

The James Hansen Crusade Against Fossil Fuels

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Dr. James Hansen, chief of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS) in New York City, came to Washington on June 18 at the invitation of Congressman Ed Markey (D-Mass) to recreate his famous testimony of the hot, drought-stricken summer of 1988. In this testimony, presided over by Senator Tim Wirth, he had claimed, with 99 percent certainty, that global warming (GW) was manmade; it had a lot to do with starting the craze of climate catastrophism. At that time, Hansen predicted huge temperature increases and apocalyptic consequences, such as sea level rise and catastrophic weather events, unless we stopped burning fossil fuels to generate energy.

It was this hype that led me, first to publish an op-ed article in the Wall Street Journal, then a more detailed article (with oceanographer Roger Revelle and energy expert Chauncey Starr), and finally to studies which concluded that climate change was caused by natural forces rather than by man's emission of greenhouse gases.

Twenty years later, we find that temperatures have hardly increased -- in fact they have been falling in the last ten years -- and that sea level is nowhere near the levels predicted. None of this has diminished Hansen's stature as a "prophet" to "true believers" in GW. The acolytes of Al Gore consider Hansen to be the oracle of climate science and have adopted his views uncritically. He himself has not wavered; he now claims certainty "exceeding 99 percent."

But Hansen has become delusional and this has affected his science adversely. He is possessed by the idea of a "tipping point" -- an irreversible change in climate. He is also completely out of step with the "mainstream," defined as the UN-sponsored group of climate experts, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), who also assert that the cause of climate change is mostly human. Hansen is certainly in complete disagreement with the growing number of "climate skeptics," who believe that the cause is mostly natural.

Some examples will suffice. Last year, Hansen's group forced to revise published temperature data after a Canadian statistician discovered a fundamental error in their analysis. Now, the warmest years in the US occurred back in 1934 rather than around 1998. In a 2005 research paper analyzing records of ocean temperatures and in press releases, Hansen confidently trumpeted his discovery of a "smoking gun" for anthropogenic GW (AGW). That claim proved to be quite wrong; to make matters even worse, ocean temperatures then stopped increasing. It is significant that the UN-IPCC does not cite Hansen's analysis to support their claim of AGW.

In turn, Hansen considers the IPCC as too conservative. His estimate for sea level rise of 20 feet per century [NY Review of Books, July 13, 2006] is about 20 times the value given by the IPCC 2007 report. In my view, the IPCC may have overestimated by a factor of 2 to 3, putting Hansen very far out on the limb. Needless to say, Al Gore dutifully echoes Hansen's wild predictions and adds the scary graphics that show wide-scale inundations. Gore does not delve into the unrealistic assumptions that Hansen uses to arrive at such values: that the Greenland ice cap will simply slide into the ocean and melt almost instantly. But evidence published by Dutch glaciologist van de Wal (*Science* July 2008) undermines Hansen's case.

We also have the historic record to draw on. Greenland temperatures 1000 years ago were warmer than today's -- and much warmer during the 'Holocene Optimum' of 8000 -- 5000 years BP (before present) (Dahl-Jensen et al, *Science* 1998). The ice cap did not disappear and data from corals show no unusual rise in global sea level -- just the same steady rise of 18 cm per century that's been measured during the past 3000 years

A group of some 30 climate experts from 16 nations, organized as the Non-Governmental International Panel on Climate Change (NIPCC) has reviewed the evidence used by the IPCC and arrives at a contrary conclusion: namely, that the modest warmings observed in the last 100 years (as well as the coolings) are due primarily to natural causes rather than to human-generated greenhouse gases. Needless to say the

NIPCC disagrees even more strongly with the scary estimates produced by James Hansen. (see “Nature – Not Human Activity – Rules the Climate” http://www.sepp.org/publications/NIPCC_final.pdf)

It has become impossible to carry on a scientific discussion with Hansen. His belief in climate catastrophes has reached a religious fervor; he sees himself as a lone figure, “muzzled” by evil forces, while “crying in the wilderness.” In his appearance in Washington last month he called for oil executives to be tried for “high crimes against humanity and nature.” It is Hansen, and people like him who are spreading disinformation by demonizing carbon dioxide, an innocuous gas and natural component of the atmosphere.

Strangely, we support his suggestion for a trial because it would allow the whole matter to be brought into a court of law where evidence has to be produced and cross-examination is permitted. This may be the only way to stop the climate alarmism and quasi-religious movement of which Hansen has been a prime instigator.

Atmospheric physicist S. Fred Singer is Professor Emeritus of Environmental Sciences at the University of Virginia and former director of the US Weather Satellite Service. His most recent book “Unstoppable Global Warming – Every 1500 Years” (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007) presents the evidence for natural climate cycles of warming and cooling and became a NY Times best-seller. He is the organizer of NIPCC (Non-governmental International Panel on Climate Change) and editor of the NIPCC Report “Nature, Not Human Activity, Controls the Climate” [2008], which responds to the claims of the UN-IPCC. http://www.sepp.org/publications/NIPCC_final.pdf As a reviewer of IPCC reports, he shares the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with Al Gore.

The respected French newspaper *Le Monde* (June 26, 2008) discusses Hansen’s Washington’s statements and refers to him as “l’alarmiste en chef.” By contrast, the Italian newspaper *Il Giornale* (June 19, 2008) refers to me as “il re degli anticatastrofisti”

Hansen quote (June 2008): “Now, as then, I can assert that these conclusions have a certainty exceeding ninety-nine per cent.”