

Global Warming - science or politics?

As expected, the new "Global Warming" report is starting to show its fangs.

While the full report will not be available for months, the "executive summary" is starting to leak out. Among other things, it proclaims:

It is "very likely" (defined as 90% or more) that human activity is the cause of "global warming" to some degree. Of course the "to some degree" is not defined (is it 1%? 2%? 10% of the warming? 100%? Hmmmmm

- If we don't "do something" about it, sea levels will rise catastrophically and so will surface temperature averages - perhaps as much as 10 degrees Fahrenheit.
- If we do "do something" about it, we will still see dramatic sea level and temperature rises, but they may not be catastrophic. Or they might be anyway.

"The worst" is being billed as more than 1 million people dead and hundreds of billions of dollars in cost by 2100.

It is, indeed, now pretty much accepted science that the climate is warming. What's not settled, however, is *why* the climate is warming, nor whether we can do anything about it.

The report blames man-made emissions, but there the science is simply not present to the degree it's sold. For example, look around for scientific data on how much carbon dioxide is released from natural sources (that is, not under our control) every year. I've done this research, and I've found figures that differ by *two orders of magnitude* (that is, by more than 100 times!) Ditto for the figures on "man made" releases!

When you combine the limits of error on both of these figures, you find that on a scientific basis there is more than a 10,000:1 range on the **percentage** of CO₂ that man releases into the atmosphere! And that's just CO₂ - then we have to talk about Methane (which is also a greenhouse gas), with nearly all of that release being "natural" (think "cow farts"). When we start including other than CO₂ in the computations we have severe problems because it is known, for example, that some ice packs trap huge amounts of methane gas, and thus as they melt that gas is released.

The report all sounds awful and a poster child for "immediate action", but one needs to step back a bit before we all close our garage doors, turn off our lights, and hunker down under a blanket. In short, we should challenge the science - because by definition, there is no such thing as "consensus" when true science is involved. That all these scientists are claiming "consensus" means that what we have instead is politics - by scientists.

First, let us deal with the experimental uncertainty. We know, for example, that there was a period of time known as the "Medieval Warm Period" from 800-1300 AD, and that this period largely coincides with the Medieval Solar Maximum (1100-1250AD.) While there is argument over whether the climate elements of the MWP were global in nature (we seem to have some problem with western-nation sort of records in large parts of the world for that period - big surprise, right?) what is known is that there is both written (by the Vikings) and archaeological evidence that **grapes** were being grown in Greenland. The Vikings took advantage of the ice-free seas in the the North Atlantic to colonize Greenland and other outlying lands. Radiocarbon dating has shown that peak sea temperatures of about 1C warmer than today during the MWP, and there is solid archaeological evidence that the MWP reached as far as Japan.

This period was followed by what is known as the "Little Ice Age" (LIA) from roughly 1400 to 1850 or thereabouts.

And of course, today we have another warming period.

But... were human-caused carbon emissions responsible for the MWP and LIA? Of course not. In fact, the correlation is with solar activity.

This should not be a surprise. After all, our planet gains most of its natural energy from the Sun. It is through either fortune or God (depending on your beliefs) that our planet finds itself orbiting at a fairly stable distance from a sun with a reasonably-stable energy output that happens to be conducive to life.

And, it appears, there really is a solar flux issue at play here (<http://www.nasa.gov/centers/goddard/news/topstory/2003/0313irradiance.html>) - one that is being ignored by the climate change politics folks. Yet if the Sun is the primary mover of climate change, there is, of course, nothing we can do to change it.

Does this mean that we should ignore the issue? No. That the climate is changing is a given - the climate of the earth is **always** in flux. We should - indeed, we must - take note of the changes that occur, the cyclic alterations over time that inexorably will affect us.

But let's assume that the so-called "science" is right - that there really IS a human component to Global Warming, and that we can influence that component.

Well, that would seem to indicate that the United States should take the lead. After all, we're the biggest polluter, right?

Not so fast.

While the US produces more CO₂ today than anyone else, this ignores the *trends* in CO₂ production. Within just a few short years China will produce more CO₂ than we do today. Yet they, along with India and other developing nations, were intentionally omitted from the last go-around on CO₂ emissions!

Clearly, if man is going to act, we need to agree on a few basic principles:

We must also determine what percentage of the increase is due to a loss of sequestration capability, and where that loss is taking place. That is, when you cut down a forest for lumber and do not replace it with new saplings, you remove CO₂ absorption capability. If I release one ton of CO₂, so long as I add one ton of CO₂ sequestration capability over the time I release the ton of CO₂, my actions are net neutral and have no effect on climate.

- *We must first determine what percentage of the total change underway is due to the actions of man. To do this we must know what percentage of greenhouse gas releases are due to human activity, we must exempt "renewable" releases (that is, if you grow a plant in a year and then burn it, you have released no net CO₂ - the CO₂ was taken up and sequestered into the carbon you burned; conversely, if you burn a gallon of oil, you have released CO₂ that was sequestered millions of years ago and thus there is a net release.) Today, we do not know how much CO₂ is naturally released nor how much is man-made. Without these figures we cannot determine what percentage of the issue is due to our releases.*
- *These figures must be determined within reasonable scientific levels of accuracy and reported with scientific levels of uncertainty. A figure without an uncertainty must be categorically rejected. Without uncertainties, we cannot determine the accuracy of any predictions made.*

Once we have this data, we can then act. *It is entirely possible, and indeed more than somewhat likely, that we will discover that man's component in global warming is mostly coming from deforestation rather than*

CO2 emissions, and that cutting CO2 emissions will be entirely ineffective!

Let's say, for example, that we find that man creates 5% (+/- 1%) of the global CO2 emissions on an annual basis. Yet we also find that in the last 30 years, we have destroyed (through deforestation and "paving the world") 10% of the total CO2 sequestration capability of the planet.

The consequence of this finding would be that *even if we were to reduce our human emissions of CO2 to zero - which we obviously cannot achieve - we would STILL have a net warming effect!*

With this data we can then determine what action - if any - needs to be taken on both carbon sequestration and emissions. Those who have deforested (or de-greened) the planet will need to be called upon to re-green in proportion to their "contribution." Likewise, those who are emitting the CO2 must be called upon to curtail it. In no case may we exempt any nation from their obligation in this regard, and we must refuse - as a nation - to go along with any proposal that gives any of the participants a "pass".

It is, however, entirely possible that we will find that indeed man is responsible for some of the warming that is taking place, but that this contribution is extremely small - say, 5%. That is, if the global temperature is due to rise by 10 degrees F in the next 100 years, we are responsible for only 0.5F of that rise! Thus, were we to completely cut off CO2 emissions, we'd STILL see a 9.5F rise in temperature. Obviously, if this is the case, then the data does not support taking any sort of drastic action *at this time*.

The problem with the current political-speak coming from these so-called "scientists" is that it contains no real data and no ranges of uncertainty on their alleged measurements.

That's not science folks - its politics - and we must, as a nation and people, refuse to be cowed by bald claims without the presence of facts behind them.

Labels: [global warming](#), [politics](#), [science](#)

Posted by Karl Denninger at 13:29

I felt your overview was well stated. As a retired chemist from 35 years of service with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency I feel you have nailed the logic of the scientific arguments perfectly. Your simple plea to quantitate the human contribution to global warming in relation to natural forces and to report the numbers along with their scientific uncertainty factors is paramount. Thanks for showing there is at least one other person out there with their head screwed on straight. Anonymous on Feb 3 2007, 23:38