

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.**Letters to the Editor: No Deception in Global Warming Report**

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Abstract:

Dr. Seitz discusses editorial changes made to Chapter 8 of the 1995 IPCC report on the science of climate change. The chapter evaluates the scientific evidence from many studies that have attempted to detect "unusual" change in the earth's climate, and determine whether some portion of that change is due to human activities. Dr. Seitz claims that the alterations made to Chapter 8, after a November 1995 IPCC meeting held in Madrid, were in violation of IPCC rules of procedure, and that their effect is to "deceive policy makers and the public into believing that the scientific evidence shows human activities are causing global warming." Similar claims of procedural improprieties have been made by the Global Climate Coalition, a consortium of industry interests. These claims conjure visions of sinister conspiracies that are entirely unfounded.

There has been no dishonesty, no corruption of the peer-review process and no bias -- political, environmental or otherwise. Mr. Seitz claims that the scientific content of Chapter 8 was altered by the changes made to it after the Madrid IPCC meeting. This is incorrect. The present version of Chapter 8, in its Executive Summary, draws precisely the same "bottom-line" conclusion as the original Oct. 9 version of the chapter: "Taken together, these results point towards a human influence on climate." A statement conveying the same message was endorsed unanimously by the governments of the 96 IPCC countries represented at the Madrid meeting.

Full Text:

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Frederick Seitz's June 12 editorial-page piece "A Major Deception on `Global Warming'" wrongly accuses both the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and a member of the climate science community of violation of procedure and deception. Not only does he thereby demonstrate ignorance of both the topic and the IPCC process, but his actions reflect an apparent attempt to divert attention away from the scientific evidence of a human effect on global climate by attacking the scientists concerned with investigating that issue.

Dr. Seitz discusses editorial changes made to Chapter 8 of the 1995 IPCC report on the science of climate change. The chapter evaluates the scientific evidence from many studies that have attempted to detect "unusual" change in the earth's climate, and determine whether some portion of that change is due to human activities. Dr. Seitz claims that the alterations made to Chapter 8, after a November 1995 IPCC meeting held in Madrid, were in violation of IPCC rules of procedure, and that their effect is to "deceive policy makers and the public into believing that the scientific evidence shows human activities are causing global warming." Similar claims of procedural improprieties have been made by the Global Climate Coalition, a consortium of industry interests. These claims conjure visions of sinister conspiracies that are entirely unfounded.

All IPCC procedural rules were followed in producing the final, now published, version of Chapter 8. The changes made after the Madrid meeting were in response to written review comments received in October and November 1995 from governments, individual scientists and nongovernmental organizations during plenary sessions of the Madrid meeting. IPCC procedures required changes in response to these comments in order to produce the best possible and most clearly explained assessment of the science.

There has been no dishonesty, no corruption of the peer-review process and no bias -- political, environmental or otherwise. Mr. Seitz claims that the scientific content of Chapter 8 was altered by the changes made to it after the Madrid IPCC meeting. This is incorrect. The present version of Chapter 8, in its Executive Summary, draws precisely the same "bottom-line" conclusion as the original Oct. 9 version of the chapter: "Taken together, these results point towards a human influence on climate." A statement conveying the same message was endorsed unanimously by the governments of the 96 IPCC countries represented at the Madrid meeting.

The pre- and post-Madrid versions of the chapter are equally cautious in their statements. Uncertainties have not been suppressed. Roughly 20% of Chapter 8 is devoted to the discussion of uncertainties in estimates of natural climate variability and the expected "signal" due to human activities.

The deletions quoted by Mr. Seitz relate to the difficulties involved in attributing climate change to the specific cause of human activities, and to uncertainties in estimates of natural climate variability. These issues are dealt with at great length in the published chapter. The basic content of these particular sentences has not been deleted.

Dr. Seitz is not a climate scientist. He was not involved in the process of putting together the 1995 IPCC report on the science of climate change. He did not attend the Madrid IPCC meeting on which he reports. He was not privy to the hundreds of review comments received by Chapter 8 lead authors. Most seriously, before writing his editorial, he did not contact any of the lead authors of Chapter 8 in order to obtain information as to how or why changes were made to Chapter 8 after Madrid.

We urge readers of the Wall Street Journal to read the IPCC report ("Climate Change 1995: The Science of Climate Change," Cambridge University Press, 1996). They will see for themselves that, as required by and stated in and IPCC procedural rules, the detection chapter is a "comprehensive, objective and balanced" review of the science.

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(This letter was also signed by 40 scientists from eight countries. All were lead authors or contributors to the 1995 IPCC Working Group.)

In accordance with IPCC procedures, the changes to the draft of Chapter 8 were under the full scientific control of its convening lead author, Benjamin Santer. No one could have been more thorough and honest in undertaking that task. As the responsible officers of the IPCC, we are completely satisfied that the changes incorporated in the revised version were made with the sole purpose of producing the best possible and most clearly explained assessment of the science and were not in any way motivated by any political or other considerations.

It is, of course, easy to take isolated sentences from the earlier version that have been deleted or replaced to bolster arguments or suspicions such as those presented by Dr. Seitz. But that is to

misunderstand the nature of the science with which we are dealing and the very open IPCC scientific assessment process.

Bert Bolin

Chairman

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(See related letters: "Letters to the Editor: Coverup in the Greenhouse?" -- WSJ July 11, 1996)

(See related letters: "Letters to the Editor: Global Warming Critics, Chill Out" -- WSJ July 23, 1996)

(See related letter: "Letters to the Editor: Our Critics Provide Valuable Publicity" -- WSJ Sept. 3, 1996)

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