

## ***Why Bringing Sanity Back on Climate Change Won't Be Easy***

We are seeing increasing stories during the last year in the news about cold and snow and the global data bases based on satellite and station and ocean data suggest temperatures have leveled off over the last decade. These facts even have the IPCC head Dr. Rajendra Pachauri questioning whether natural forces are at least temporarily offsetting greenhouse forcing.

The media and most alarmists have largely ignored these facts or attributed them to a temporary decrease in sunspot numbers or La Ninas, factors they scoffed at before or in the case of La Nina would admit only to regional importance.

This conflicting data is bringing an uncomfortable feeling among many believers, what is called a cognitive dissonance, but most all are able to shake it off. Some work over five decades ago by Leon Festinger, a social psychologist helps explain how they can do that and why we may not see a widespread rapid return to sanity on global climate change even as evidence mounts the prevailing greenhouse theories are flawed and global warming has ceased and climate change may be largely due to natural variability.

### ***Cognitive Dissonance***

Cognitive dissonance is a theory of human motivation that asserts that it is psychologically uncomfortable to hold contradictory cognitions or beliefs. This theory was first explored in detail by Festinger in 1957.

He argued that there are three ways to deal with cognitive dissonance. He did not consider these mutually exclusive.

1. One may try to change one or more of the beliefs, opinions, or behaviors involved in the dissonance;
2. One may try to acquire new information or beliefs that will increase the existing consonance and thus cause the total dissonance to be reduced; or,
3. One may try to forget or reduce the importance of those new cognitions that are in a dissonant relationship

This evolved out of his book "When Prophecies Fail" in 1956, in which he notes:

"A man with conviction is a hard man to change. Tell him you disagree and he turns away. Show him facts and figures and he questions your sources. Appeal to logic and he fails to see your point.

We have all experienced the futility of trying to change a strong conviction, especially if the convinced person has some investment in his belief. We are familiar with the variety of ingenious defenses with which people protect their convictions, managing to keep them unscathed through the most devastating attacks.

But man's resourcefulness goes beyond simply protecting a belief. Suppose an individual believes something with his whole heart; suppose further that he has a commitment to this belief, that has irrevocable actions because of it; finally suppose that he is presented with evidence, unequivocal and undeniable evidence, that his belief is wrong: what will happen? The individual will frequently emerge, not only unshaken, but even more convinced of the truth of his beliefs than ever before. Indeed he may even show a new fervor about convincing and converting others to his view.

Let us begin by stating the conditions under which we would expect to observe increased fervor following the disconfirmation of a belief. There are five such conditions:

(1) The belief must be held with deep conviction and must have some relevance to action, that is, to what the believer does or how he behaves

(2) The person holding the belief must have committed himself to it; that is, for the sake of his belief, he must have taken some important action that is difficult to undo. In general, the more important such actions are and the more difficult they are to undo, the greater is the individual's commitment to the belief

(3) The belief must be sufficiently specific and sufficiently concerned with the real world so that events may unequivocally refute the belief.

(4) Such undeniable disconfirmatory evidence must occur and must be recognized by the individual holding that belief.

The first two conditions specify the circumstances that make the belief resistant to change. The third and fourth conditions together, on the other hand point to factors that would exert a powerful pressure on the believer to discard the belief. It is, of course, possible that an individual, even though deeply convinced of a belief, may discard it in the face of unequivocal disconfirmation. We must therefore state a fifth condition specifying the circumstances under which the belief will be discarded and those under which it will be maintained with new fervor.

(5) The individual believer must have social support. It is unlikely that one isolated believer could withstand the kind of disconfirming evidence we have specified. If, however, the believer is a member of a group of convinced persons who can support one another, we would expect the belief to be maintained and the believers to attempt to proselyte or persuade non-members that the belief is correct.”

Today there is a huge ‘social support’ group of grant toting modelers and researchers, agenda driven or ratings driven journalists, environmentalists and corporations that have realized green is their favorite color and see this as a way to keep green paper flowing into their coffers and pockets, farmers who are benefiting from the misplaced focus on alternative fuel from crops which has sent the cost for their crops to record levels, traders and major market firms licking their chops at the prospects of big time money from carbon trading, big oil and alternative energy companies that has realized this is the

vector to bigger profits and the politicians and political activists who see it as a way to accomplish ulterior goals about changing society and increasing their powerbase.

It will only be after the public realizes they have been snookered that the situation may turn on them. We can only hope the damage done is not great and irreparable when that day comes.