

## The Second-string 'Hockey Team'

The ongoing battle over Global Warming with Western Washington University geology professors has been fascinating for what it reveals about second tier supporters of the apocalypse who have backgrounds in science but not in climate science. These are not the knowledgeable first string players on the 'Hockey Team,' working together to manipulate climate data and keep opponents from challenging them in the scientific journals, as Climategate revealed. There are no Michael Manns, no Phil Jones, no Gavin Schmidts, and no James Hansens here. These are the Inspector Clouseaus of the climate clique, the suave but hopeless practitioners of bumbling politicized science.

What distinguishes them from the Great Global Warming Guru James Hansen? The most obvious thing about Hansen is that he can discuss a wide range of topics related to Global Warming and display considerable scientific insight. He does not resort to popular political tactics based on consensus, authority, or belief.

For instance, he and I agree about the lack of global warming for more than a decade, about Milankovitch cycles, nuclear power, and radiation safety. He even uses a temperature reconstruction of this Holocene interglacial period similar to what I prefer. It shows the gradual average temperature decline over the last few thousand years as we sink toward the next ice age. We also agree that ethanol-based motor fuel is a carbon reduction scam that needs to be abandoned. I chuckled with him about the difficulties he must face coming from Iowa where government-subsidized corn ethanol is very popular among those making money from it.

Had we gotten into a detailed discussion of carbon dioxide, we would have disagreed substantially. But that would have involved questions of 'climate sensitivity' where he is completely aware of the need to invoke an amplification from water vapor, because CO<sub>2</sub> alone lacks sufficient horsepower. Perhaps it was the wine or the fact that we are both astrophysicists that kept things constructive. Clearly, neither of us wanted to fall into the black hole of scientific nonsense, even though our disagreements about a climate catastrophe are profound.

The Professor Clouseaus from WWU are a world apart. Gone is the congenial atmosphere and discussion among colleagues where the objective is to find common ground before addressing difficult questions. These professors are going for a knockout blow against 'deniers' whom they equate with cranks. Emeritus Professor of Geology Don Easterbrook was their lone crank, until I came along. Then there were two! When I pointed out that many well-known physicists have views similar to mine, they supposed that physicists do not understand the complexities of climate, as they do. "FINE," I said, "Show me!" "Let's have a seminar at WWU." That precipitated panic and retreat with a helpful twist. One professor admitted to an insufficient knowledge of climate science to argue with me.

But just as one blunder after another never discouraged Peter Sellers in the Pink Panther, Professor Clouseau (played in this case by Dave Hirsch) was sure that 'consensus' is the way we properly do things in science. Oh, really?

The geological establishment has been famous for clinging to the majority opinion even when it is no longer scientifically viable and consequently being wrong time after time. One prominent example involves J. Harlen Bretz, once a high school biology teacher from Seattle, who proposed that the unusual geology of Eastern Washington was caused by catastrophic floods from an ice age lake in

Montana and not by gradual erosion over millions of years. He spectacularly prevailed over the 'consensus' with convincing logic and evidence. Similarly, the concept of 'continental drift' overcame stiff establishment resistance to become the present paradigm.

In 1905 a little Jewish man who was but a clerk in a patent office challenged the perception that Classical Physics was 'settled.' He recognized that the two hundred year old theory of Newtonian Mechanics had to be significantly modified to keep Maxwell's equations unchanged in a moving frame. Although popular opinion quickly embraced Albert Einstein, he was content to wait decades for the necessary physical evidence to back up his new concepts of space, time, and gravity. To no surprise, Einstein understood how science works.

The Professor Clouseaus at WWU fall flat with their attempts to short circuit the scientific method using 'consensus.' If they want to legitimately participate in climate discussions, they should learn something about this topic and discuss it with their peers, including physicists. Although many scientists seek assistance in understanding complex topics by consulting the most informed among us (like Don Easterbrook), the bottom line still comes down to the best 'logic and evidence.' All else is a sideshow.

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