

I read Mr. Schlesinger's editorial "Climate Change: The Science is Settled (Washington Post, 7 July) with a combination of dismay and amusement. This is the third time in my nearly 40 years as a scientist that I have seen American political and business wonks assume responsibility for interpreting science with respect to a major environmental issue.

In the early 1970s, when 99% of scientists in the field indicated that controlling phosphorus would control the "greening" of the Great Lakes (eutrophication), prominent wonks from the political and business world assured Americans that thousands of published papers by world-renowned scientists were junk, and that a small handful of skeptical individuals had proven them to be wrong. As a result of this deliberate and well-orchestrated obfuscation, which was well supported by TV ads, political lobbyists, and glossy pamphlets, America lagged well behind Europe and Canada in controlling the problem. A decade later, nearly the same scenario developed with respect to acid rain. Once again, America ignored its own world-renowned scientists, continuing to emit harmful sulfur oxides until legislation in other countries had shown that the scientific majority had been right. Indeed, a few slow learners in the business community continue even today to believe that acid rain was a hoax, trusting foolish texts like Lomborg's "The Skeptical Environmentalist" while ignoring overwhelming scientific evidence.

Here we are again with global warming! An international scientific community of several thousand is telling us that accelerating emissions of greenhouse gases have an extremely high probability of harming the ecosystems and economies of the world. As in the two previous examples above, a large proportion of the best science supporting this view comes from American science and scientists. Another tiresome "grade B-Western" political scenario is shaping up: same plot, different problems, different players.

America produces more world-class scientists and invests more in science than any other nation. The majority opinion of scientists is trusted fully by business and political figures when science supports their agendas: witness the success of space programs, medical advances, and the effectiveness of weapons of mass destruction. However, when mainstream scientific advice runs contrary to political and business agendas, scientists are quickly dismissed as a pack of fools. Their findings instead are publicly reinterpreted by economists, business executives and politicians, who themselves have absolutely no scientific credentials. Mr. Schlesinger may be a respected politician, but his views on global warming are about as helpful as more cow flatulence.

Yes, some uncertainties may remain about climate science and its effects on the world upon which we all rely. However, based upon their long careers of weighing the objective evidence, the overwhelming majority of America's (and the world's) scientists believe that we should take action **now** to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, because there is a high probability of severe ecological and economic consequences if we wait for "perfect" understanding. Trust the majority opinion of your scientists, America!

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rivers have resulted in over 30 national and international scientific awards, including the Stockholm Water Prize and the Volvo Environment Prize, regarded as the equivalent of Nobel Prizes in Aquatic and Environmental Science. He is an elected member of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, the Royal Societies of Canada and the United Kingdom, and the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering.