



600 Detained At Copenhagen Climate Rally Urging Bold Pact



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Hammering Out a Deal for Our Future

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The vast majority of the world's nations and about 100 heads of state are migrating to Copenhagen for a two week meeting to hammer out a plan to protect the Earth's climate from human use of the atmosphere as a free sewer to dump our tailpipe and smokestack wastes, and some of the products of deforestation and land degradation.

"Hammer" may indeed be the right metaphor for the verbal head banging going on among those who are demanding major cuts in greenhouse gas emissions from the wealthy countries who

produced most of the historic accumulated pollution. The ones pushing dramatic cuts by 2020 include small island states getting flooded out of house and home by sea level rise, or most western European states, on one side, and fossil fuel producing states and developing countries on the other side, the latter claiming they haven't yet had their fair share of the atmosphere to dump their wastes in, refusing to take on much reductions for themselves.

The US, after two terms of Bush Administration climate change denial that virtually tied up progress in the negotiation progress, is strongly endorsing strict very long term targets—like an 80 percent cut in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050, but is proposing only minor cuts by 2020. The weak short term target from the US is angering those who are claiming that this will not help alleviate the planetary "climate emergency" we face. Compromise is predicted by some optimists and rejected by many pessimists. But it is still early in the game and national posturing always dominates early phases of negotiations like this. What is mostly lost in the middle of the posturing are our children and grandchildren's interests in a sustainable world and the viability of the plant and animal kingdoms, that had no role in creating the problem and have the least adaptive capacity.

The past 40 years, when attached at the end of a reconstruction of the temperatures of the past 1000 years, look like a bit like a "hockey stick" with a wavy handle but a "blade" that rises above the climatic history of the millennium and exhibits the warmest decades in the record in the past 30 or so years. This reconstruction has been the object of intense arguments between the climatologists who constructed the hockey stick and some skeptical attackers who claimed it was erroneous. The US National Academy of Sciences conducted an extensive study on this and agreed that individual scientist's assumption were occasionally questionable—the normal process of scientific progress—but that a dozen replicate studies added more waviness to the handle but the blade still stood out. Hockey stick denial was a favorite item of the climate skeptics, despite the NAS study.

Debate lines at Copenhagen over short term targets versus long term technology development plans and funds for adaptation and technology transfer to the lesser developed nations remain sticky—they are yet the latest re-rehearsal of a rich country-poor country divide that has been going on at these UN sponsored Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992—where a protocol was signed by President Bush I and ratified by the US Senate. It declared that all signatories—about 190 countries—agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emission to a level that would prevent "dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system." Unhappily, precious few countries have met that agreed to criterion. In the US it seems not to have been an impeachable high crime or misdemeanor to violate this law of the land contained in this treaty.

Now, however, after record melting of high mountain and polar ice, killer heat waves, intensifying wildfires and some stronger hurricanes, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) declared anthropogenic global warming (AGW) as "very likely" over the past 40 or so years. "Very likely" in IPCC parlance means more than a 90 percent chance human activities were a prime cause of the record warming since the 1970s. In essence, what is different from when some of us warned about this problem to presidents, legislators and ministers in the late 1970s—when global warming was still largely theory—is that in the subsequent 35 years "Nature has been largely cooperating with climate", as I phrased it in my new book "*Science as a Contact Sport: Inside the Battle to Save Earth's Therapy*," which details the 40 year history of our failure to achieve meaningful emissions cuts at either a national or global level. Despite all this, concerning history, there is legitimate optimism as momentum is building for a global deal. Over the next two weeks the world will watch the Copenhagen delegates and tens of thousands of non-governmental "observers"—including yours truly—try to put our planetary future ahead of short-term national interests. The stability of the climate hangs in the balance, and history is not a promising model for success.

Climate Denier Gate

With that background of concern and debate, one might suspect that I—a recognized 40 year player in this contact sport—would be asked by the many reporters, national delegates and others who stop me in the halls: "so what is the highest level of warming we can tolerate to avoid 'dangerous anthropogenic interference'?" Indeed I do get that question often and will discuss it in future blogs and many events at COP15. But by far the question I get most right now has created a media and political firestorm: the theft of private emails in the UK's University of East Anglia about a month ago in which the hackers illegally obtained private emails among exasperated climate data scientists decrying their besieged status by some politicians and fossil fuel interest groups trying to deny global warming and attacking their work and character.

Like the Watergate break in, the suffix "gate" was then immediately added by various spinners to this situation, since some of the hacked emails confessed to "tricks" that had to be used to get the hockey stick results. To frame that word as a deliberate cover-up is simply to be unaware of the normal jargon of scientists and mathematicians—the word "trick" means to us a clever simplification to an impossible-to-solve problem that allows some approximate solutions. Redacted emails or those thought incriminating, appeared in gleeful synchrony on climate denier blog sites after the theft. Environmentalists called it "email-gate" to focus scorn on the hackers, who like the Watergate burglars violated laws and belonged in jail. The climate "skeptics" community immediately labeled it "climate-gate" as if the climatologists whose private thoughts, doubts and frustrations were now widely disseminated without context and sent to media and political venues, were the perpetrators, rather than the victims. My favorite label on this sad debacle is simply: "Climate Denier Gate" to refocus on the "gate" part—illegally obtained private and privileged materials being used as evidence of climatologists' malfeasance, rather than hackers and bloggers use of purloined privacy. It amazes me that these bloggers—very often the very ones opposing climate policy as a government encroachment on entrepreneurial "freedom"—would condone the loss of freedom of privacy with such glee.

But the problem is worse than that. Polls in the US and other countries have shown serious erosion of public support for AGW concern after a media frenzy quoting words like "trick" in the emails to mean that the scientists involved were, like Halloween night, "trick or treating" the public. The email blogs asserted, and the media dutifully covered it as a scandal of climate scientists' cover-ups. Thus, the private frustrations of a few climate scientists was turned into an ostensible plot by the entire climate science community in dozens of countries, hundreds of institutions, and hammered out over 40 years of peer reviewed assessment studies (as I detail in "*Contact Sport*") as some kind of fraud. The head of the Saudi Arabia delegation was quoted as saying Copenhagen should be cancelled since AGW no longer exists. Another delegate told media in Copenhagen that the IPCC should recant its "very likely" assessment of AGW, just as have skeptical bloggers, editorial writers, etc.—mostly in the US, but still to some extent elsewhere. Serial climate deniers like Senator Inhofe from Oklahoma declared these pilfered emails as a smoking gun that AGW doesn't exist and thus requires no policy response. There will be very contentious doings here in Copenhagen when Inhofe and his ilk arrive in a few days as a self-labeled "truth squad." I find that ironic since truth on climate change has been largely absent from that senator's comments over the years.

Hockey Stick vs. Fingerprinting

Unfortunately, Climate Denier Gate is being used by some on blogs and the usual suspects in media to lionize the perpetrators as some kind of heroic stealth investigative reporters who have just in time saved the world from the "big mistake" of fashioning climate policy in Copenhagen. The amazing scientific thing that nobody seems to be covering is that the "hockey stick" was never used as proof of anthropogenic global warming by IPCC—it was the "fingerprinting" studies of many scientists dating back to 1995—three years before the first hockey stick was even published. A fingerprint is an attempt to combine models of climate change with observed data. The models are driven by natural forces like solar variations or volcanic eruptions, and their retractions of what should have happened between 1900 and 2000 are compared to what actually happened. Then the models are driven by anthropogenic forces such as increasing greenhouse gases as has been observed and again compared to what actually happened to the 20th century climate. And finally models are driven by combined natural and anthropogenic forces—and as expected, the latter has the highest correlation with observations, the former the least and the middle one in between correlations. That is a smoking gun—but for AGW—and the number of such studies appearing in the peer reviewed scientific literature since 1995 has multiplied. Ergo, IPCC has increased its confidence in AGW over successive studies, with the "very likely" the most recent 2007 assessment.

That fingerprint history the denier set will almost certainly not mention, just claim that the hockey stick graphs are "exposed" and therefore AGW is a fraud. The fraud however is on the deniers, I'm afraid, since the hockey stick has (a) never been disproved, and (b) nor was it ever the basis for AGW; likelihood assessment. Rather, the fingerprint analyses by many groups over the years were the scientific evidence used for AGW. Would somebody in the mainstream media please cover this!!!

I am hopeful that we can dispense with this smokescreen—a diversionary tactic to mask the well-established climate science that has been building via assessments of thousands of climate scientists over three decades—soon and get on with the tough business of fashioning an environmentally sound, cost-effective and equitable set of rules to protect the planetary life support system before it is too late to avoid many irreversible damages.

Books By Stephen H. Schneider

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