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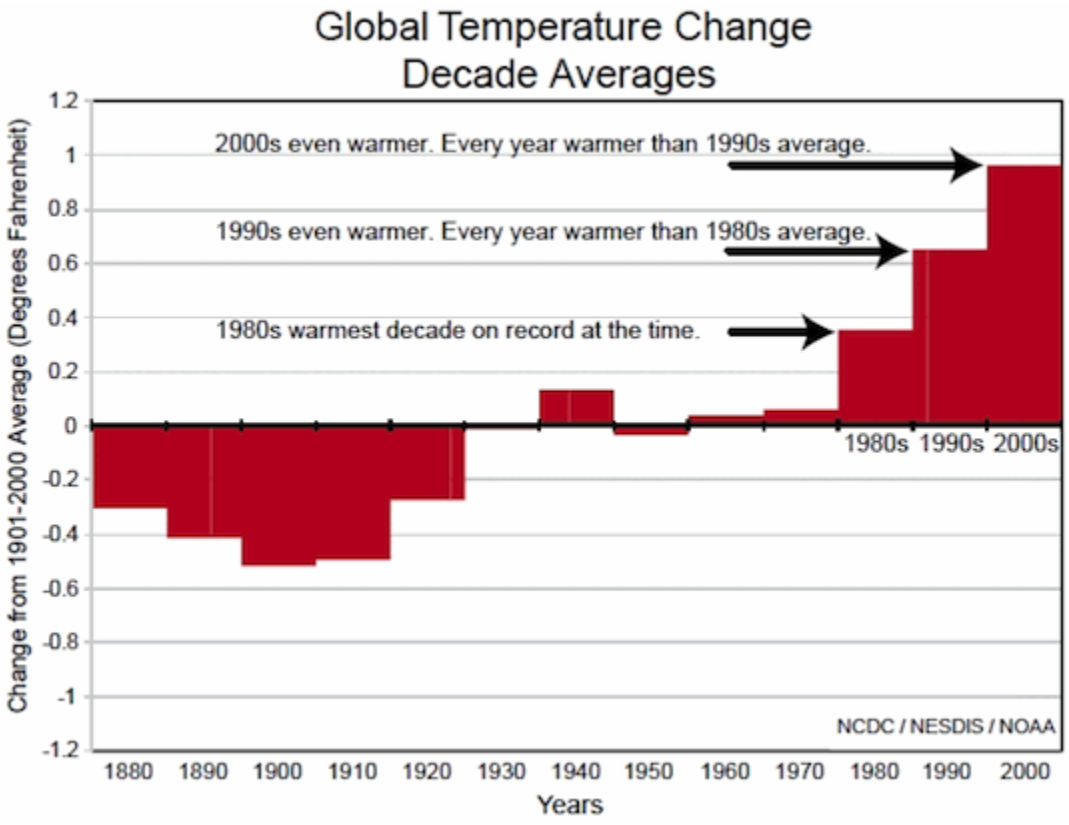
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Panic Attack: Murdoch's Wall Street Journal Finds 16 Scientists to Push Pollutocrat Agenda With Long-Debunked Climate Lies

oe Romm on Jan 29, 2012 at 12:33 pm



A lot of folks have asked me to debunk the recent anti-truthful *Wall Street Journal* article with the counterfactual headline, "No Need to Panic About Global Warming." I'll combine my debunking with the rapidly growing list of debunkings from scientists and others. And I'll update this as new debunkings come in.

That the *WSJ* would publish an amateurish collection of falsehoods and half truths is no surprise. The entire global Murdoch enterprise is designed to advance the pollutocrat do-nothing agenda (see [Scientist: "The Murdoch Media Empire Has Cost Humanity Perhaps One or Two Decades in Battle Against Climate Change"](#)). As National Academy of Sciences member Peter Gleick explains in his evisceration of the piece, "[Remarkable Editorial Bias on Climate Science at the Wall Street Journal](#)":

But the most amazing and telling evidence of the bias of the *Wall Street Journal* in this field is the fact that 255 members of the United States National Academy of Sciences wrote a comparable (but scientifically accurate) essay on the realities of climate change and on the need

for improved and serious public debate around the issue, offered it to the *Wall Street Journal*, and were turned down. The National Academy of Sciences is the nation's pre-eminent independent scientific organizations. Its members are among the most respected in the world in their fields. Yet the Journal wouldn't publish this letter, from more than 15 times as many top scientists. Instead they chose to publish an error-filled and misleading piece on climate because some so-called experts aligned with their bias signed it. This may be good politics for them, but it is bad science and it is bad for the nation.

Science magazine – perhaps the nation's most important journal on scientific issues – published the letter from the NAS members after the Journal turned it down.

A tad more surprising is that 16 admittedly non-leading scientists would choose to soil their reputations by stringing together a collection of long-debunked falsehoods. What is surprising is that these falsehoods are more easily debunked than the typical disinformers clap-trap because they are so out-of-date!

Guys, if you're going to push disinformation, you have to do better than this:

Perhaps the most inconvenient fact is the lack of global warming for well over 10 years now. This is known to the warming establishment, as one can see from the 2009 "Climategate" email of climate scientist Kevin Trenberth: "The fact is that we can't account for the lack of warming at the moment and it is a travesty that we can't"....

The lack of warming for more than a decade—indeed, the smaller-than-predicted warming over the 22 years since the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) began issuing projections—suggests that computer models have greatly exaggerated how much warming additional CO2 can cause.

Well, as the chart above shows, the last 10 years were easily the hottest on record. As the Union of Concerned Scientists debunking notes, "2011 was the 35th year in a row in which global temperatures were above the historical average and 2010 and 2005 were the warmest years on record." Doh!

And apparently these guys missed the news that last year's Koch-Funded and Skeptic-Led Study Finds Recent Warming "On the High End" and Speeding Up. The Berkeley Earth Surface Temperature Study (BEST) concluded:

... we find that **the global land mean temperature has increased by 0.911 ± 0.042 C since the 1950s**.... our analysis suggests a degree of global land-surface warming during the anthropogenic era that is consistent with prior work (e.g. NOAA) **but on the high end of the existing range of reconstruction.**

Double Doh!

Then again, what do you expect from a list of 16 scientists that include:

- **Richard Lindzen**, one of the most debunked climate scientists in the world (see Lindzen debunked again: New scientific study finds his paper downplaying dangers of human-caused warming is "seriously in error": Trenberth: The flaws in Lindzen-Choi paper "have all the appearance of the authors having contrived to get the answer they got"). See also Kerry Emanuel slams media, asserts Lindzen charge in Boston Globe is "pure fabrication."
- **William Happer**, physicist, Chairman of the Board of a leading disinformers think-tank George Marshall

Institute, heavily funded by Exxon Mobil and other anti-science funders.

- **Roger Cohen**, Former manager for Strategic Planning and Programs ExxonMobil Corporation, now a George Marshall Institute 'expert'.
- **Harrison H. Schmitt**, geologist and astronaut, who believes enviros and climate scientists like Holdren are communists.

This gang that couldn't shoot straight assert "it is likely that more CO2 and the modest warming that may come with it will be an overall benefit to the planet." In fact, as Fatih Birol, the chief economist for the International Energy Agency explained last year, the world is on pace for 11°F warming, and "Even School Children Know This Will Have Catastrophic Implications for All of Us."

Yes, even school children know more than these guys!

They utterly misrepresent the work of serious climatologists like Kevin Trenberth. Anybody who is actually paying attention to real science knows Trenberth explained 2 years ago that the way the disinformers were quoting him was nonsense, and they know recent analysis has done a good job of identifying where the "missing" warming went — the deep oceans (see my 9/11 post "Hottest Decade on Record Would Have Been Even Hotter But for Deep Oceans — Accelerated Warming May Be On Its Way"). Let's go through this one more time.

As Trenberth explained back in 2009, we have a vast amount of evidence that "global warming is continuing":

But Trenberth, who acknowledged the e-mail is genuine, says bloggers are missing the point he's making in the e-mail by not reading the article cited in it. That article — An Imperative for Climate Change Planning (.pdf) — actually says that global warming is continuing, despite random temperature variations that would seem to suggest otherwise.

"It says we don't have an observing system adequate to track it, but there are all other kinds of signs aside from global mean temperatures — including melting of Arctic sea ice and rising sea levels and a lot of other indicators — that global warming is continuing," he says.

In the paper, Trenberth posited the very recent surface temperature data might not be keeping up with the other data showing global warming because of a variety of reasons, most significantly "Was it because the heat was buried in the ocean and sequestered, perhaps well below the surface?" The answer to that appears to be "yes."

The key point from recent observation is that whatever slight slowing in global warming some groups may have observed in the past decade, it was primarily in the surface temperature data set. The oceans kept warming (see "Sorry Deniers, the Oceans are Still Warming as Predicted");

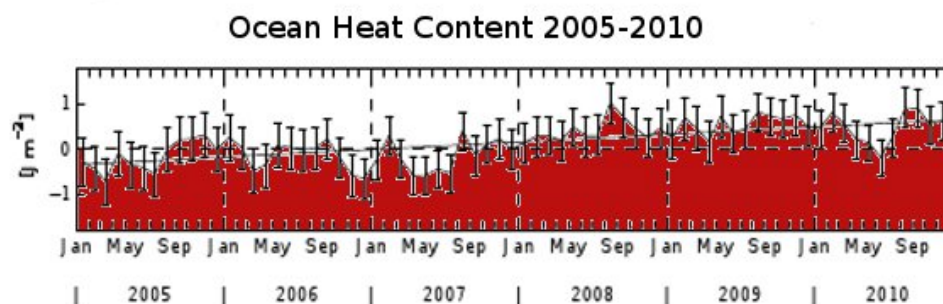


Figure 1: Revised estimate of global ocean heat content (10-1500 mtrs deep) for 2005-2010 derived from Argo measurements. The 6-yr trend accounts for $0.55 \pm 0.10 \text{ Wm}^{-2}$. Error bars and

trend uncertainties exclude errors induced by remaining systematic errors in the global observing system. See Von Schuckmann & Le Traon (2011). Via [Skeptical Science](#).

It is worth adding that Trenberth signed the [Must Read Bali Climate Declaration by Leading Scientists](#), which opens:

The 2007 IPCC report, compiled by several hundred climate scientists, has unequivocally concluded that our climate is warming rapidly, and that we are now at least 90% certain that this is mostly due to human activities. The amount of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere now far exceeds the natural range of the past 650,000 years, and it is rising very quickly due to human activity. If this trend is not halted soon, many millions of people will be at risk from extreme events such as heat waves, drought, floods and storms, our coasts and cities will be threatened by rising sea levels, and many ecosystems, plants and animal species will be in serious danger of extinction.

One can only dream that we lived in a world where that important declaration by more than 200 of the world's leading climate scientists would get more attention than either stolen emails or the silly sixteen.

The thing about these 16 scientists, the overwhelming majority of whom have no background whatsoever in climate science, is that because they don't know the scientific literature, they are forced to cling to out-of-date claptrap:

In 2003, Dr. Chris de Freitas, the editor of the journal *Climate Research*, dared to publish a peer-reviewed article with the politically incorrect (but factually correct) conclusion that the recent warming is not unusual in the context of climate changes over the past thousand years.

A nine-year-old paper? Really guys? If you want to know about de Freitas, DeSmogBlog has a great piece, ["Skeptics Prefer Pal Review Over Peer Review: Chris de Freitas, Pat Michaels And Their Pals, 1997-2003."](#)

But the key point is that in the past 9 years, there has been a National Academy of Sciences review of the literature and over a dozen independent studies making clear that "Recent global warming is unprecedented in magnitude and speed and cause." Here are a few:

1. *GRL*: **"We conclude that the 20th century warming of the incoming intermediate North Atlantic water has had no equivalent during the last thousand years."**
2. *JGR*: **"The last decades of the past millennium are characterized again by warm temperatures that seem to be unprecedented in the context of the last 1600 years."**
3. [Unprecedented warming in Lake Tanganyika and its impact on humanity](#) (2010)
4. [Human-caused Arctic warming overtakes 2,000 years of natural cooling, "seminal" study finds](#) (2009):
5. [Sorry disinformers, hockey stick gets longer, stronger: Earth hotter now than in past 2,000 years](#) (2008)
6. [Arctic Sea Ice Hockey Stick: Melt Unprecedented in Last 1,450 Years](#) (2011)

The entire op-ed is just a laughable collection of out of date and debunked disinformers talking points.

Or, rather, it would be laughable if it worked for the fact that the Murdoch outlet is using these 16 scientists to help push its do-nothing agenda. Here is the key argument:

The fact is that CO2 is not a pollutant. CO2 is a colorless and odorless gas, exhaled at high concentrations by each of us, and a key component of the biosphere's life cycle. Plants do so

much better with more CO2 that greenhouse operators often increase the CO2 concentrations by factors of three or four to get better growth. This is no surprise since plants and animals evolved when CO2 concentrations were about 10 times larger than they are today. Better plant varieties, chemical fertilizers and agricultural management contributed to the great increase in agricultural yields of the past century, but part of the increase almost certainly came from additional CO2 in the atmosphere....

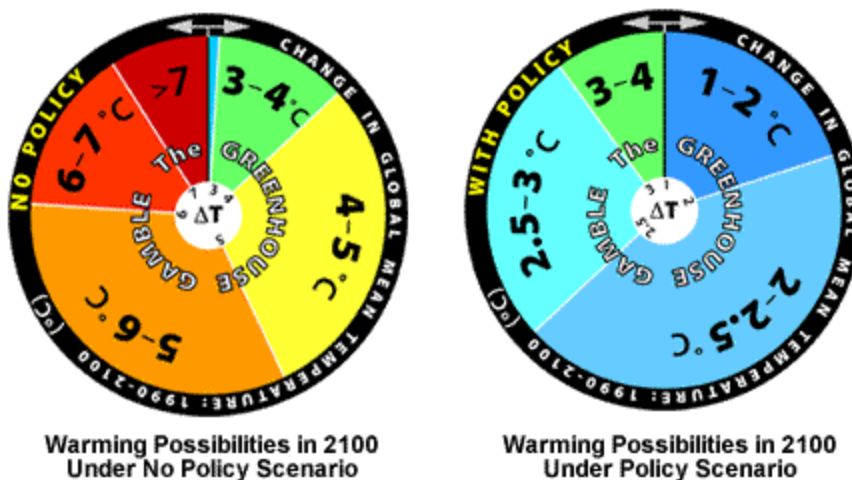
A recent study of a wide variety of policy options by Yale economist William Nordhaus showed that nearly the highest benefit-to-cost ratio is achieved for a policy that allows **50 more years of economic growth unimpeded by greenhouse gas controls....** And it is likely that more CO2 and the modest warming that may come with it will be an overall benefit to the planet.

In short, let's do nothing and it'll probably all work out for the best. [I'll deal with Nordhaus in a later post, though it is worth noting now that Nordhaus's most recent paper finds "Oil and Coal-Fired Power Plants Have Air Pollution Damages Larger Than Their Value Added" and Natural Gas generation damage is larger than its value added for even low CO2 prices.]

In fact, this perspective has already been quite well debunked in the literature. First off, we now know that the totality of impacts of global warming — warming, acidification, extreme weather, Dust-Bowlification — is already showing evidence of harm to the biosphere, biodiversity, and agriculture in particular:

- Oxfam: Extreme Weather Has Helped Push Tens of Millions into "Hunger and Poverty" in "Grim Foretaste" of Warmed World.
- Climate Story of the Year: Warming-Driven Drought and Extreme Weather Emerge as Key Threat to Global Food Security
- NCAR analysis warns we risk multiple, devastating global droughts even on moderate emissions path

Second, the only way we could have modest warming is if we acted aggressively to reduce greenhouse gas emissions starting now. Ironically, or, rather, tragically, the one way to be absolutely certain of high levels of warming and catastrophic impacts is to do nothing for the next several decades, which is clearly what these 16 scientists are promoting. A review of 50 recent studies makes that clear — see "An Illustrated Guide to the Science of Global Warming Impacts: How We Know Inaction Is the Gravest Threat Humanity Faces."



Humanity's Choice (via M.I.T.): Inaction ("No Policy") eliminates most of the

*uncertainty about whether or not future warming will be catastrophic.
Aggressive emissions reductions dramatically improves humanity's chances.*

Rather than quoting one economist, Nordhaus, we should listen to the traditionally staid and conservative International Energy Agency in its recent [IEA's 2011 World Energy Outlook \[WEO\]](#):

"On planned policies, rising fossil energy use will lead to irreversible and potentially catastrophic climate change"

"Delaying action is a false economy: for every \$1 of investment in cleaner technology that is avoided in the power sector before 2020, an additional \$4.30 would need to be spent after 2020 to compensate for the increased emissions."

I started by saying this piece had a counterfactual headline, "No Need to Panic About Global Warming."

Panic is a sudden sensation of fear which is so strong as to dominate or prevent reason and logical thinking...

It is the authors of the WSJ piece who are panicked because they have allowed their fear of climate action to "dominate or prevent reason and logical thinking." They have abandoned science. Climate scientists and other climate realists like the IEA are not urging panic — quite the opposite, we are urging a reasoned and logical science-based policy response.

The tragedy is that if we listen to Rupert Murdoch's media outlets and the handful of scientists willing to push anti-scientific nonsense, if we keep taking no serious action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, then we make it far more likely that future generations will in fact panic, when they wake up sometime in the 2020s and realize how dire the situation is but how the disinformers have all but ended the possibility for averting catastrophe.