

Climategate Ten Years On

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It is now ten years since a hacked account at the Climatic Research Unit (CRU) at the University of East Anglia (UEA) released over a thousand emails of communication between the UK's leading climate centre and its equivalent in the US, the Earth Science Research Unit at Pennsylvania State University. The Director of research at the UK organisation, Phil Jones, and his US equivalent Michael Mann, were both the subject of a number of enquiries; Jones retired in 2016 and Mann is still involved in multiple litigation cases which followed publication of these documents. This important anniversary will no doubt not be mentioned by the left wing press.

The emails revealed that these two, under the auspices of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), had control of past temperature recordings and exerted influence on the peer review process for publication of relevant scientific papers. The IPCC was established in 1988, under the auspices of the United Nations, to find evidence of human influence on climate (not to investigate other possible explanations for rising world temperature); its regular publications have been increasingly definite in reaching that conclusion and the severity of the outcome. This small group of scientists have had undue influence and have been instrumental in predicting catastrophic outcomes.

The first release of 1,000 hacked emails came in November 2009, prior to the 2009 Climate change meeting in Copenhagen; a second release of 5,000 emails in 2011, known as Climategate 2, coincided with the Durban Climate meeting. The media attention and apparent data manipulation undoubtedly affected the public's view of global warming as it was then known. This controversy resulted in numerous enquiries: by the Universities concerned, by the House of Commons of UK, the US environmental protection agency, in total eight investigations. The conclusion reached was that there had been irregularities, with comments taken out of context, some emails deleted and refusal to release original data. Nothing was found that affected the underlying science produced elsewhere and the incident was brushed over.

Reviewing the emails, which date back to 1999, reveals an increasing ideological approach which appears to overtake scientific objectivity. There are abundant examples discussed in emails of data being used selectively to fit the authors' theories, whilst ignoring contradictory information. The peer review process was undermined to block publication of scientists who had different views, even suggesting removal of journal editors who did not toe the line. Attempts were made to present a unified consensus when none in fact existed. Involvement of the media meant embellishment of risk and certainty of outcome were increasingly used. Scientists became increasingly involved in political and financial decision making, as far back as 2001 suggesting cessation of unsustainable energy generation. Refusal to release data for independent assessment created suspicion about its manipulation, as did deletion of emails when many thousand were retained.

The pronouncements of the IPCC have become less reliably based on peer reviewed science and more on unreviewed activist material. Over the thirty years since its institution its conclusions have become increasingly confident, steadily increasing from medium confidence (50%, just as likely to be true as not, ie no confidence) to now around 90%. With each meeting the pronouncements have become more extreme; the latest tipping point (after previous points have failed to eventuate) gives

us until 2030 before irreversible sea level rises. Meanwhile the science remains unsettled and computer modelling stubbornly fails to predict the present, let alone the future. A group of 500 scientists this September sent a letter to the United Nations Secretary General with their concerns about manipulation of Science for political goals.

Climate science covers a multitude of disciplines including astrophysics, palaeontology, marine geology, geology, geography, physics, astronomy, oceanography, etc. Professor Phil Jones was temporarily stood down as director of the CRU but survived the Climategate onslaught. He was admonished for failing to release information when requested, also for loosing data; even he admitted some of his emails were “pretty awful”. The awful emails included in 2008 requesting his colleagues, Michael Mann and Keith Briffa, delete emails following a freedom of information request. His background in paleoclimatology resulted in his being a contributor to the IPCC’s 3rd and 4th reports of 2001 and 2007. He did not contribute to the 5th IPCC report in 2014 but he remained at the UEA until retirement in 2016.

Professor Michael Mann has a background in geophysics and is head of the Earth System Science Center at Penn State University. He has been a controversial scientist since in 1999 he published the highly disputed “hockey stick” graph purportedly showing dramatic recent temperature increase. He was a lead author for the 2001 IPCC report and, with his colleagues, has been accused of taking over the IPCC agenda. Despite dubious science the graph fitted with the IPCC vision and was portrayed as signifying explosive global warming, warming which has failed to materialise. He has been highly political in his career and has been also highly litigious, rather than disputing alternative views in the scientific media, with some cases running for many years. His figures have been refuted in court by numerous statisticians. After 10 years of hockey stick dispute he this year lost a case against fellow climatologist Dr Tim Ball, following his being in contempt of court for failing to release his data. He has also been reported for inappropriately claiming a Nobel Prize certification, courtesy of that awarded to the IPCC in 2007 (when he was not a contributor). He has not contributed to subsequent IPCC reports but remains director of the Earth Systems Science Center in the US.

Ten years on the Climate Debate continues, the hacked emails temporarily undermined public confidence, but the IPCC juggernaut rolls on. The “settled” science has now resulted in vast financial expenditure with little outcome; the latest media crisis this year being increasing rise in sea levels. China and India continue to increase their CO₂ output, whilst the West is blamed and compensation is demanded; the science is increasingly buried under politics.

Perhaps the hidden agenda is not saving the planet but socialist wealth redistribution under the auspices of the United Nations climate fund?

Graham Pinn, October 2019