

The Politics of Global Warming

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Timothy Ball is no wishy-washy skeptic of global warming. The Canadian climatologist, who has a Ph.D. in climatology from the University of London and taught at the University of Winnipeg for 28 years, says that the widely propagated “fact” that humans are contributing to global warming is the “greatest deception in the history of science.”

Ball has made no friends among global warming alarmists by saying that global warming is caused by the sun, that global warming will be good for us and that the Kyoto Protocol “is a political solution to a nonexistent problem without scientific justification.”

Needless to say, Ball strongly disagrees with the findings of the latest report from the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which on Feb. 2 concluded that it is “very likely” that global warming is the result of human activity.

I talked to Ball by phone on Feb. 6 from his home on in Victoria, British Columbia, on Vancouver Island, which the good-humored scientist likes to point out was connected to the mainland 8,000 years ago when the sea level was 500 feet lower.

Q: The mainstream media would have us believe that the science of global warming is now settled by the latest IPCC report. Is it true?

A: No. It's absolutely false. As soon as people start saying something's settled, it's usually that they don't want to talk about it anymore. They don't want anybody to dig any deeper. It's very, very far from settled. In fact, that's the real problem. We haven't been able to get all of the facts on the table. The IPCC is a purely political setup.

There was a large group of people, the political people, who wanted the report to be more harum-scarum than it actually is. In fact, the report is quite a considerable step down from the previous reports. For example, they have reduced the potential temperature rise and they've reduced the sea level increase and a whole bunch of other things. Part of it is because they know so many people will be watching the report this time.

Q: Why should we be leery of the IPCC's report -- or the summary of the report?

A: Well, because the report is the end product of a political agenda, and it is the political agenda of both the extreme environmentalists who of course think we are destroying the world. But it's also the political agenda of a group of people ... who believe that industrialization and development and capitalism and the Western way is a terrible system and they want to bring it down. They couldn't do it by attacking energy because they know that would get the public's back up very quickly. ... The vehicle they chose was CO₂, because that's the byproduct of industry and fossil-fuel burning, which of course drives the whole thing. They think, “If we can

show that that is destroying the planet, then it allows us to control.” Unfortunately, you’ve got a bunch of scientists who have this political agenda as well, and they have effectively controlled the IPCC process.

Q: You always hear the argument that the IPCC has several thousand scientists -- how can you not accept what they say?

A: The answer, first of all, is that consensus is not a scientific fact. The other thing is, you look at the degree to which they have controlled the whole IPCC process. For example, who are the lead authors? Who are the scientists who sit on the summary panel with the politicians to make sure that they get their view in? ... You’ve got this incestuous little group that is controlling the whole process both through their publications and the IPCC. I’m not a conspiracy theorist and I hate being even pushed toward that, but I think there is a consensus conspiracy that’s going on.

Q: What is your strongest or best argument that GW is not “very likely” to be caused by SUVs and Al Gore’s private planes?

A: I guess the best argument is that global warming has occurred, but it began in 1680, if you want to take the latest long-term warming, and the climate changes all the time. It began in 1680, in the middle of what’s called “The Little Ice Age” when there was three feet of ice on the Thames River in London. And the demand for furs of course drove the fur trade. The world has warmed up until recently, and that warming trend doesn’t fit with the CO2 record at all; it fits with the sun-spot data. Of course they are ignoring the sun because they want to focus on CO2.

The other thing that you are seeing going on is that they have switched from talking about global warming to talking about climate change. The reason for that is since 1998 the global temperature has gone down -- only marginally, but it has gone down. In the meantime, of course, CO2 has increased in the atmosphere and human production has increased. So you’ve got what Huxley called the great bane of science -- “a lovely hypothesis destroyed by an ugly fact.” So by switching to climate change, it allows them to point at any weather event -- whether it’s warming, cooling, hotter, dryer, wetter, windier, whatever -- and say it is due to humans. Of course, it’s absolutely rubbish.

Q: What is the most exaggerated and unnecessary worry about global warming or climate change?

A: I think the fact that it is presented as all negative. Of course, it’s the one thing they focus on because the public, with the huge well of common sense that is out there, would sort of say, “Well, I don’t understand the science, but, gee, I wouldn’t mind a warmer world, especially if I was living in Canada or Russia.” They have to touch something in the warming that becomes a very big negative for the people, and so they focus on, “Oh, the glaciers are going to melt and the sea levels are going to rise.” In fact, there are an awful lot of positive things. For example, longer frost-free seasons across many of the northern countries, less energy used because you don’t need to keep your houses warm in the winter.

Q: Is the globe warming and what is the cause?

A: Yeah, the world has been warming since 1680 and the cause is changes in the sun. But in their computer models they hardly talk about the sun at all and in the IPCC summary for policy-makers they don't talk about the sun at all. And of course, if they put the sun into their formula in their computer models, it swamps out the human portion of CO₂, so they can't possibly do that.

Q: Is the rising CO₂ level the cause of global warming or the result of it?

A: That's a very good question because in the theory the claim is that if CO₂ goes up, temperature will go up. The ice core record of the last 420,000 years shows exactly the opposite. It shows that the temperature changes before the CO₂. So the fundamental assumption of the theory is wrong. That means the theory is wrong. ... But the theory that human CO₂ would lead to runaway global warming became a fact right away, and scientists like myself who dared to question it were immediately accused of being paid by the oil companies or didn't care about the children or the future or anything else.

Q: Have you ever accepted money from an oil company?

A: No. No. I wish I did get some. I wouldn't have to drive a '92 car and live in a leaky apartment bloc.

Q: Why are sea levels rising and should we worry?

A: Sea levels have been rising for the last 10,000 years. In fact, 8,000 years ago, sea level was almost 500 feet lower than it is today. It's been rising gradually over that time. It's risen very slightly in the modern record, but it has risen no more rapidly than it has in the last 8,000 years. One of the factors that people forget is that most of the ice is already in the ocean, and so if you understand Archimedes' Principle, when that ice melts it simply replaces the space that the ice occupied -- even if the ice caps melt completely. What they do is they say if we estimate the volume of water in Antarctica and Greenland, then we add that to the existing ocean level. But that's not the way it works at all. But it does work for panic and for sea-level rises of 20 feet, like Gore claims.

Q: Why are the sea levels rising, just because we are in a warming period?

A: Yes. We are in an inter-glacial. Just 22,000 years ago, which is what some people can get their minds around, Canada and parts of the northern U.S. were covered with an ice sheet larger than the current Antarctic ice sheet. That ice sheet was over a mile thick in central Canada. All of that ice melted in 5,000 years. There was another ice sheet over Europe and a couple more in Asia. As that ice has melted, it's run back into the oceans and of course that's what's filled up the oceans. But if you drilled down in Antarctica, you go down almost 8,000 feet below sea level. That ice below sea level, if it melts, is not going to raise sea level. The other thing, just to get a little technical, is that sea level variation is called "eustasy," and it can vary for a whole variety of reasons. It can vary simply because of the water being a little warmer by thermal expansion. The problem with that is, we really don't know what sea level is. Sea level is not level. That means if you go through the Panama Canal, you are at different sea levels on the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans. There are areas off the coast of eastern North America where sea

level is 100 feet higher than the surrounding sea, simply because of different gravitational pulls within the Earth.

Q: So there is no global sea level?

A: Exactly. Then you add to that that the crust of the Earth also moves up and down. For example, if you fly into Hudson Bay, as you fly in you cross about 150 beach lines because Hudson Bay is rising. If you looked at that and stood on the shore at Churchill on the Hudson Bay, you'd say, "Oh, the sea level is dropping." No it isn't. It's because the land is rising. That's called "isostasy" and that, by the way, is what's going on in the Gulf of Mexico. People are saying, "The ocean is coming in and we're seeing the evidence of sea level rising." What you're seeing is the evidence of land sinking.

Q: Is there any aspect of global warming alarmism that you are worried about?

A: There are a couple of very minor things. I'm interested in and need more research done on commercial jet aircraft flying in the stratosphere. The research that's been done so far says no, it's not an issue, but I think the jury is out on that still. The other concern I have is that we're totally preparing for warming. The whole world is preparing for warming, but I mentioned that we have been cooling since 1998 and the climate scientists that I respected -- particularly the Russians and Chinese -- are predicting that we're going to be much, much cooler by 2030. So we've got completely the wrong adaptive strategy.

Q: Is it not inevitable that we will have another ice age?

A: Yes, I think there is another ice age coming, because the major causes of the ice ages are changes in the orbit of the Earth around the sun and changes in the tilt of the Earth. Those are things we've known about for 150 years, but we're still telling our students that the orbit around the sun is a fixed elliptical orbit and the tilt is an unchanging 23.5 degrees. Neither of those things are correct.

The question is, why are we still teaching our students that the orbit is a fixed, relatively small, unchanging ellipse? The answer is because the whole of our view of the world -- in the Western world at least -- is something called "uniformitarianism." This is the idea that change is gradual over long periods of time. It was basically established out of Darwin's view, which had to overcome the church and accommodate his evolutionary theory. So what it means is that we are all educated to see change as gradual over long periods of time. So any sudden or dramatic change is seen as either wrong or unnatural. Of course, that plays into the hands of the environmentalists, because it means all of this is not natural, it is something humans are doing, when in fact nature varies tremendously all the time.

Q: If someone asked you where he should go to get a good antidote on the mainstream media's spin on global warming, where should he go?

A: There are three Web sites I have some respect for. One is the one I helped set up by a group of very frustrated professional scientists who are retired. That's called FriendsOfScience.org. It

has deliberately tried to focus on the science only. The second site that I think provides the science side of it very, very well is CO2Science.org, and that's run by Sherwood Idso, who is the world expert on the relationship between plant growth and CO2. The third, which is a little more irreverent and maybe still slightly on the technical side for the general public, is JunkScience.com.

Q: If you had to calm the fears of a small grandchild or a student about the threat of global warming, what would you tell him?

A: First of all, I probably wouldn't tell him anything. As I tell audiences, the minute somebody starts saying "Oh, the children are going to die and the grandchildren are going to have no future," they have now played the emotional and fear card. Just like in the U.S., it's almost like the race card. It's not to say that it isn't valid in some cases. But the minute you play that card, you are now taking the issues and the debates out of the rational and logical and reasonable and sensible and calm into the emotional and hysterical. To give you an example, I was talking to a group in Saskatoon and a woman came up after and she said, "I agree with you totally. We were having a party for my 7-year-old. I went into the kitchen and there was a bang in the living room. I went back and a balloon had exploded. The kids were crying and I said, 'Why are you crying?' And they said, 'There's going to be another hole in the ozone.'"

It's completely false. There never were holes in the ozone, by the way. But when we start laying those kinds of problems onto shoulders that are very narrow, that is criminal. My comment to her was, I said, "Look, let the kids get on with the party. Give them another beer. Let 'em enjoy themselves."

So I wouldn't raise these kinds of fear with the children. What I would do with my children and grandchildren is what I'm trying to do with the public and say, "Look, here's the other side of the story. Make sure you get all of the information before you start running off and screaming 'wolf, wolf, wolf.'"

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