this. The rest of the post is just science=good, which I agree with, but didn’t need to be reminded of.

4. *Alan* Says:

[November 30th, 2009 at 11:36 am](#)

Marxist? It looks like the battle of corporatists.

Speaking of wind farms, this relates to Faiz’s TP post over the weekend. I didn’t have to root through e-mails, just SEC filings:

*General Wesley Clark sits on five corporate boards, including **Juhl Wind, Inc.**, a wind farm*