



THE BBC AND CLIMATE CHANGE: A TRIPLE BETRAYAL

Christopher Booker

Foreword by Sir Antony Jay

The Global Warming Policy Foundation
GWPF Report 5

GWPF REPORTS

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ISBN: 978-0-9566875-5-5

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Christopher Booker

Christopher Booker is an author and journalist. In recent years, in his weekly column in the *Sunday Telegraph*, he has regularly reported on scientific and political issues related to global warming. In 2009 he published a detailed history of how global warming developed into one of the most important and controversial issues of our time: *The Real Global Warming Disaster: Is the obsession with 'climate change' turning out to be the most costly scientific blunder in history?* (Continuum, 2009). In December 2010 it was named by *The Bookseller* as having been one of the three best-selling books on the subject in Britain over the previous decade, alongside works by Al Gore and James Lovelock.

Sir Antony Jay

Antony Jay has enjoyed a distinguished career as writer, broadcaster and producer. He was a founder and editor of the BBC's legendary *Tonight* programme and is famous for his political comedies *Yes Minister* and *Yes, Prime Minister* (1980-88). He is the editor of *The Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations*. He was knighted in 1988.

Foreword

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has a duty of impartiality, as we all know. But what exactly does 'impartiality' mean? If it simply means giving equal time to Labour and Conservative politicians on matters of party contention, the BBC fulfils its duty fairly well. But if it means not having, or at least never revealing, any views of its own on any subject of public debate, well, that is quite another matter.

Anyone familiar with large organisations knows that over the years they develop and perpetuate their own ethos, their own value system, their own corporate beliefs and standards. The police, the Army, the National Health Service, the Civil Service – they all subscribe to their own central orthodoxy, even if not every member accepts every item of it. Connoisseurs of Whitehall are aware that different Ministries have different and even conflicting attitudes – the conservatism of the Home Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Trade and Industry contrasts with the liberalism of the Departments of Education, Health and Social Services and the Department of Environment, though they are united in their belief in a large and well remunerated Civil Service. Those at the top of the tree are the custodians of corporate orthodoxy; they recruit applicants in their own image, and the applicants are steadily indoctrinated with the organisation's principles and practices. Heretics tend to leave fairly early in their careers.

It would be astonishing if the BBC did not have its own orthodoxy. It has been around for 85 years, recruiting bright graduates, mostly with arts degrees, and deeply involved in current affairs issues and news reporting. And of course for all that time it has been supported by public money. One result of this has been an implicit belief in government funding and government regulation. Another is a remarkable lack of interest in industry and a deep hostility to business and commerce.

At this point I have to declare an interest, or at least admit to previous. I joined BBC television, my first job after university and National Service, in 1955, six months before the start of commercial television, and stayed for nine years as trainee, producer, editor and finally head of a production department. I absorbed and expressed all the accepted BBC attitudes: hostility to, or at least suspicion of, America, monarchy, government, capitalism, empire, banking and the defence establishment, and in favour of the Health Service, state welfare, the social sciences, the environment and state education. But perhaps our most powerful antagonism was directed at advertising. This is not surprising; commercial television was the biggest threat the BBC had ever had to face. The idea that television should be financed by businessmen promoting their products for profit created in us an almost spiritual revulsion. And when our colleagues, who we had thought were good BBC men, left to join commercial broadcasters, they became pariahs. We could hardly bring ourselves to speak to them again. They had not just gone to join a

rival company; they had sinned against the true faith, they were traitors, deserters, heretics.

This deep hostility to people and organisations who made and sold things was not of course exclusive to the BBC. It permeated a lot of upper middle class English society (and has not vanished yet). But it was wider and deeper in the BBC than anywhere else, and it is still very much a part of the BBC ethos. Very few of the BBC producers and executives have any real experience of the business world, and as so often happens, this ignorance, far from giving rise to doubt, increases their certainty.

We were masters of the techniques of promoting our point of view under the cloak of impartiality. The simplest was to hold a discussion between a fluent and persuasive proponent of the view you favoured, and a humourless bigot representing the other side. With a big story, like shale gas for example, you would choose the aspect where your case was strongest: the dangers of subsidence and water pollution, say, rather than the transformation of Britain's energy supplies and the abandonment of wind farms and nuclear power stations. And you could have a 'balanced' summary with the view you favoured coming last: not "the opposition claim that this will just make the rich richer, but the government point out that it will create 10,000 new jobs" but "the government claim it will create 10,000 new jobs, but the opposition point out that it will just make the rich richer." It is the last thought that stays in the mind. It is curiously satisfying to find all these techniques still being regularly used forty seven years after I left the BBC.

The issue of man-made global warming could have been designed for the BBC. On the one side are the industrialists, the businessmen, the giant corporations and the bankers (or at least those who are not receiving generous grants, subsidies and contracts from their government for climate-related projects such as wind farms or electric cars), on the other the environmentalists, the opponents of commercial expansion and industrial growth. Guessing which side the BBC will be on is a no-brainer, but no one has documented it in such meticulous detail as Christopher Booker. His case is unanswerable. The costs to Britain of trying to combat global warming are horrifying, and the BBC's role in promoting the alarmist cause is, quite simply, shameful.

So what do we do about the BBC? One course of action that would be doomed from the start is to try and change its ethos, its social attitudes and its political slant. They have been unchanged for over half a century and just about all the influential and creative people involved in political programme commissioning and production are thoroughly indoctrinated. So do we abolish the BBC? After all, we do not have any newspapers or magazines that are subsidised with nearly four billion pounds of taxpayers' money; why should broadcasting be different? If broadcasting were to start now, with all the benefits of cable and satellite technology, I cannot see anyone suggesting a system devised for the era of restricted wavelengths in which the BBC was born in the 1920s.

Of course no government would actually face up to the problem of privatising the BBC. And there are strong arguments for keeping it: some of its production units are among the best in the world. There is also a case for leaving its news and current affairs operation alone; it may have a built-in liberal/statist bias, but there are lots of other news channels which are commercially funded, so there is no great damage done if one of them is run by the middle class liberal elite.

No, what really needs changing is the size of the BBC. All we need from it is one television channel and one speech radio station – Radio 4, in effect. All its other mass of activities – publishing, websites, orchestras, digital channels, music and local radio stations – could be disposed of without any noticeable loss to the cultural life of the country, and the licence fee could probably be cut by two-thirds.

Could it happen? As the economic squeeze tightens, the case for a drastic slimming down of the BBC gets stronger every day. Cash-strapped households might be glad of the extra £100 a year, even at the expense of repeats, movies, imported programmes, quiz show and panel games – not to mention the sporting events we would see on other channels if the BBC hadn't outbid them - that the BBC currently uses to fill out its schedules. But in some ways, the strongest case of all is made by Christopher Booker: if the BBC is to be paid to propagate the opinions of a liberal elite minority, it should not be allowed to dominate the national airwaves as it does today. Its voice should be heard, but it should not be allowed to drown out the others.

Sir Antony Jay

December 2011

Author's Foreword

By any measure, concern over global warming has been one of the major stories of our time, raising questions of profound relevance to all our futures.

How much of such global warming as has taken place can be ascribed to human activity? Have predictions that this faces the world with an unprecedented threat been based on truly reliable evidence? Considering their immense economic and social implications, how far have the measures put forward by politicians to avert that threat been in practice justified?

This report examines the coverage of these issues by the BBC, as the largest and arguably most influential media organisation on earth. The BBC has had no prouder boast over the years than that it has won unique respect for the impartiality and independence of its reporting. Its duty to remain at all times impartial is enshrined by law in regulations under its Royal Charter.

Nevertheless there are many who would question the extent to which it has always lived up to this obligation. Ever longer in recent years has been the list of issues on which the BBC has a clearly identifiable 'party line', which is allowed to dictate the nature and slant of its coverage.

On few issues, however, if any, has the BBC shown itself to be more conspicuously committed to a particular point of view than the belief in man-made global warming. And it is important to recognise the extent to which this has been the result of deliberate policy.

Around the middle of the last decade, as these pages will show, the BBC's senior executives, including those in charge of news and current affairs, along with its team of environmental journalists, took a decision that its coverage on issues related to climate change should be more overtly partisan. They justified this on the basis that belief in the threat of man-made global warming was now accepted by such an overwhelming 'consensus' of scientists that it was the BBC's duty not merely to accept that view but actively to promote it - and to ignore the views of those who disagreed.

Significantly, however, it was precisely around this time that the global warming story was entering a new phase. It was beginning to throw up more serious questioning, both scientific and political, than ever before. Ever more scientists, many of them leaders in their fields, were beginning to challenge the assumption on which the global warming theory rested: that the chief cause of rising world temperatures was man-made emissions of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases. Foremost in giving authority to this view since 1990 had been the series of major reports issued by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC.

Other experts were beginning to expose serious flaws in the scientific meth-

ods by which the cause had been promoted - most notably in the IPCC's exceptionally prominent use of the famous 'hockey stick' graph, which was its chief evidence for claiming that global temperatures had suddenly shot up in the late 20th century to by far their highest level in 1,000 years.

After years of negotiation, December 2009 saw the dramatic failure, for political reasons, of the Copenhagen climate conference, the largest the world had ever seen. Here it had been hoped that the world's leaders would sign a treaty agreeing to cuts in emissions of greenhouse gases so drastic and so costly that these would have presented mankind with easily the largest bill in its history.

The BBC's journalists made no secret of their dismay at the breakdown of negotiations in Copenhagen. But also, around that same time in the winter of 2009/10, came the revelations of the 'Climategate' emails, and those other scandals surrounding the IPCC, which dealt such a blow to that body's authority that it would not be easy to recover.

This sequence of events amounted to a wholly new phase in the climate change story, one which should have called more than ever for informed and dispassionate reporting. Yet through it all, the BBC's coverage remained so defensively one-sided that it was at best peculiarly selective, while to much of what was happening it remained studiously oblivious.

In the very years when the global warming issue was becoming more controversial than at any time since the scare was first launched on its way in the 1980s, the BBC continued to promote the received orthodoxy on climate change and the political response to it without ever exposing either to serious questioning.

The BBC's journalists went out of their way to publicise almost every alarmist claim the promoters of the scare could come up with, even after these had been shown to be without scientific foundation. Almost the only occasions on which they have paid attention to the views of dissenters from the orthodoxy has been when they have produced programmes designed to trivialise and caricature those views, portraying them as being held by only a tiny and disreputable minority of 'deniers'.

They have lent enthusiastic support to every political measure proposed to 'fight climate change', while consistently failing to explain the immense financial cost of those proposals and their enormous economic implications. In their relentless promotion of the benefits of 'renewable energy', such as wind power, they have consistently endorsed the often absurdly exaggerated claims of the commercial interests involved in 'renewables', while failing to explain their practical shortcomings.

In doing this, as this report will try to show, the BBC has not only failed in its professional duty to report fully and accurately on one of the biggest scien-

tific and political stories of our time: it has betrayed its own principles, in three respects.

First, it has betrayed its statutory obligation to be impartial, using the excuse that any dissent from the official orthodoxy was so insignificant that it should just be ignored or made to look ridiculous.

Second, it has betrayed the principles of responsible journalism, by allowing its coverage to become so one-sided that it has too often amounted to no more than propaganda.

Third, it has betrayed the fundamental principles of science, which relies on unrelenting scepticism towards any theory until it can be shown to provide a comprehensive explanation for the observed evidence.

In all these respects, the BBC has above all been guilty of abusing the trust of its audience, and of all those compelled to pay for it. On one of the most important and far-reaching issues of our time, its coverage has been so tendentious that it has given its viewers a picture not just misleading but at times even fraudulent.

Such are the issues this report sets out to discuss.

Summary

The purpose of this report is to measure the BBC's coverage of all aspects of the climate change issue between 2005 and the present day against its statutory obligation to report on the world 'with due accuracy and impartiality'.

The report shows how in 2005 and 2006 the BBC adopted a new interpretation of what was meant by impartiality in this context. It took the view that the 'consensus' supporting a belief in the threat of man-made global warming was now so overwhelming that it was now the BBC's duty actively to promote that belief, while ignoring or belittling any views or evidence which contradicted it.

The report consequently examines the BBC's one-sided coverage of some of the major climate-related events of 2006 and 2007, such as Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Truth*, the Stern Report and the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report, while failing to report evidence which indicated that the scientific 'consensus' was now beginning to be questioned seriously.

In 2007 the Channel 4 documentary *The Great Global Warming Swindle* aroused widespread interest by publicising the views of eminent dissenting scientists which the BBC had ignored, as it did the evidence of a sharp if temporary drop in temperatures, which raised questions over the projections of the computer models on which the 'consensus' relied.

In 2008 the BBC responded to Channel 4's documentary by attacking some of the scientists it had featured in one of its own, *Climate Wars*. It also omitted to report on the huge financial costs and practical shortcomings of the measures now being proposed by politicians to meet the supposed warming threat, notably those of the government's wind power programme and the Climate Change Act.

In 2009 the BBC went out of its way to publicise various scientific papers and publicity stunts designed to heighten alarm over global warming in advance of the Copenhagen conference; and could not hide its dismay when the conference ended in acrimony without the far-reaching treaty it had hoped for. The BBC tried to hold the line for the 'climate establishment' through all the scandals which assailed it during that winter, from the publishing of the 'Climategate' emails to the revelations surrounding the IPCC.

In 2010 it supported the establishment over the various inquiries staged to downplay the significance of Climategate. So far had these events put the BBC and the cause it supported on the back foot, that in 2011 it turned more aggressively than ever on the 'deniers' who had dared question the 'consensus'. Most bizarrely of all this was reflected in a review on 'impartiality' in reporting on science commissioned by the BBC Trust, which in effect

recommended that, far from needing to become more balanced in its coverage, the BBC should show more bias than ever.

This report's conclusions discuss some of the reasons for the BBC's inability to recognise why its coverage of climate change has been so fundamentally flawed, and why there seems little likelihood that, at any time in the immediate future, it will amend its policy to comply with its statutory obligations.

Introduction

'The BBC must do all it can to ensure that controversial subjects are treated with due accuracy and impartiality in all relevant output.'

Regulatory obligations on the UK Public Services, under the BBC Charter 2006.

'There are some issues on which the Corporation does not attempt – and never has attempted – to be impartial ... I have neither the learning nor the experience to know whether the doomsayers are right about the human causes of climate change, But I am willing to acknowledge that people who know a lot more about than I do may be right when they claim that it is the consequences of our own behaviour, I assume that this is why the BBC's coverage of the issue abandoned the pretence of impartiality long ago.'

Jeremy Paxman, 'How green is my Auntie?', Newsnight website, 2 February 2007.

'For me though, the most worrying aspect of political correctness was over the story that recurred with increasing frequency during my last ten years at the BBC – global warming ...from the beginning I was unhappy at how one-sided the BBC coverage of the issue was, and how much more complicated the climate system was than the over-simplified two-minute reports that were the stock-in-trade of the BBC's environment correspondents. These, without exception, accepted the UN's assurance that 'the science is settled' and that human emissions of carbon dioxide threatened the world with catastrophic climate change. Environmental pressure groups could be guaranteed that their press releases, usually beginning with the words "Scientists say..." would go on air unchallenged. My interest in climate change grew out of my concern for the failings of BBC journalism in reporting it. In my early and formative days at ITN, I learned that we have an obligation to report both sides of a story. It is not journalism if you don't. It is close to propaganda.'

Peter Sissons, 'The BBC became a propaganda machine for climate change zealots ... and I was treated like a lunatic for daring to dissent', Daily Mail, 9 February 2011.

Strangely enough, the first occasion when the BBC took an interest in global warming was long before the term had been invented. Way back in 1974 it broadcast a two-hour television documentary entitled *The Weather Machine*. In fairly sensationalised fashion, it centred on interviews with a number of scientists who shared the then-fashionable belief that the world

might be heading for catastrophe through global cooling. After three decades when global temperatures had been falling, they warned that this might be presaging the onset of a new ice age,

The one exception to this was an interview with a Swedish meteorologist, Professor Bert Bolin. As the programme's odd man out, his concern was precisely the opposite. The real impending disaster, he suggested, was that, thanks to rising human emissions of CO₂, temperatures might soon be rising again so fast that the planet could be threatened by runaway warming.

No one could then have foreseen that, just 14 years later, this obscure Swedish professor would become the first chairman of a new United Nations body which, over the 20 years that followed, was to become very much the central player in the crusade to warn the world that it faced the threat of dangerous warming.

In the late 1970s global temperatures had indeed again risen, as Bolin had predicted. He then became the leader of a small group of international meteorologists and officials who shared his conviction that the reason for this was the rise in CO₂ levels. By 1988 this group, including the head of the UK Met Office, Dr John Houghton, had won so much high-level political influence that, under the auspices of the UN, they were authorised to launch, in November that year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Essentially, their agreed task, on behalf of the world's governments, was to assemble the evidence for what they called 'human-induced climate change', to assess its likely impacts and to produce recommendations as to how these might be mitigated.¹

Certainly 1988 was the year when the great global warming scare took off. But more obviously, at the time, this was due to a carefully stage-managed performance before a US Senate Committee by an American scientist working for NASA, Dr James Hansen. In front of a room-full of journalists and TV cameras, it was his apocalyptic warning that the world was suddenly becoming hotter than ever before in history which first fired up the attention of the world's media. This launched into popular consciousness that soon all-too familiar vision of a world facing catastrophe through soaring temperatures, melting ice caps, fast-rising sea levels, heatwaves, droughts, floods, hurricanes and the rest.

¹ The story of the steps leading up to the formation of the IPCC is told in some detail in Booker, *The Real Global Warming Disaster*, op.cit., pp.30-34 and 40-43. A central figure in this was Maurice Strong, a left-wing Canadian businessman with a strong ideological interest in environmental issues, who in 1972 had become the first executive director of the UN Environment Program (UNEP). In 1985 his successor Dr Mustafa Tolba presided over a conference at Villach, Austria, co-sponsored by UNEP with another UN body, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), at which Bolin and Tolba took a leading role in calling for international action to combat global warming. Their ally Strong was now a member of the Brundtland Commission on 'the environment and development', which reported in 1987 (Tolba being singled out in the foreword to the report for having given valuable advice). UNEP and the WMO were consequently given authorisation by governments to set up the IPCC. At the IPCC's first meeting in Geneva in November 1988, chaired by Tolba and attended by representatives of 34 governments, Bolin was appointed its first chairman. Houghton was appointed to head the key Working Group 1, assembling the scientific case for global warming. The written statements presented by governments unanimously took man-made warming to be an accepted fact and that the IPCC's primary task was to collect and assess the evidence for it (<http://www.ipcc.ch/meetings/session01/first-final-report.pdf>, National Statements, Annex III). The IPCC's first Assessment Report (1990) provided the evidence which formed a basis for the 1992 Rio 'Earth Summit', chaired by Strong as its chief organiser. This set up the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which in turn staged the 1997 conference to adopt the Kyoto Protocol.

With remarkable speed, the scare began to carry all before it. In 1990 the IPCC issued the first of its famous assessment reports, giving authoritative backing to what had fast become accepted as the orthodoxy of the time, supposedly upheld by a 'consensus of the world's scientists'. The world's political leaders responded by gathering in Rio in 1992 for the largest conference ever seen, to sign a treaty pledging them in principle to make major reductions in emissions of CO₂. A second IPCC report in 1996, less qualified in its alarm than the first, was followed in 1997 by another global treaty in Kyoto, setting out specific national commitments for emissions reductions. Swept along by all this, almost wholly uncritically, were almost all the mainstream media, on both sides of the Atlantic.

The BBC's role at this time did not attract any particular comment because, although it did not question either the authority of the IPCC or the theory it represented, it was merely swimming with a general tide.

By the start of the 21st century, the fever over climate change was rising even higher. In 1998 global temperatures had risen to what was claimed to be their highest level in modern times, making the 'consensus' theory seem more plausible than ever. In 2001 the findings of the IPCC's third report, with the 'hockey stick' graph as its centrepiece – able to show temperatures soaring up to 1998 as 'the hottest year in history' - were even more alarming than those before it. But the time when this fever reached its height was the years between 2004 and 2007.

These were the years when the British Prime Minister Tony Blair, with the aid of his chief scientific adviser Sir David King and the mammoth report produced for him in 2006 by Sir Nicholas Stern, bid to become more vocal in warning of the threat facing mankind than any other world leader. In 2006 the claims made by Al Gore in his hugely popular film *An Inconvenient Truth* were notably more extreme than anything so far predicted even by the IPCC. The IPCC's own fourth report in 2007 was by far its scariest yet, predicting that global warming could within decades melt the Himalayan glaciers, destroy 40 per cent of the Amazon rainforest and threaten Africa with mass famine by halving crop yields.

It was in these same years, when the panic over climate change was at its height, that those running the BBC came to the view that they would now be justified in adopting a new editorial policy line – one which would allow its coverage of global warming issues to become even more overtly partisan.

Chapter One: (2005-6) 'We have now moved on in our coverage'

The BBC's new policy and the 'consensus bubble'

On several occasions during this period, various senior broadcasters and journalists met to discuss how reporting on climate issues could be made more effective in communicating to the public just how serious the threat from man-made global warming had become.

One revealing instance was a discussion on environmental reporting, chaired by Jon Snow of Channel 4 News, at the annual conference of News Xchange in Amsterdam in November 2005.² Following an attack on the BBC's environmental coverage by George Monbiot of the Guardian, Snow prompted a reply from Fran Unsworth, the BBC's Head of Newsgathering, by putting to her that the BBC had recently carried out a survey which showed that an overwhelming majority of scientists now accepted the case for man-made global warming. Yet 'many programmes', he went on, try to 'put on a balancing voice that says there's no such thing as global warming'.

Unsworth admitted there might formerly have been a time when the BBC felt it necessary to balance 'one person setting out the case for man-made global warming' with another person opposing it', and that this could have 'left the viewer with the impression that there is equal weight to those arguments'. But, she continued, 'we have now moved on in our coverage of it'. The issue now was 'how much weight do you give to different viewpoints?'. The BBC's conclusion was that the weight of evidence was now so heavily against that tiny minority of scientists 'who don't accept that there is man-made global warming' that their views could be ignored.

Particularly significant in what followed was an event which took place two months later when, on 26 January 2006, a day-long 'high-level seminar' was staged at the BBC Television Centre. Entitled 'Climate Change - The Challenge to Broadcasting'. It was 'directed' by Roger Harrabin, one of the BBC's senior environmental reporters, and Dr Joe Smith, an Open University geographer who describes himself as an 'action researcher' on climate change. Back in 1996 they had set up the 'Cambridge Media and Environment Programme' to promote environmental coverage in the media. They were funded, inter alia, by Defra, the department responsible for government policy on global warming; the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), a leading environmental pressure group; and the Tyndall Centre, a climate research unit at the University of East Anglia.³ Also helping to organise the BBC seminar was a body called

² 'What's wrong with TV news coverage of global warming and the weather?', News Xchange website, http://www.newsxchange.org/archive/newsx2005/what_wrong_02_05.html.

³ The most comprehensive source of evidence on this seminar is a submission made in October 2010 to the BBC's Trust's 'Review of Impartiality and Accuracy of the BBC's Coverage of Science' by two diligent bloggers on climate change, Andrew Montford (*Bishop Hill*) and Tony Newbery (*Harmless Sky*). Their evidence, obtained in part through requests under

the International Broadcasting Trust. Despite its name, this was a PR lobbying organisation which acted for several leading global warming activist groups, including Friends of the Earth.⁴

Although the BBC initially remained very secretive about the nature and purpose of this gathering, held under Chatham House rules (it refused to answer some 400 enquiries about it from members of the public), it eventually emerged that the meeting, hosted by Jana Bennett, head of BBC Vision and Helen Boaden, director of BBC News, was attended by '30 key BBC staff and 30 invited guests who are specialists in the area of climate change'.

Chief guest speaker at the seminar was Lord May of Oxford, a former chief scientific adviser to the government, who had recently stepped down as President of the Royal Society. Although not a climate scientist, he was a fervent long-time believer in man-made global warming – and a former trustee of the WWF - and had used his presidency to push the Royal Society into a much more actively committed stance on the issue. In his valedictory address he had said 'make no mistake, climate change is undeniably real, caused by human activities, and has serious consequences'. He added, in a point already long familiar from other advocates of man-made global warming, that:

'there exists a climate change "denial lobby", funded to the tune of tens of millions of dollars by sections of the hydrocarbon industry', which was very similar; in attitudes and tactics to the tobacco lobby that continues to deny smoking causes lung cancer, or the curious lobby denying that HIV causes AIDS'.⁵

Only five years later, in November 2011, did one of the chief organisers, Roger Harrabin, at last give some more direct clue as to what advice Lord May had given the BBC's senior staff at this seminar. 'A senior scientist present', he wrote (clearly referring to May):

told us the debate on climate change was 'over' and urged us to stop reporting the views of climate sceptics.

Harrabin himself, by his own account, had offered some qualification to this. Although he agreed that 'the balance of the science' indicated that it was not always necessary to represent the views of sceptics, he did suggest that they could on occasion be reported 'on a case-by-case basis'. The BBC's Director of News, Helen Boaden, he added, 'endorsed the advice'.⁶

the Freedom of Information Act, was brushed aside by Professor Steve Jones in his report (see Epilogue below). It can be read at <http://www.bishop-hill.net/storage/BBC%20Science%20review%20submission%20Final.doc>. See also the Postscript of this report.

4 Montford and Newbery, op.cit. The IBT describes its purpose as 'lobbying Government, regulators and broadcasters'. In an email obtained under FoI in 2008, Jana Bennett wrote that this and other BBC seminars had been 'organised jointly' by the IBT and the CMEP. The BBC's Head of Editorial Compliance told Montford and Newbery that Harrabin had co-directed the seminar 'entirely as part of his BBC work'.

5 'Threats to tomorrow's world', Address of the President Lord May of Oxford OM AC FRS given at the Anniversary Meeting, Notes and Records of the Royal Society, 30 November 2005, <http://rsnr.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/60/1/109.full>.

6 <http://www.bishop-hill.net/blog/2011/11/29/harrabin-on-cmep.html>. Harrabin was provoked into publishing this brief

The only other account of the BBC seminar ever to have been published came shortly after it took place from the journalist and blogger Richard D. North, who recorded his impression that he had been the only person in the room who was in any sense 'a climate change sceptic'.⁷ He wrote:

I found the seminar frankly shocking. The BBC crew (senior executives from every branch of the Corporation) were matched by a equal number of specialists, almost all (and maybe all) of whom could be said to have come from the 'we must support Kyoto' school of climate change activists...

I was frankly appalled by the level of ignorance of the issue which the BBC people showed. I mean that I heard nothing which made me think any of them read any broadsheet newspaper coverage of the topic (except maybe the Guardian and that lazily). Though they purported to be aware that this was an immensely important topic, it seemed to me that none of them had shown even a modicum of professional curiosity on the subject ... I spent the day discussing the subject and I don't recall anyone showing any sign of having read anything serious at all.

I argued at the seminar that I thought most broadcasting coverage on climate change was awful. But I also said there was no need for them to become self-conscious about it, This was because, although the issues were scientifically, politically and economically difficult, the BBC's reporting of the thing would improve as soon as their audience was asked to vote or pay for climate change policy.

North summed up his impression of the occasion by saying that 'the whole apparatus of self-examination on climate change policy' seemed 'remarkably like subtle propaganda for the orthodoxies it was meant to be interrogating'.

Yet this was the basis on which the BBC around this time was developing the new policy line – to be refined and made more explicit in the years that followed – which would allow it to make its coverage of any issues related to climate change more actively partisan than ever. Its obligations to remain impartial could be put aside, it argued, on the grounds that the official orthodoxy was now so overwhelmingly accepted that any dissent from it could be dismissed as too insignificant to be worthy of notice.

The 'consensus bubble'

The most obvious reason why the BBC took this line when it did was that this was the time when the 'consensus' view seemed more than ever in the ascendant, carrying all before it. The IPCC enjoyed extraordinary prestige and was widely presented as expressing a 'consensus' of 'the world's 1500 top climate scientists' (a description more than once repeated by the BBC). The

reference to the seminar in the BBC house magazine *Ariel*, after the importance of the meeting and his part in it were publicised in the *Mail on Sunday* and the *Sunday Telegraph*, 20 November 2011.

⁷ Not to be confused with my own long-time colleague and co-author Dr Richard A. E. North.

'consensus' view was being actively promoted by the scientific establishments of Britain, the US and other countries, led by the Royal Society and the journal *Nature* and their US equivalents. Britain's three main political parties were all equally firmly behind it (the Conservative Party even more obviously so after it elected David Cameron as leader in 2005). So was the European Union, the level of government on which the environmental policy of its 27 member states was ultimately decided, and which had been firmly committed to 'the fight against climate change' since 1990.

In hindsight we can thus see how this unanimity of accepted opinion had become so all-pervasive that it gave little incentive to those journalists inhabiting the same 'consensus bubble' to look outside it for any alternative facts or opinions. It was in 2006 that it had become fashionable to pour scorn on any dissenters from the 'consensus' as 'deniers', implying that they could be compared to those mentally unbalanced right-wing extremists who denied the historical evidence for the Nazi holocaust.⁸

The only allowable element of dissension appeared to lie within the bubble itself, where there was constant pressure from its own more extreme wing, led by the activists of environmental pressure groups such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and the WWF, to promote the cause even more vehemently. They argued that the threat of global warming was so much greater and more urgent than was yet generally recognised that governments must be pushed into taking even more drastic steps to counter it.

If anything the BBC was inclined to support this latter view, as it showed early in 2005 in its coverage of a conference staged in Exeter under the auspices of the Met Office and its Hadley Centre. This gathering had been organised at the instigation of Tony Blair, who the previous year had set out his stall to become the most prominent politician in the world calling for more drastic action on climate change. In the summer of 2005, he was due to hold the presidencies of both the G8 and the EU, and wanted to put global warming at the top of their agendas.

The theme of the Exeter conference, entitled *Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change* and attended by 200 scientists from across the world, was to convey that the risks of global warming were 'more serious than previously thought'. As a senior BBC environmental correspondent, Richard Black, reported, new research presented to the conference showed that a rise in global temperatures of 2 degrees C 'would mean the displacement of millions of people from their homes, a fall in the productivity of farmland, widespread devastation of coral reefs and the melting of the Greenland ice-cap'. Other speakers argued that such a temperature rise could only be averted by adopting the most radical measures, such as forcing every kind of business to pay a heavy financial price for the right to emit CO₂, along with a major push

⁸ The first use of the term 'denier' in this context has often been ascribed to Scott Pelley, the presenter of a CBS TV programme, *60 Minutes*, in April 2006. It was popularised in Britain by George Monbiot of the *Guardian*, who wrote on 21 September 2006 'almost everywhere, climate change denial now looks as stupid and unacceptable as Holocaust denial', see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2006/sep/21/comment.georgemonbiot>. But disparaging use of the term 'denialism' to describe opinions dissenting from the warming 'consensus' has been traced back as far as 2002.

behind new technologies designed to curb CO2 emissions, such as a much greater reliance on renewable energy.⁹

All this Black and his colleagues reported as if such claims were not to be questioned. But two months later, in evidence to a House of Lords committee, a senior Times journalist gave a rather different impression of this gathering, which she described as having been:

something like a contest between which horror stories – the Vanishing Gulf Stream, Millions Dead of Malaria, the Parboiled Polar Bear – would do the best job of making the public's flesh creep. As spin for the government's case that climate change is a worse threat than terrorism, this was no doubt effective. As guidance to policy makers it was a disgrace. Tall stories have no place at G8 summits'.¹⁰

Just as revealing as those aspects of the climate story which the BBC did choose to cover were those which it did not report because they did not fit its 'consensus' narrative. As it happened, in the wider scientific community outside the 'bubble', there were at this time the first signs of a new groundswell of expert dissent. As yet this was nothing like so obvious as it would become later, so it was perhaps not surprising that the BBC journalists seemed to remain oblivious to it.

There were, for instance, several episodes involving eminent scientists who, after participating in the inner workings of the IPCC, had begun to express dismay at the curious way this organisation was run, and how ruthlessly it acted to suppress any views contrary to its official line.

One of these, a longtime critic of the 'consensus', was Professor Richard Lindzen of MIT, one of the world's leading atmospheric physicists. As early as 2001 he had testified to a US Senate committee on his experience as a senior contributor to the IPCC's Third Assessment Report. He not only recalled how arguments based on his researches in his own field of expertise had been overruled, because they ran directly counter to those preferred by the IPCC, he went on to describe the more general pressures imposed on the IPCC's contributors to conform to its chosen line.

In 2004, Dr Chris Landsea, the leading expert on Atlantic hurricanes, had been invited by a senior member of the IPCC establishment, Dr Kevin Trenberth, to contribute on this subject to the IPCC's next report. Shortly afterwards, he learned that Trenberth was planning to state at a major press conference that climate change was causing hurricanes to become much more frequent and intense. Landsea emailed Trenberth, who knew nothing about hurricanes, to say that there was not a shred of scientific evidence to support the line he was proposing to take. But Trenberth had gone ahead with his statement

⁹ 'Scientists' grim climate report' by Richard Black, BBC environment correspondent, BBC News website, 3 February 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/4234467.stm>, and other BBC coverage at the time.

¹⁰ Rosemary Righter, written evidence to House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs, *The Economics of Climate Change*, Vol. II, Evidence, HL Paper 12-B, published 6 July 2005, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200506/ldselect/ldeconaf/12/12we23.htm>

regardless, winning headlines across the world. Furthermore, his right to do so was then defended by the IPCC's chairman, Dr Rajendra Pachauri, prompting Landsea to resign - on the grounds that the IPCC seemed to place its political agenda above the cause of scientific truth.

In 2005 one of the world's leading experts on malaria and other insect-borne diseases, Dr Paul Reiter of the Pasteur Institute, painted a disturbing picture to a House of Lords committee of his experiences as a contributor to a chapter on his subject in the IPCC's 2001 report. He had been surprised to discover that scarcely any of his fellow authors had any academic expertise in the subject. Some were merely environmental activists. Almost all were already convinced, contrary to the evidence, that global warming must lead to a spread of insect-borne diseases.

Despite his efforts to correct them on the science, when the chapter appeared, Reiter was amazed to find that his evidence had been ignored in place of a text which merely echoed the scare story which the IPCC wanted. Another witness before the committee, Dr Nils-Axel Morner, former President of the International Commission on Sea Levels, had a similar story to tell of his experiences as a contributor to the same report's chapter on sea-levels.

All these incidents from outside the 'bubble' were beginning to add up to what, in journalistic terms, might have seemed rather an interesting and important story. But it was one which wholly passed the BBC journalists by - as did an even more significant story beginning to break around this time. Two expert Canadian analysts, Steve McIntyre and Ross McKittrick, exposed the computer tricks used to construct the most celebrated IPCC icon of them all, the 'hockey stick' temperature graph produced by a team led by Michael Mann. The 'hockey stick' was regarded by the IPCC as such key evidence for its case that its 2001 report had reproduced it no fewer than six times.

Steve McIntyre was a mathematician and a retired consulting analyst on the mining industry, with a particular expertise in computer modelling. Ross McKittrick was an economics professor with a particular interest in environmental issues. In 2003 and 2005, after subjecting the methodology used to construct Mann's graph to exhaustive analysis, they published papers demonstrating that the 'hockey stick' was no more than a statistical artefact. They showed how it had been created by a computer algorithm which manipulated data which was itself highly questionable, to produce results which bore no relation to reality.¹¹ The fact that the IPCC had made such

¹¹ For anyone unfamiliar with this story, Mann and his team had based their findings on an earlier study of tree rings from bristlecone pine trees in the Sierra Nevada (although the authors of that study had explicitly made clear that the varying widths of the tree rings were not to be regarded a reliable guide to past temperatures). Mann's team then added other tree ring samples from across North America which failed to show the same pattern, a gently declining temperature trend for most of the past 1,000 years (with no Medieval Warm Period or Little Ice Age), suddenly rising sharply at the end. McIntyre and McKittrick established that the computer model then used to put all the data together had been programmed with an algorithm which gave up to 390 times more weight to the samples from the bristlecone pines than to those from elsewhere which failed to show the required pattern. This effect was reinforced by replacing the tree ring record for recent decades with an actual thermometer record, to give the final graph the shape of an ice-hockey stick, a long flat stick with a blade sticking up almost vertically at the right end. See S.McIntyre and R.McKittrick, 'Corrections to the Mann et al (1998) proxy database and northern hemispheric temperature series', *Energy and Environment*, 14,206 (2003), <http://climateaudit.files.wordpress.com/2005/09/mcintyre.mckittrick.2003.pdf>; McIntyre and McKittrick, 'Hockey sticks, principal components and spurious significance', *Geophysical Research Letters*; 32, 2005;

prominent use of the graph, without carrying out any checks on the methods used to construct it, raised further questions as to how competently or honestly the most influential scientific body in the world was run.

This particular story had begun to arouse growing interest in a new medium which from now on was to play an ever more significant part in the climate debate, the blogosphere. Irked by the emergence of a new kind of dissent from the 'consensus', including the criticism of their graph, in 2004 Mann and some of his IPCC allies, calling themselves 'the Hockey Team', launched a blog, *RealClimate*, to defend their views.¹² McIntyre responded with one of his own, *Climate Audit*.

It was here on the internet that much of the serious debate over climate change was now beginning to be centred. But, like those criticisms of the IPCC from the scientists disillusioned by their sight of its workings from the inside, all these harbingers of what was to come remained wholly off the BBC's radar. In its narrow focus on just that small part of the picture it was now more than ever determined to promote, it showed not the slightest interest in what was happening outside the 'bubble'.

Chapter Two: (2006-7) The BBC goes on the offensive

From Attenborough, Gore and the IPCC Report to The Archers

In 2006, in pushing its preferred line, the BBC went into overdrive. In May that year it staged a long-planned *Climate Chaos* season, the highlight of which was a major two-part television documentary entitled *The Truth About Climate Change*. For this it called on the services of Sir David Attenborough, the most widely respected of all the BBC's regular contributors for his many documentary series on the world's wildlife.¹³

In his first programme, *Are we changing Planet Earth?*, Attenborough introduced himself as a man who had once been sceptical about man-made climate change, but who now found the evidence for it 'overwhelming'. What above all had convinced him, he said, were the graphs produced by climatologists which showed such a close correlation between the rise in CO₂

<http://www.agu.org/pubs/crossref/2005/2004GL021750.shtml>; McKittrick, 'What is the "hockey stick" debate about?', <http://www.uoguelph.ca/~rmckitri/research/McKittrick-hockeystick.pdf>; and evidence by McKittrick to the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee, 2005, op.cit. See also A.W.Montford, *The Hockey Stick Illusion*, Stacey International 2010; and Booker, *The Real Global Warming Disaster*, 2009, op.cit.

¹² *RealClimate* was in fact set up by Environmental Media Services, part of a PR firm, Fenton Communications, long associated with promoting liberal or left-of-centre causes.

¹³ For a lengthy sympathetic summary of Attenborough's programmes see the entry ; *Are We Changing Planet Earth?* on Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Are_We_Changing_Planet_Earth%3F. According to the 2008 email from Jana Bennett (Head of BBC Vision) obtained by Montford and Newbery under the Freedom of Information Act, the *Climate Chaos* season was inspired by the 'enormously positive feedback' from the seminars organised by Harrabin's CMEP.

levels and that of global temperatures.

As evidence for how human activity was beginning to have a devastating effect on the earth's climate, Attenborough cited various familiar examples. There was the previous year's Hurricane Katrina, leading him to claim that the 2005 hurricane season had been the worst ever recorded. There was the abnormal drought of 2005 in the Amazon, signifying what he claimed was a fast approaching threat to the survival of the world's largest rainforest. There had been the freakish 2003 European heatwave, described by Attenborough as "the worst for 60 years" and responsible for "27,000 deaths", but which was now likely to recur much more often. He pointed to the record melting of Arctic ice, threatening the future survival of the world's polar bears, which he claimed had already been reduced in numbers by a quarter. This he linked also to the melting of the huge Greenland icecap, threatening a catastrophic rise in sea levels,

All these disasters, Attenborough claimed, were just portents of much worse to come. But what he seemed unaware of was all the authoritative evidence which contradicted every one of these claims.

Had Attenborough or the BBC's researchers consulted the official data published by NOAA (the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), they would have discovered that, far from 2005 breaking any records, Atlantic hurricane activity had been more intense in the 1940s and 1950s than at any time since. Katrina had brought disaster to New Orleans not because of global warming but because of a failure to maintain the city's protective levees.

Had Attenborough or his team looked at the history of rainfall in the Amazon, they would have learned that although the drought which climaxed in 2005 was unusually severe, it was by no means unprecedented; and furthermore he failed to mention that, in the early months of 2006 - before his programme was broadcast - the drought had been immediately followed by abnormally severe rainfall, causing disastrous floods right across the Amazon basin (this, incidentally, was to be repeated in 2007).¹⁴

As for the famous 2003 European heatwave, more sanguine weather experts had already explained that this was merely the result of an unusual but again not unprecedented stationary high-pressure cell sucking in heat from the Sahara (even Attenborough admitted that there had been a similar heatwave 60 years earlier). The 35,000 deaths more usually attributed to this period of unusual heat, far from being an exceptional disaster, was much lower than the number of deaths routinely ascribed to excessive cold during European winters.¹⁵

On the summer melting of Arctic ice, there was considerable evidence to

14 For a full discussion of all this, see 'Amazon drought: the least of their worries' on Dr Richard North's EU Referendum blog, 14 March 2010, <http://eureferendum.blogspot.com/2010/03/amazon-drought-least-of-their-worries.html>.

15 In 2001 a study in the *British Medical Journal* estimated that in unusually cold winters hypothermia could cause 50,000 deaths in Britain alone.

suggest that the extent of this had been greater even in comparatively recent times, such as the 1930s. Had Attenborough consulted the latest data for polar bear numbers in Alaska and Canada, he would have discovered that, far from declining, 19 of the 21 main polar groups had in fact expanded since the 1960s by up to 300 percent (largely due to curbs on hunting). Had he looked at the latest studies of the Greenland ice sheet, he would have seen that the recent melting of its glaciers was relatively so modest that it amounted to only 7/1000ths of one percent of the island's ice, and that this peripheral melting had also coincided with a thickening of the ice sheet in the interior¹⁶ (Greenland's ice had anyway retreated much more significantly during the Medieval Warm Period, allowing settlements to flourish now still buried under feet of ice).

In other words, the picture Attenborough gave showed no familiarity with the serious science on these issues at all. All these claims were already familiar from environmentalist lobby groups, or from scientists trying to come up with findings which might please those who supplied their government funding. Yet it was on such sources that the BBC seemed content to rely for its information.¹⁷

In his second programme, *Can we save Planet Earth?*, Attenborough visited the Met Office's Hadley Centre in Exeter, also long at the forefront of the battle to promote an alarmist view of the threat of global warming. Here he accepted, without questioning their assurance, that a planetary warming of 2 degrees C was now inevitable, thanks to human activity over the previous 25 years. He claimed that the melting of the Greenland ice cap alone would be enough to flood much of south-east Britain, including central London, and would wipe most of Florida and all of Bangladesh off the map. No mention of the fact that even the IPCC had not predicted that sea levels were likely to rise over the next century by more than 59cm (23.2 inches).

Later that summer the BBC gave much coverage to the popular success of Al Gore's Oscar-winning documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*. Its senior environmental correspondent Richard Black posted a glowing review of the film on the BBC website, describing it as 'in a congenial, user-friendly, understated way', perhaps 'the most terrifying movie of all time'.¹⁸

Gore, as Black admiringly put it, had 'a brain which understands and holds figures and arguments', in giving his audience 'a hand-held tour through the intricacies of climate change science'. But Black seemed unaware that, measured against proper scientific evidence, virtually every one of the scores of claims Gore made in the film was at best an exaggeration or a distortion of the facts, and in many instances were just pure invention - right down to his claim that a huge blow-up version of the 'hockey stick' provided independent

¹⁶ See, for instance, W.Krabill et al (2000), 'Greenland ice-sheet: high elevation balance and peripheral thinning', *Science*, 289, <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/289/5478/428>. E.Rignot and P.Kanagaratnam (2006), 'Changes in the velocity structure of the Greenland ice sheet', *Science*, 311, <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/311/5763/986>.

¹⁷ The scientific adviser to Attenborough's programmes was Dr Joe Smith, co-organiser with Roger Harrabin of the BBC's 2006 seminar (see Postscript).

¹⁸ 'An engaging dissection of disaster', BBC News website, 15 September 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/5348692.stm>.

confirmation of Mann's original graph, when, as later emerged, it was simply an exaggerated version of Mann's own graph.¹⁹

Black cited only two specific examples of Gore's claims. One was a passage predicting that, thanks to global warming, 'within the decade there will be no more snows of Kilimanjaro'. Although this was a favourite claim of supporters of the 'consensus', expert scientific studies had shown that the cause of the retreat of Kilimanjaro's ice cap was not global warming at all. It had begun around 1880 due to a sharp decline in precipitation caused mainly by local deforestation (and the speed of the retreat was greater in the decades before 1950 than it had been since).²⁰

Black also hailed Gore's 'computer simulations' showing how the melting of the West Antarctic ice cap would cause a 20-foot rise in sea-levels, inundating many of the world's major cities, such as Shanghai, Calcutta and New York. Again, even the upper level of the IPCC's range of projections had not shown a likely sea-level rise in the 21st century greater than 23.2 inches. With the exception of a tiny part of Antarctica around the Antarctic Peninsula, all the evidence indicated that the continent had, over the past 50 years, been slightly cooling rather than warming. Yet, for the BBC's senior environment correspondent, such game-playing with the evidence was enough to justify his praise of the film as 'the most terrifying movie ever made'.

In October 2006 the BBC again gave a remarkable demonstration of the one-sidedness of its reporting in the coverage it gave to the publication of the Stern Review, a 712-page report on the 'economic consequences of climate change' commissioned by Tony Blair from a senior Treasury official, Nicholas Stern. Heavily reliant on economic computer modelling, Stern came up with a whole array of predictions as to the disasters global warming was likely to cause. It would create damage costing more than the two world wars. Swathes of the planet would become uninhabitable. At least 200 million people would be driven from their homes by rising sea levels. Declining crop yields would bring mass-famine, particularly in Africa. There was even a possibility that runaway warming would bring about the extinction of 40 percent of all species on earth.

Scarcely had Stern's report been published than it began to be torn apart in the most disparaging terms by many of the world's most respected experts on the economic implications of climate change, such as Dr William Nordhaus of Yale University. But most telling of all was a savage attack on Stern's work by Dr Richard Tol, who had contributed to all three of the IPCC's reports and was author of the UN's *Handbook on Methods of Climate Change Impact Assessment and Adaptation Strategies*.

Stern had claimed that some of the more apocalyptic findings of his report were arrived at by using techniques devised by Tol himself. But Tol dismissed

¹⁹ For a full discussion of the scientific errors in Gore's film, giving scientific sources, see Booker, *The Real Global Warming Disaster*, op. cit., pp.140-151.

²⁰ See Booker, op.cit, p.145

these as 'preposterous', showing how Stern had misused his methodology to reach absurdly exaggerated conclusions which could not possibly be justified by the data.

Not a word of this was reported by the BBC, which instead published on its website a long series of extravagant tributes to Stern's review from such authorities as the European Commission, the UK Sustainable Development Commission, the Carbon Trust and Greenpeace.²¹ This followed the prominence it had given to Blair's claim that, by showing that the scientific evidence for global warming was now 'overwhelming', Stern had produced 'the most important report on the future ever published by this government'.

An even more important event looming at this time was the publication of the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report. On 2 February 2007 the Summary for Policymakers, an advance digest of the full report, was unveiled in Paris to unprecedented media hype.

That night, the BBC's main early evening news bulletin led with a special report. The presenters intoned the headlines in their most clamant style:

At 6 clock - no more doubt,

Climate change is happening - and we are to blame,

Leading scientists predict that by the end of the century some parts of Europe will be too hot to live in,

As temperatures soar and sea levels rise, the verdict from the world's leading climate scientists: the human race - guilty of global warming.

As these final words were read out, across the screen was blazoned the word 'GUILTY' in red. Behind it were pictures of a power station pouring out 'pollution' (in fact steam from its cooling towers); cars belching CO₂; more cars submerged in floods; and a huge chunk of ice calving into the sea from a melting ice-shelf.²²

Also in Paris to report on the launch of the IPCC's Summary was Richard Black. The heading to his account on the BBC News website - 'Humans blamed for climate change' - showed how he too had got the desired message: that according to this 'influential group of scientists', we could now be 'at least 90 percent certain' that climate change was caused by human activity, and that this would lead to the usual list of disasters: melting ice caps, rising sea levels, more droughts, floods, heatwaves and hurricanes.²³

²¹ 'Expert reaction to Stern Review', BBC News website, 30 October 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/6098612.stm>.

²² Much of the BBC's 10 O'Clock News that night was devoted to the IPCC report, and all the 'experts' interviewed accepted that global warming was caused by human emissions. On *Newsnight*, science editor Susan Watts claimed that sceptical scientists were being offered thousands of pounds to challenge the IPCC report, an unsubstantiated rumour which probably originated from a US advocacy group. Professor Lindzen was briefly interviewed but shown smoking, accompanied by a voice-over explaining that he had 'contrarian' beliefs on many issues, including tobacco (Montford and Newbery, *op.cit.*).

²³ 'Humans blamed for climate change', BBC News website, 2 February 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/6321351.stm>.

The only 'quotes' in Black's account, naturally endorsing the Summary's message, came from the IPCC's chairman, Dr Rajendra Pachauri, and from the official then heading UNEP, one of the IPCC's two sponsoring bodies. Nevertheless Black did add at the end of his post that, in the latest edition of *Science*, 'an international group of scientists' were warning that both global temperatures and sea levels were now rising even faster than the IPCC had suggested was likely. Once again the BBC was giving support to that familiar message that things were 'even worse than predicted'.

Only in April did the IPCC publish the full technical report, 3,000 pages long, showing the evidence on which the Summary for Policymakers was supposedly based. This prompted the BBC to publish on its website a six-page guide to 'Climate change around the world', giving its own versions of some of the IPCC's more alarming projections, ranging from the likelihood that, with a 1.5 to 2.5 degree Celsius temperature rise, 'roughly 20-30 percent of species' would be 'at high risk of extinction' to the threat that this would put 'many millions of people' at risk from flooding caused by rising sea levels. Other claims based on the report included predictions that the rapid melting of the Himalayan glaciers could cause water shortages in Asia within 20 to 30 years; that drought in the eastern Amazon could cause the replacement of its rainforest by savannah; and that drought in some parts of Africa could cause crop yields to halve by 2050.²⁴

All this the BBC's journalists faithfully reported, albeit with a few Al Gore-like exaggerations of their own. Nearly three more years were still to elapse before several of these IPCC claims became the focus of considerable scandal, when it was revealed that they were not based on any scientific evidence but only on alarmist claims originating from environmental activists.

In March 2007 the BBC gave similarly excitable coverage to the unveiling in Brussels of the most important policy decision on climate change ever announced by the EU: a package of measures agreed by the European Council, intended to dictate 'Europe's' response to the threat of global warming for decades to come. This, *inter alia*, set targets that, by 2020, 20 percent of all the EU's energy needs must be met from 'renewable' sources such as wind turbines and solar panels; and that EU member states must within a few years impose a complete ban on incandescent light bulbs, forcing people to switch to 'low energy' fluorescent bulbs.

The financial and other implications of all this were colossal, above all for Britain, which generated a much smaller percentage of its electricity from renewables than any EU country bar Malta and Luxembourg. Quite apart from all the technical problems involved in meeting its EU targets, this would thus cost the British far more than anyone else. But such matters were of no concern to the BBC. All it wished to report was that there had been 'an air of real achievement in Brussels', quoting various EU luminaries, including Tony Blair, to the effect that this impossibly ambitious set of proposals showed how

²⁴ 'Climate change around the world', BBC News website, 6 April 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/629/629/6528979.stm.

the EU was 'leading the way on climate change'.²⁵

It was now becoming noticeable that the BBC's obsession with global warming was creeping into almost every aspect of its output. This was not just confined to the slant of its news programmes, including *Today* and *Newsnight*. It had become evident across the board, cropping up in anything from children's programmes to *Today's Thought for the Day* religious slot, from Radio 4's rural soap opera *The Archers* to documentaries on the BBC World Service.

On 24 May 2006, for instance, as part of the BBC's *Climate Chaos* season, the popular children's programme *Blue Peter* had changed its name for the day to *Green Peter*. This was to 'look at the changes that are happening to the planet' and to give its young audience 'top tips on how to help the environment', including advice on how to plant a 'drought resistant garden' and how to 'boil a kettle with a bike'.

Early in 2007 a global warming storyline was built into *The Archers*, describing how a wealthy landowner was eventually persuaded to 'see the light' on the need to plant 'trees suited to a warmer climate'. Other countryside programmes such as *Farming Today* and *Countryfile* now regularly featured items on the global warming threat and measures designed to fight it, notably the need to build more wind turbines (*Countryfile* had already run a series on climate change as early as August 2002).

The BBC even announced at this time that it had commissioned a 'music drama about climate change, inspired by Hurricane Katrina' for its 2007 Promenade Concerts at the Royal Albert Hall. This was to feature a group of children lost after a storm caused by climate change had swept away their homes. As the Proms Controller Nicholas Kenyon put it, 'Climate change is such a subject of the moment and the Proms does reflect what is going on in the world'.²⁶

But at this high point of hysteria over global warming, the story was about to enter a new phase.

²⁵ 'EU agrees to renewable energy target', BBC News website, 9 March 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/6433503.stm>. In fact Britain's position was much worse than was widely recognised at the time, because what Blair had agreed to was that by 2020 15 percent of all Britain's energy needs would be met from 'renewable' sources. He was not aware that a large part of those needs, such as heating by gas, could not be met from renewable sources, so that he had unwittingly committed Britain to generating more than 30 percent of her electricity from 'renewables' (mainly wind power). Ironically, this astonishingly costly blunder, described as a 'multi-billion pound gaffe, was confirmed by Blair's chief scientific adviser, Sir David King, on BBC Panorama, 7 November 2011.

²⁶ 'Climate change comes to the Proms', BBC News website, 25 April 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/6591849.stm>.

Chapter Three: (2007) First cracks In the 'consensus'

From The Great Global Warming Swindle to a drop in the temperature

On 8 March 2007 came a significant moment in the story of media coverage of climate change. Channel 4's 90-minute-long *The Great Global Warming Swindle* was quite unlike any documentary on climate change shown on television before because it featured many of those eminent scientists who for years – ignored by the BBC and the mainstream media - had been doggedly calling for proper scientific scepticism towards the 'consensus' view of global warming and the curious ways in which it had been promoted.

Several of these were world authorities on their subjects, such as Dr Richard Lindzen and Dr Paul Reiter. Another contributor was Dr Fred Singer, a veteran physicist who had set up the satellite system for the US meteorological service. He had first publicly expressed scepticism about the 'consensus' theory as early as 1991, in an informal paper written with Dr Roger Revelle, the revered physicist responsible in 1957 for setting up the official station for measuring CO₂ levels on Mauna Loa (and whose lectures at Harvard in the 1960s had first alerted the young Al Gore to the idea of global warming).²⁷

Others appearing in the programme included Dr Roy Spencer and Dr John Christy, the two men who in 1979 had set up NASA's satellite system for measuring global temperatures, and who were still in charge of one of the two officially recognised satellite-based temperature records; Dr Syun-Ichi Akasofu, founder of the International Arctic Research Center in Alaska; Dr Pat Michaels, a trenchantly sceptical senior US meteorologist; Dr Nir Shaviv, an Israeli astrophysicist whose researches had led him to reverse his previous acceptance of the 'consensus' theory; and Dr Eigel Friis-Christiansen, head of the Danish Meteorological Institute, who for years had been working with his colleague Henrik Svensmark on research which seemed to indicate that a much more significant factor than CO₂ in shaping the earth's climate might be the amount of radiation being given off by the sun. In its effect on the extent to which cosmic rays reached the earth, their findings suggested, this in turn influenced the formation of clouds, thus playing a crucially influential part in determining global temperatures.²⁸

The Great Global Warming Swindle, produced and written by Martin Durkin, was as unashamedly one-sided in putting the sceptical objections to the theory of man-made global warming as innumerable BBC programmes

²⁷ 'What to do about greenhouse warming: look before you leap', by Singer, Revelle and Chauncey Starr, *Cosmos*. April 1991. For further details see Booker, *The Real Global Warming Disaster*, pp 58-62.

²⁸ The essence of Svensmark's theory was that an important part is played by cloud formation by the muons or sub-atomic particles making up cosmic rays. When the sun is magnetically active, evidenced in a profusion of sunspots, cosmic rays are diverted away from the earth. When the sun is less active, more cosmic rays hit the earth, providing the nuclei around which clouds can form. Fewer sunspots thus mean more cloud cover, lowering global temperatures, and vice versa. In 2010, Svensmark's theory was put to the test by CERN in an experimental programme called CLOUD. Preliminary results, published in 2011, seemed to give support to Svensmark's theory. For a full account of the history of this theory, see Henrik Svensmark and Nigel Calder, *The Chilling Stars: A New Theory of Climate Change*, Icon Books, 2007.

had been in conveying the 'consensus' view. It put over serious scientific arguments to which most of its audience would have been wholly unfamiliar because of the stranglehold exercised by the 'consensus' over almost everything previously broadcast on the subject.

Indeed this was just how Durkin's programme had come about in the first place. He had challenged the trivialising one-sidedness of media reporting on climate change at a meeting of the World Congress of Science Producers in Tokyo in 2006. Why, he asked, were the world's major television networks paying so little attention to the serious doubts being expressed about the 'consensus' view by so many reputable scientists? His question was angrily rejected by Michael Mosley, a senior BBC science producer, on the grounds that there were no reputable scientists who disagreed with the consensus.

It was therefore suggested that Durkin and Mosley should debate the issue in front of their professional colleagues at a subsequent meeting of the Congress in New York. So forcefully did Durkin argue his case that many producers were surprised to find themselves agreeing that he had a point. Following this episode, Channel 4 commissioned Durkin to make *The Great Global Warming Swindle*.²⁹

In particular Durkin showed his scientists explaining that the signal of the earth's recent warming was the opposite of what the 'consensus' theory predicted. The classic 'fingerprint' of CO₂ warming, said the theory, was that warming should be most pronounced in the middle and upper troposphere, where man-made CO₂ rises, heightening the greenhouse effect. But satellite and weather balloon measurements had consistently shown that warming was greater near the earth's surface.

Other scientists then described all the evidence which indicated that, far from rising CO₂ levels causing temperatures to rise, the data in fact showed the opposite happening. As the earth warmed, so the oceans, easily the largest reservoir of CO₂ on the planet, released more CO₂ - just as when it cooled, they absorbed it. As ice core data had shown, temperature rises back through pre-history had preceded rises in CO₂ levels, not the other way around. The chief reason for the recent increase in CO₂ in the atmosphere might not be human emissions but the fact that the oceans had been warming up through natural causes, thus releasing more of it to the atmosphere.

Here the programme moved on to examine Svensmark's theory that the most significant determinant of global temperatures might be those fluctuations in solar radiation that influence the amount of cosmic rays reaching the earth and hence the amount of cloud cover. This was supported by the researches of Dr Shaviv and his colleague Jan Veizer, which had shown a remarkable correlation throughout geological time between cosmic ray counts and global temperatures.

More than one of Durkin's scientists made the point that the IPCC was

²⁹ Private information from Martin Durkin, reported in *The Real Global Warming Disaster*, op.cit.,p.211.

essentially not a scientific but a political body, driven by its determination to promote one particular theory. The science on climate change had anyway become heavily skewed by the billions of dollars handed out by governments to fund every kind of climate-related research, but only so long as this came up with findings which conformed with the 'consensus' view.

To the supporters of the 'consensus', of course, all this was no less than rank heresy. Although Durkin's documentary won considerable praise, it was savaged in the press by such fanatical 'believers' as the Guardian's columnist George Monbiot, one of the first journalists to brand global warming sceptics as 'deniers', who dismissed the film's contributors as 'cranks' talking 'bunkum', whose views had long since been 'discredited' by proper scientists.³⁰

Even this paled beside the outrage the programme provoked from 'the great and the good' of the official pro-warming establishment, from whom an avalanche of complaints descended on Ofcom, the regulatory body charged with ensuring that broadcasters comply with rules relating to fairness and impartiality. These included a group of '37 professors', including senior contributors to the IPCC, such as Phil Jones of the University of East Anglia's Climatic Research Unit; another group which included Bert Bolin, the IPCC's first chairman; and the IPCC itself.

So voluminous were their complaints against almost every aspect of Durkin's programme that it would take Ofcom more than a year to work through them. But when Ofcom finally gave its verdict, the response of the BBC was to be very revealing.

Five months after the programme appeared came an odd little episode which showed just how disturbed the scientific establishment had become by Svensmark's cosmic ray thesis. Bearing all the marks of a concerted operation, the BBC and Nature gave startling prominence to a new paper published online by the Royal Society which Richard Black claimed had wholly disproved Svensmark's theory. Mike Lockwood, one of the two scientists responsible for the study, admitted that they had produced it in response to the publicity given to Svensmark's views by *The Great Global Warming Swindle*. They accused Svensmark of having misrepresented the data by concealing the fact that solar radiation had declined in the 1990s just as global temperatures were rising sharply. Black quoted Lockwood as claiming that their paper should 'settle the debate', and another scientist as saying 'this paper reinforces the fact that warming in the last 20 to 40 years can't have been caused by solar activity'.³¹

Far from this 'settling the debate', Svensmark responded by pointing out that both the paper and the BBC itself had misrepresented the data, notably in publishing a graph purporting to show cosmic ray counts in the 1990s which was not in fact related to cosmic rays at all. Why, he asked, had the BBC

³⁰ 'Don't let truth stand in the way of red-hot debunking of climate change', *Guardian*, 13 March 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/mar/13/science.media>.

³¹ "'No sun link' to climate change', Richard Black, BBC News website, 10 July 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/6290228.stm>.

not used the proper graph, which confirmed his theory by showing that the cosmic ray count had in fact been very low at that time, indicating that global temperatures were likely to rise - just as they had done?

Not the least interesting question raised by this episode was why the BBC should have gone to such lengths in seeking to discredit Svensmark's thesis, when up to that time it had shown not the slightest interest in it.

Only two days earlier the BBC had shown itself on more familiar ground when, on 8 July, it devoted no less than 15 hours of coverage to Live Earth, a series of pop concerts organised across the world by Al Gore to publicise his views on 'climate change'. At Wembley Stadium day-long music from an array of rock groups was interspersed with propaganda videos for Gore's views. However, this global extravaganza failed to attract anything like the 'two billion viewers' predicted in its advance publicity, and the bad language freely used by many of the performers at Wembley led to the event being dismissed by the tabloid press as 'a foul-mouthed flop'.

Despite all the BBC's best efforts, an Ipsos Mori poll at this time found that 56 percent of the British people did not believe that there was a 'consensus' on global warming.³²

A rather more important development at this time, which again attracted no notice from the BBC, was what was happening to global temperatures. All four main official data sets in 2007 were showing a very marked drop in temperatures.

It was not the first time that such a thing had happened. There had been a similar drop after the temperature peak in 1998. Temperatures had then risen again, peaking in 2006 only just below their 1998 level – just as they were to rise again between 2008 and 2010. But two things were significant about this. The first was that such fluctuations in temperature had not been predicted by any of those computer models relied on by the IPCC, which had been programmed on the assumption that as CO2 levels continued to rise, so temperatures must inexorably follow,

Clearly this was not happening. But it was generally explained away – even by scientists from within the 'consensus' - by the fact that 1998 was a year when there had been an abnormally strong El Nino, one of the two extreme phases in the fluctuations of that major ocean current in the Pacific which brings vast quantities of warm water welling up along the coast of South America, and which had long been observed to have a marked effect on the world's weather patterns. The reverse of this, a La Nina, brings colder water to the surface - and the sharp drop in temperatures following 1998 coincided with a substantial La Nina.

The same reversal had taken place between 2006, an El Nino year, and 2007,

³² 'Public still sceptical on climate change', *Guardian*, 3 July 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2007/jul/03/climatechange.climatechange>.

when another plunge in temperatures had coincided with a La Nina. But to put forward these explanations as to why temperatures fluctuated so widely was implicitly to acknowledge that natural forces seemed to be having a rather greater impact on the world's climate than either the 'consensus' theory or those IPCC computer models allowed for.

All this raised serious questions about the validity of the theory on which the whole of the orthodox global warming theory rested - to such an extent that even some of the scientists working inside the 'consensus' began to suggest modifications to the theory. They allowed for the possibility that shifts in the major ocean currents might be causing global temperatures temporarily to decline, possibly for several decades, before global warming re-emerged.³³ A phrase they liked to use, even picked up by that great champion of the orthodoxy, the UK's Met Office, was that the effect of these natural factors was merely 'masking the underlying warming trend'.

But scarcely any of this important debate was reported by the BBC.³⁴ Similarly it seemed to be oblivious to some rather newsworthy 'extreme weather events' taking place across the world, at a time when global temperatures were temporarily falling below their 20th century average.

For years the BBC and other proselytisers for the 'consensus' in the British press had liked to cite the seemingly increased rarity of snow in winter as yet further evidence of global warming. For more than a decade the absence of serious snowfalls had been observed not just in Britain but in many parts of the world, such as the Alps, where fears had been expressed that the ski-ing industry might soon be a thing of the past.

In 2007, however, in both the northern and southern hemispheres, snow seemed to be returning with something of a vengeance. Freak snowfalls were recorded in places as far apart as Johannesburg and Buenos Aires, where it had not been seen for 89 years. With the onset of the winter of 2007/8 in the northern hemisphere, record low temperatures and snowfalls across North America caused it to be dubbed as 'the winter from hell'.

Snow was being recorded in such unlikely places as Jerusalem, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and the desert of southern Iran, where no one could recall it having ever fallen before. Astonished Athenians looked up at a snow-draped Acropolis, while hundreds of villages in Greece, Crete and Turkey were cut off for days and weeks. Heavy blizzards brought disaster to Tibet and several regions of China, where so much snow had not been seen for 50 or even 100 years.

Simply as news stories, without any reference to 'climate change', at least some of these events might have been thought worthy of reporting by a news organisation which prided itself on its unique world-wide reach. If they

³³ See, for instance, N.Keenlyside et al, 'Advancing decadal-scale climate predictions in the North Atlantic sector', *Nature*, 453, 84-88, 1 May 2006, <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v453/n7191/full/nature06921.html>.

³⁴ One exception was when the BBC website defensively publicised the suggestion that any decline in temperatures might only reflect a temporary masking of the 'underlying warming trend'. 'Next decade may see no warming!', BBC News, 1 May 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7376301.stm>.

had been record heat waves or abnormal floods, the BBC might well have given them some coverage, assuring its audience that they were evidence of the growing 'climate disruption' caused by global warming. But to all of this it remained conspicuously oblivious. The return of snow did not fit the BBC's 'narrative'. It now seemed more determined than ever to press on with promoting its cause, regardless of what was actually happening in the world.

Chapter Four: (2008) Losing the plot

From wind turbines to Climate Wars and the Climate Change Act

Up to this point, the BBC's record on climate change may not have been particularly glorious. But if there was one year when it chose to make its coverage more overtly propagandist than ever, it was 2008.

One indication of this was a new report to the BBC Trust which, in July that year, recommended that the definition of 'impartiality', when applied to global warming, should now be moved even more explicitly towards promoting the 'consensus'. The reason given for this was the much more unqualified position taken by the IPCC's 2007 report.

'The centre ground in climate science', it said,

'has shifted markedly. One main reason for the change in global opinion was last year's resolution of the most fundamental questions in climate science by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world's official climate change assessment forum. The IPCC concluded beyond doubt that the climate is warming and more than 90 percent likely that this has been driven by human activity. Given the weight of opinion building up around the IPCC, it makes sense for us to focus our coverage on the consensus that climate change is happening, is serious, but is manageable if tackled urgently'.³⁵

'Re-education' and 'Agitprop'

An interesting test of the BBC's response to the questioning which was beginning to emerge around the global warming issue was a curious little episode in April involving its 'environmental analyst' Roger Harrabin. Normally a tireless advocate of the warmist orthodoxy, he dared momentarily to step out of line by referring on his blog to a press release from the World Meteorological Organisation. This stated that since 1998 global temperatures had not risen,

³⁵ Quoted in the 'BBC Trust Review of impartiality and accuracy of the BBC's coverage of science'. p. 70, July 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/our_work/science_impartiality/science_impartiality.pdf.

and that in 2008 they were likely to be below their average of the previous 20 years.

In itself this was remarkable, being the first time that anyone from the BBC had publicly acknowledged the otherwise easily accessible fact that the global temperature trend since 1998 had not been positive. Furthermore, the source of the statement was the WMO, one of the two sponsoring bodies of the IPCC.

But Harrabin's admission provoked a howl of protest from one particularly zealous activist, Jo Abbess of the Campaign Against Climate Change (honorary president George Monbiot). She emailed Harrabin, demanding that he 'correct' his item. Harrabin replied that there were indeed respected climate scientists who now questioned whether 'warming will continue as predicted'. This only angered Ms Abbess still further. It was 'highly irresponsible', she wrote back, 'to play into the hands of the sceptics', or even to 'hint that the world is cooling down'. Harrabin stood his ground. Even in the general media, he pointed out, there were 'sceptics' reporting that temperatures had failed to rise since 1998, and that to ignore this might give the impression that 'the debate is being censored'.

This was too much for Ms Abbess. It was not a matter for 'debate', she said. He had no right to quote the sceptics 'whose voice is heard everywhere, on every channel, deliberately obstructing the emergence of the truth'. Unless he changed his item, she would have to conclude that he was 'insufficiently educated' to recognise when he had been 'psychologically manipulated', and she would have to expose him to the world by publishing his emails on the internet.

At this Harrabin caved in. Within minutes a significantly modified version of his post had appeared, given the same date and time as the original. He had removed the details of the offending statement from the WMO, referring only to 'slightly cooler temperatures'. But he gave reassurance to his green readers by adding that temperatures were still 'above the average', and that they would 'soon exceed the record year of 1998'. The BBC man was safely back in the fold, his exercise in re-education complete.

In June, to considerable hype, the BBC unveiled a major two-part drama, *Burn Up*. This was a thriller centred on a bid to save the planet by forcing the US government to sign a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, committing America and the world to much more drastic curbs on CO₂ emissions. The hero, the young CEO of a major oil company, was shown the error of his ways by the suicide of an Inuit climate change activist who had been campaigning to expose his company's part in rendering her homeland uninhabitable. He joined forces with the heroine, his company's Head of Renewables, who turned out to be also an undercover climate change activist.

The pair then uncovered a world-shattering secret. Saudi Arabia was hiding the fact that its oil reserves were about to run out, and that therefore industrial civilisation based on fossil fuels was doomed. After much anguish, because

he feared that to reveal this secret to the world could bring about a panic that might lead to war, he finally realised that the only way to save the planet was to play his trump card. He thus paved the way for mankind to live by renewable energy happily ever after.³⁶

The BBC's bias on wind power

The timing of this piece of agitprop, pitching the evil fossil-fuel lobby as the monster against the fearless hero and heroine fighting for a renewable future, was immaculate. Just three weeks later, Britain's new prime minister, Gordon Brown, was unveiling what he called 'the most dramatic change in our energy policy since the advent of nuclear power'. This was a '£100 billion green energy package', centred on building 7,000 giant wind turbines, 4,000 of them offshore. These, Brown claimed, would go a long way to meeting the agreed EU target, whereby Britain must by 2020 be generating 32 percent, or nearly a third, of its electricity from 'renewables'.

The way the BBC reported this announcement reflected one of the most glaring of all its journalistic failings in covering climate issues. For some years the BBC had made no secret of its enthusiasm for wind turbines. This fed through into its reporting on every level, from news broadcasts and flagship magazine programmes to coverage by local radio stations.

What was particularly striking about the BBC's line on wind power was that it was virtually indistinguishable from that of the British Wind Energy Association (BWEA), the professional lobbying organisation for the wind industry. Above all, there were two very significant aspects of wind power which both consistently tried to hide.

The first was the technical shortcomings of wind turbines which made them such a remarkably inefficient and unreliable means of producing electricity, stemming from the fact that wind speeds continually fluctuate, so the amount of power generated constantly varies (anywhere between its full potential capacity and zero).

The trick the industry used to conceal this was to insist on talking of its wind farms only in terms of their 'installed capacity'. But, as official figures showed, the actual output of Britain's wind turbines was far less than that, averaging only around 25 percent of their capacity (slightly more for offshore turbines). By referring only to 'capacity', the developers deliberately sought to give the impression that their turbines were four times more effective in producing electricity than their output justified.

Among those who seemed to be taken in by this trick, which enabled the supporters of wind power to exaggerate vastly its benefits, were not only the politicians, such as Gordon Brown, but also the journalists of the BBC. Quite

³⁶ *Burn Up*, BBC press release, 3 June 2007. The scientific adviser to the programme was Dr Joe Smith, a co-organiser with Roger Harrabin of the 2006 BBC seminar (see Postscript).

routinely when reporting on a new wind farm, or on the contribution made by wind to Britain's electricity needs, this led them to overstate its supposed benefits by some 300 percent.

Thus when Brown claimed that the 7,000 new turbines he wished to see built would do much to meet Britain's EU target of generating 32 percent of its electricity from renewables, it was painfully obvious to anyone versed in the facts about wind power that he was wildly overstating the case, albeit unwittingly. The average capacity of a giant onshore turbine at that time was 2 megawatts, that of offshore turbines 3MW. The 'installed capacity' of his 7,000 turbines would thus be some 18,000MW, or 18 gigawatts. But the actual output of Brown's turbines would at best average out at only between 25 and 30 percent of that figure, or some 5GW.

In the real world, however, the amount of electricity Britain needed to keep its lights on and its computer-dependent economy functioning averaged more than eight times that figure, 42GW. Even if all the windmills Brown was hoping for could in practice be built by 2020 (in itself only an idle pipe dream, since this would require the erection of nearly two giant turbines every day for 12 years), their actual output would only meet 12 percent of Britain's average needs, or just over a third of the 32 percent required by the EU target.

The output of all Brown's hypothetical turbines would thus in fact be not very much greater than that of one large coal-fired power station.³⁷ Yet for this Brown wished to see Britain spend the best part of £100 billion, when that same money could buy 200 gas-fired power stations, capable of generating nearly 30 times more electricity.³⁸

Of course the advantage of wind, its supporters liked to argue, was that it was free, whereas coal, gas and nuclear were expensive. But even taking into account the cost of fuel, the capital costs of wind were so much greater that the electricity it produced was still vastly more expensive than that generated by conventional power stations.³⁹ In fact no one would have dreamed of spending money on wind turbines unless their electricity was given a huge subsidy – and this was the other awkward fact about wind power which its supporters, including the BBC, did their best to conceal.

Under the government's *Renewables Obligation*, the subsidy to electricity from offshore wind turbines was 100 percent. From offshore turbines it was 200 percent. And the hidden cost of these subsidies was passed on to all electricity

37 Drax, the largest coal-fired power station in Britain, can if needed generate not far short of its capacity, at 3.8GW. Shortly after Brown made his announcement, he addressed an EU meeting in Paris attended by senior representatives of Middle Eastern oil states. Referring to his plans to build enough offshore wind farms to generate slightly more power than a single coal-fired power station, he told his audience that Britain would be 'the global centre for offshore wind', making the North Sea 'the Gulf of the future' ('The Post-Oil Economies of the Future', Oil Drum website, 15 July 2008, <http://www.theoil Drum.com/node/4300>).

38 The CCGT gas-fired power station opened at Langage near Plymouth in March 2011, costing £400 million to build, had a capacity of 882MW (not far short of the average output in 2010 of all Britain's wind farms put together).

39 In 2004 the Royal Academy of Engineering had published a study comparing the real costs per kilowatt hour of the main sources of electricity production. From gas it was 2.2p, nuclear (including decommissioning costs) 2.3p, the more efficient coal plants 2.5p. From an onshore wind turbine it was 5.4p, or more than twice as much as that from conventional power stations. From offshore turbines it was 7.2p.

consumers through their bills without most being aware of it.

So why, in all the hundreds of BBC programmes touching on wind power, were none of these simple facts ever explained? Why, when Brown came out with his wholly unrealisable proposal in 2008 – supported, it must be said, by all the main political parties – was not one attempt made, anywhere in the BBC's output, to inform its audience of some of those facts which might have enabled them better to understand what was going on?⁴⁰

The truth was that the BBC had long since become so committed in its support for wind power that its coverage had been reduced to no more than one-dimensional propaganda. It presented the debate over wind turbines in exactly the same dishonest terms as did the wind industry. Like the BWEA, the BBC liked to caricature any opposition to wind power as coming merely from the 'Nimby' faction: a small selfish minority, with no concern for 'saving the planet', whose only real objection to turbines was that they might spoil the view.

No one relying solely on the BBC for information about wind power would have had any idea in 2008 that in 2007 the contribution to the national grid of all 2,000 wind turbines so far built in Britain was so derisory that it amounted to less than that of a single gas-fired power station.⁴¹ But the BBC journalists were so locked into their institutional mindset - and so little had they done their homework - that probably none of them were even aware of this.

Climate Wars: The BBC hits back

So angered were the BBC by the attention paid to Channel 4's *The Great Global Warming Swindle* that they had long been planning a counter-attack. But weeks before this was screened, they were given something of an hors d'oeuvre when, on 21 July 2008, Ofcom published its response to all the complaints received the previous year objecting to Durkin's documentary.

The vast majority of these complaints had been directed at the scientific points made by contributors to the programme. The impression given by much of the media was that Ofcom had given the IPCC and its allies a great victory. The headline in the *Daily Telegraph*, almost as firmly in the warmist camp as the BBC, said that Channel 4 had "'misrepresented" scientists'. The BBC itself published two reports on its website. In the first, headed 'Climate documentary "broke rules"', it quoted Dr Pachauri describing Ofcom's findings as 'a vindication of the credibility and standing of the IPCC'. The second was

40 The first occasion I can recall when the BBC admitted that wind electricity was significantly more expensive than that from conventional power stations was Panorama's 'What's fuelling your energy bill?', 7 November 2011, http://news.bbc.co.uk/panorama/hi/front_page/newsid_9631000/9631864.stm.

41 Nor would they have known that the more wind farms that were built, the more it would become necessary to build gas-fired power stations matching the wind farms in their capacity, simply to provide instantly available back-up for times when the wind dropped. These would have to be kept permanently running on 'spooling reserve', emitting more CO₂ than the wind turbines were theoretically capable of saving. This would completely negate any supposed reduction in CO₂ emissions, so that, even on this count, wind farms would achieve no beneficial purpose.

a long, very sympathetic interview with the co-ordinator of the largest number of complaints, quoting him as saying that Channel 4's film had been 'a systematic attempt to deceive the public, an out-and-out propaganda piece masquerading as a science documentary'.

The media had been circulated by the IPCC with a series of statements from several of its most senior members, past and present. Sir John Houghton said that Ofcom's ruling had 'confirmed the misleading and false information' about the IPCC contained in the programme, which 'had been wilfully disseminated by the climate-denying community'. Dr Bob Watson, the IPCC's second chairman, was pleased that Ofcom had recognised 'the serious inaccuracies in *The Great Global Warming Swindle*'. Dr Pachauri himself, in the statement paraphrased by the BBC, was pleased to see that Ofcom had 'vindicated the IPCC's claim' and the 'credibility' of its reports.

When Ofcom's report was examined, however, it was hard to imagine that any of them had actually read it before the IPCC issued its press release. Although the BBC reported that Ofcom had found that 'Channel 4 did not fulfil obligations to be impartial and to reflect a range of views on controversial issues', Ofcom had – with one very minor exception - found nothing of the kind. Above all it had been careful to rule that it was not its brief to adjudicate on any controversial issue of science contained in the film. Of the hundreds of complaints levelled at the programme, only a handful had been upheld, none related to the science, and most so trivial or odd that it looked as though Ofcom was merely trying to throw a few crumbs of comfort to the complainants.

Of six complaints upheld in favour of the IPCC, only two were concerned with the contents of the film, both on tiny points. The other four were merely procedural, centred on Ofcom's view that Channel 4 should have given the IPCC a few days longer to comment on points made in the programme. None of this in any way justified the various statements put out by the IPCC, since Ofcom had said nothing about its 'credibility'. Nor did it justify the BBC's sweeping claim that Ofcom had criticised the programme for its lack of impartiality and its failure to 'reflect a range of views'.

Just how rich this was coming from the BBC, was about to be amply demonstrated in the three-part series intended to be its counter-blast to *The Great Global Warming Swindle*.

Climate Wars, broadcast on three Sunday evenings in September 2008, was presented by geologist Dr Iain Stewart, who purported to be acting as an impartial scientist, objectively reviewing the case for and against global warming.

No expense had been spared in flying him to distant locations across the globe, from Greenland to California, as in the first programme he laid out the 'consensus' case for man-made global warming.

Only in the second instalment, subtitled '*The Fightback*', did the BBC reveal its true purpose, when it examined three of the central points made by Durkin's film.⁴² In each case it used the same technique. Earlier in the year it had sent a team to New York to film a conference of leading 'sceptics' organised by the Heartland Institute, a leading US think tank. Here Dr Stewart conducted brief interviews with some of the conference speakers, such as Fred Singer and Roy Spencer, so that these could be edited down to produce short clips of them making seemingly provocative remarks critical of the 'consensus'. These were then cut off before the interviewees could explain the reasoning behind their comments, allowing Stewart in each case to assert that their views had been discredited.

Back in the 1990s, for instance, a fault had been discovered in the satellite method of measuring temperatures because satellites slipped in their orbit as they 'decayed', skewing their data. Dr Spencer, as designer of the system for NASA, was shown admitting that a flaw had been identified in the system. But the programme omitted the rest of the interview, in which Dr Spencer had gone on to explain (as he later recalled), how, as soon as this fault in the system had been identified, action was taken to correct it. On screen he was left only apparently admitting that his data were flawed, thus giving the impression the programme wished to make: that satellite data were unreliable.⁴³

Dr Stewart accused Durkin's programme of having cut off a graph showing the correlation between temperatures and solar radiation at a point where the data failed to support the thesis (as soon as this had been pointed out, Channel 4 corrected it on DVD versions of its programme). But *Climate Wars* itself then did exactly the same, by not extending its own version of the graph to 2008, which would have confirmed Channel 4's point.

Most bizarre of all, however, was a long sequence in which Stewart defended the 'hockey stick'. After being shown on a California mountainside, reverentially fondling the trunks of the famous bristlecone pine trees from which Mann had been able to concoct his graph, he then appeared in front of a huge poster version of the graph on the back of a lorry, of the type used for propaganda purposes at election times. Copying Al Gore's trick from *An Inconvenient Truth*, he had to climb up a ladder at the right hand end of the graph to emphasise the unprecedented (and quite absurdly exaggerated) upward leap temperatures had made 'in the second half of the 20th century'.

Dr Stewart did scornfully concede that Mann had been 'accused of using faulty data and dodgy statistics', even of 'fraud'. But he could not afford

⁴² *Climate Wars 2, The Fightback*, can be seen on YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?hl=en&v=A_1wAQJi_YU&gl=US.

⁴³ The advocates of the orthodoxy were particularly anxious to discredit the reliability of satellite temperature data because of serious questions which had recently been raised as to the reliability of the two main surface temperature records. One of these, based in the UK, was HadCrut, run by Professor Phil Jones of the University of East Anglia's Climatic Research Unit in conjunction with the UK Met Office's Hadley Centre. The other, GISTEMP, technically under NASA, was run by James Hansen. In 2007 Steve McIntyre had discovered that GISS had been 'adjusting' its temperature record to suit the global warming case. The satellite data tended to show significantly less global warming than weather stations. See McIntyre's blog *Climate Audit*, 16 September 2008, <http://climateaudit.org/2008/09/16/bbc-climate-wars/>.

to explain why such accusations had come about, let alone give any idea of how McIntyre and McKittrick had exposed the computer trickery used to manufacture the graph - because even to have summarised their criticisms might have given the game away. He merely went on to claim that many other studies had subsequently confirmed Mann's thesis, without mentioning that these had been the work of Mann's allies in a concerted bid to defend his graph after it had been so comprehensively discredited.

The BBC finally sought to 'prove its point' with a surreal sequence showing its giant 'hockey stick' being triumphantly driven round the London tourists spots. As Londoners saw it trundling past them, from Buckingham Palace to the Tower, from Big Ben to Piccadilly Circus, they can only have wondered what was the purpose of this weird publicity stunt, which must have cost the BBC many thousands of pounds to stage. No one unfamiliar with the story of how this graph had been exposed as the greatest single scientific scandal in the IPCC's history would have had any idea what this charade was about.

With the second programme the BBC had done what it had really set out to do. The third programme in the series added nothing to the previous instalments. But scarcely a frame of this propaganda exercise had not obscured, distorted or omitted some important point in the scientific arguments it purported to discuss. If all those who complained about Channel 4's film had shown similar devotion to truth and fairness in this case, Ofcom might have been submerged in work for several years.

The BBC also received many complaints from viewers after the series, the replies to which showed how it had now refined still further the justification for its editorial line on climate change. Its argument was that it was precisely thanks to its obligation to impartiality that it had a duty to discount any views which differed from the 'consensus'. As replies to complainants explained:

*BBC News currently takes the view that their reporting needs to be calibrated to take into account the scientific consensus that global warming is man-made. The BBC's Editorial Guidelines, issued to all editorial staff, state that "we must ensure we avoid bias or an imbalance of views on controversial subjects" and, given the weight of scientific opinion, the challenge for us is to strike the right balance between mainstream science and sceptics since to give them equal weight would imply that the argument is evenly balanced.*⁴⁴

In other words, in the name of reporting impartially, the BBC saw no need to report impartially. In practice this seemed to mean that it was under no obligation to report the views of 'sceptics' at all – except when it could do so in only the most dismissively partisan terms. To rub this in, the BBC announced that copies of *Climate Wars* would be distributed for showing in Britain's schools - to ensure that its 'impartial' version of the 'truth' prevailed.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ From copies of such letters sent me by readers of the *Sunday Telegraph*.

⁴⁵ 'BBC stitches up sceptics in counter-attack over climate change', *Sunday Telegraph*, 21 September, 2008.

The strange affair of the Climate Change Act

A significant contributory factor to the BBC's ability to report so one-sidedly on climate issues was that all the main political parties were in agreement on them. From their unquestioning acceptance of the authority of the IPCC to their enthusiasm for wind turbines, the positions of the three main parties were virtually identical. The fact that there was barely a sliver of division between them gave the BBC yet further justification for not reporting anything from outside the 'consensus'.

This was never more vividly illustrated than by the story of the government's Climate Change Bill, initially designed to commit Britain to making a staggering 60 percent cut in CO₂ emissions within four decades (from 1990 levels).

When the Bill had first been announced in the Queen's Speech on 6 November 2007, that evening's BBC News made it the lead item. At the top of the programme was a film report by David Shukman standing in front of a wind turbine next to the M4 motorway in Reading. 'We're going to see a lot more of these in the years ahead', he said. A massive expansion of windpower would be the key to meeting the emissions targets set by the proposed Bill, bringing about a 'dramatic transformation' in Britain's countryside. But 'critics say ministers aren't going far enough', Shukman went on as he introduced his only interviewee, a spokesman for WWF, who said that 'wind turbines in the right place have a very important role in meeting our energy needs'.⁴⁶

A year later, when the Bill came up for its third and final reading on 29 October 2008, it had a new ministerial sponsor, Ed Miliband, as the first Secretary of State for the new Department for Energy and Climate Change. His main contribution was to propose that the original 60 percent cut in CO₂ emissions should now be raised to an even more astonishing 80 percent. When, after six hours of debate, MPs supported this amendment by 463 votes to 3, the Bill was about to make Britain the only country in the world committed by law to reducing its CO₂ emissions by 2050 by four-fifths.⁴⁷

One remarkable thing about this was that, on the only figures yet available, based on the government's original 60 percent target, the cost of this measure was estimated at £205 billion, whereas its benefits were given at only £110 billion. So the MPs voted near-unanimously for a Bill which they were told would be almost twice as costly as its benefits. Another was that not a single MP who had voted for the Bill could have begun to explain how such a staggeringly

46 A video of Shukman's report is available on the website of Ecotricity, the owners of the 2MW Reading turbine, which came to be described as 'Britain's most useless wind turbine' because it operated on average at only 17 percent of its capacity ('Is this the UK's most useless wind turbine?', *Daily Mail*, 10 February 2011, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1355419/UKs-useless-wind-turbine-Cost-130k-raise-electricity-worth-100k.html>).

47 The story behind this Bill, which only came out much later, was curious. The Bill had been actively lobbied for by Friends of the Earth (FoE). When it came to be drafted in the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs under its original sponsoring minister, Ed Miliband's brother David, a key part in the drafting process was played by Bryony Worthington, a climate campaigner formerly working for FoE, who had now been recruited to work at Defra. In 2010 Ms Worthington was made a Labour peer ('Guilty men and guilty woman', *Bishop Hill*, 27 September 2011, <http://bishophill.squarespace.com/blog/2011/9/27/guilty-men-and-guilty-women.html>).

ambitious target could in practice be achieved without closing down virtually all Britain's largely fossil-fuel and computer-dependent economy.

This already made it far and away the most expensive law ever passed by Parliament - and it would become even more so when the Government finally produced a revised figure for the cost of its new 80 percent reduction target. This, it now estimated, could be as much as £18.3 billion every year for 42 years, totalling £768 billion, or £30,000 for every household in the country.

Yet in all the BBC's coverage of the new law, whenever its journalists reported on it or ministers were questioned about it, none of these points were ever mentioned. The only MP who had raised them during the debate was Peter Lilley, who became so frustrated by the BBC's failure to refer to the cost issue that he asked for space to write about it on its website.⁴⁸ This he was allowed to do in a 'Viewpoint' published nearly a month after the Bill passed through the Commons. He was also the only MP who, just as his colleagues prepared to troop en masse through the lobby to support their wish to halt global warming, had drawn their attention to the fact that, outside in Parliament Square, snow was falling in London for the first time in October for 74 years – as Britain and the northern hemisphere entered a winter even colder and snowier than the one before.

Chapter Five: 2009: 'Everything worse than predicted'

Copenhagen and 'Climategate'

The dominating theme of 2009 was the run-up to the great climate conference at Copenhagen in December. Here it was hoped that the world's leaders would sign a new treaty to succeed Kyoto, committing mankind to emissions' cuts so immense and so costly that they would land it with easily the biggest bill in history.

For all those groups campaigning to promote the treaty, the chosen strategy during the months building up to the conference was to hype up the warming threat to such extremes that the politicians would be pressured into thinking that they could not be seen to be rejecting the treaty. This was again done by drumming up yet more evidence to show how the threat posed by global warming was even 'worse than predicted'. The BBC joined in this charade with a vengeance.

As a prelude, in January it sent 400 staff to Washington D.C. to give the

⁴⁸ Peter Lilley, 'Coughing up to curb climate', BBC News website, 25 November 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/7746126.stm>.

inauguration of President Obama many more hours of coverage than the BBC had ever given such an occasion before. Not the least reason for its infatuation with the new President was his pledge that, after years of US failure to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, he would now 'lead the world' on global warming.

Despite all his earlier banging of the drum on climate change, Obama's two fleeting allusions to it in different parts of his speech seemed strangely thin. In one place he pledged that America would 'harness the sun and the wind and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories', in the other he promised to 'lessen the nuclear threat and roll back the spectre of a warming planet'. That was all. Desperate to squeeze what it could from these fragments, *Newsnight* trickily spliced the two half-sentences together to make them sound much stronger than they were. This gave its science editor, Susan Watts, the text for a paean of gratitude that the world at last had a US President prepared to 'listen to the science' after the dark days of 'religious' obscurantism personified by George W. Bush. 'Scientists calculate', she intoned, 'that President Obama has just four years to save the world'. The only scientist actually to have said such a thing, a few days earlier, was James Hansen, who had long become very much more obviously a fanatical 'climate activist' than a scientist.

Next day the old team of the BBC's Richard Black and *Nature* again joined forces to promote an apparently sensational new study which claimed to turn existing climate science on its head by correcting what had long been one of the more embarrassing anomalies in the global warming theory. It was universally accepted that the one continent in the world to have become not warmer but cooler over the previous 50 years was Antarctica. But now, as Black was first to trumpet when the study was published in *Nature*, a team of US scientists, including Dr Mann of 'hockey stick' fame, had come up with startling new evidence to show that Antarctica had in fact been getting markedly warmer after all.

Even loyal protagonists for the cause such as Kevin Trenberth were troubled by the curious method the team had used to reach this finding. Across most of Antarctica's frozen wastes there are no weather stations. But the team had remedied this deficiency by a technique they called 'sparse data infilling'. They had used their computer model to extrapolate temperatures all across the continent, based on such fragments of data as could be gleaned from the handful of weather stations which did exist.

Even Trenberth observed 'it is hard to make data where none exists'. But then two expert US science blogs, Steve McIntyre's *Climate Audit* and *Watts Up With That*, run by meteorologist Anthony Watts, discovered that the claimed new evidence for warming had largely originated from a discrepancy between two thermometers, hundreds of miles apart. One of these had become so insulated from the air beneath the accumulating snow that it had come to give readings that were falsely high – and the computer model's 'sparse data infilling' had done the rest. When this extraordinary error was brought to light, no correction to its earlier reports was published by the BBC.

A few days later the BBC did, however, give extensive coverage to a publicity stunt involving a giant plastic replica of a polar bear on a melting iceberg, floating up the Thames beside the Palace of Westminster. This was a cue to yet again wheel out its favourite naturalist, Sir David Attenborough, to repeat that, although he had once been a climate 'sceptic', he now found the science entirely convincing.⁴⁹

One Sunday morning in February, the BBC led its news programmes with a report that 'the severity of global warming over the next century will be much worse than previously believed', according to 'a leading climate scientist'. The world's future climate, Professor Chris Field had told a Chicago conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 'will be beyond anything predicted'.⁵⁰

The mystery as to why the BBC should have made this the main news of the day only deepened when it emerged that Field was not a climate scientist at all, but a professor of biology in an ecology department. To promote its cause, the BBC website even posted a video explaining how global warming would be made much worse than forecast by 'negative feedback'. 'Negative feedback', of course, reduces temperatures rather than raising them. This elementary howler inspired such a gale of derision from *Watts Up With That* that the BBC had to pull hurriedly the video off its website.⁵¹

In March the BBC was again giving excitable coverage to a conference of '2,000 climate scientists' in Copenhagen, designed as a curtain-raiser to the far larger gathering planned for the same venue at the end of the year. "'More bad news" on climate change', was its website headline, as it became clear that the common theme for the speakers, who included Dr Pachauri, Lord Stern and James Hansen, was that the latest research on everything from the melting of the ice caps and sea level rise to the destruction of the Amazon rainforest and deaths from heat waves now showed the likely impact of global warming to be 'much worse than predicted' even by the IPCC's 2007 report.⁵²

Meanwhile the BBC was also giving prominent coverage to the progress of another publicity stunt, the Catlin Arctic Survey. This was a venture sponsored by a City firm, which specialised in insuring 'climate risks', under the patronage of Prince Charles and the WWF. A three-man team under Pen Hadow planned to trek to the North Pole to measure how fast Arctic ice was disappearing thanks to global warming.

Everything about this expedition, which had left Britain frozen under snow and ice during its coldest winter for 13 years, quickly degenerated into farce.

49 'Polar bears in climate awareness', BBC News website, 25 January 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7851224.stm>. The only other candidate for the BBC's 'favourite naturalist' would once have been the bearded conservationist Professor David Bellamy, who featured on more than 400 programmes from the 1970s onwards. In the late 1990s, however, he was dropped by the BBC, after he had said, first, that he was opposed to wind farms, and then that he could not accept that global warming was man-made. ('BBC shunned me for denying climate change', *Daily Express*, 5 November 2008, <http://www.express.co.uk/posts/view/69623>).

50 "Global warming underestimated", BBC News website, 15 February, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7890988.stm>.

51 'Climate change rhetoric spins out of control', *Sunday Telegraph*, 22 February, 2009.

52 "'More bad news" on climate change', BBC News website, 10 March 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7934046.stm>.

Hadow reported via the BBC that the Arctic was 'much colder' than they had expected. Their electronic measuring equipment froze so that they had to replace it with an old tape measure. Progress turned out to be so painful that in May, filmed by a BBC crew, they had to be airlifted off the ice back to the safety of a fossil-fuel driven support ship, having discovered nothing of scientific value. Even their claim, by a satellite link to Prince Charles, that they had found the ice 'thinner than expected' was contradicted by German and Canadian scientists, who flew past them all the way to the Pole, using proper equipment, to find that the ice was 'somewhat thicker' than it had been in earlier years. At least when David Shukman came to film the moment of the team's rescue, he had the tact not to ask them anything about their scientific researches.

The same month the BBC reported that climate change was "'the biggest global health threat of the 21st century'" according to a leading medical journal'.⁵³ This was a study by researchers from University College London, published by *The Lancet*, warning that the threat posed by global warming to food and water supplies would 'create 'mass migrations and civil unrest'. The BBC quoted one professor on the team saying that the Indian government was building 'a seven-foot high double-thickness razor wire and steel fence 4,500 kilometres long along the entire border with Bangladesh, and it's there to keep out climate migrants'.⁵⁴ Richard Horton, the journal's editor, told the BBC that these researches should be 'taken to every climate conference'. The one now on everyone's mind, of course, was that due to take place in Copenhagen six months later. But by this time, despite the frenzied efforts of all those scientists committed to the cause, the organisers of publicity stunts and the BBC, it was already clear that the world-changing climate agreement they had all for so long been dreaming of, and working for, was not going to happen.

Failure at Copenhagen – and the 'Climategate' emails

The reason why the Copenhagen treaty was never going to be agreed had in fact been evident for more than 12 years. In the run-up to the Kyoto Protocol of 1997, it had already become clear that an unbridgeable gulf was opening up between the developed nations of the West, led by the EU, and the fast-developing countries elsewhere, led by China and India. The politicians of the West might have been calling for drastic cuts in CO₂ emissions, but the argument of the developing countries was that, if excessive man-made CO₂ was causing the world to overheat, then the blame for this lay firmly with those developed economies which had caused the problem in the first place. They were the ones which should now make the cuts, and there was no way the still-developing nations could be expected to follow suit until they had caught up with the living standards of the West.

In behind-the-scenes negotiations over a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, this

⁵³ 'Climate "biggest health threat"', BBC News website, 14 May 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/8049061.stm>.

⁵⁴ The purpose of the barbed wire and concrete fencing on the Indian side of the border had, of course, no connection with 'climate migrants'. According to the Indian government, it was built to prevent economic migration, theft, the smuggling of drugs and weapons, and infiltration by terrorists.

division had now re-emerged more forcefully than ever, even though China had now become the largest single emitter of CO₂ on the planet. Through the summer of 2009, as the deadline approached, international conferences were in almost continuous session, culminating in July in a summit-meeting of the G20 nations in Italy which was like the nearest thing yet seen to a meeting of a world government. The leaders of the countries with the world's 20 largest economies, including Obama, made a last-ditch bid to keep hopes of a Copenhagen treaty alive, with the West offering astronomical sums to bring China, India, Brazil, South Africa, Russia and the other developing countries on board. But it all ended in deadlock and a face-saving fudge.

With four months to go, even some of the treaty's most ardent promoters had to admit that Copenhagen appeared doomed. All this had added up to the real 'climate story' of 2009. Yet hardly any of these important events were properly reported by the BBC. Right up to the eve of the conference, it continued to express the hope that the treaty might still go ahead as planned.⁵⁵ What intruded, however, just two weeks before the world leaders were due to arrive in Copenhagen, was something no one expected.

On 19 November 2009, the anonymous release onto the internet of 3,000 emails and other documents from the Climatic Research Unit at the University of East Anglia, set off such a furore that it was quickly dubbed 'Climategate'. The immediate response of the climate establishment was to claim that the emails must have come from some outsider 'hacking' into the CRU website. But the form in which they were released more plausibly suggested that they might have been leaked by some insider, possibly an employee of the university wanting the world to know what his colleagues had been up to.

Despite the storm of media interest aroused by the emails, few journalists had the background fully to appreciate their significance, because few were aware of just how central had been the part played in the global warming story by the particular group of scientists responsible for them. These included many of the senior figures who for years had been at the heart of the IPCC establishment; from Michael Mann, Kevin Trenberth, Ben Santer and Stephen Schneider to the CRU's director Phil Jones and others of his team, who were in charge of the most prestigious of the four main global temperature records on which the IPCC relied.

Even before Mann's 'hockey stick', no group of scientists in the world had been more influential in pushing the scare over climate change, and it was this which made the picture revealed by the emails so embarrassing. It showed these key players discussing how data might be manipulated to promote the warming cause; conspiring to withhold important data from any outsiders who might have been able to use it to undermine their case; and ruthlessly exercising their influence to keep papers critical of their case out of scientific journals and IPCC reports.

⁵⁵ See, for instance, 'Climate science: from Bali to Copenhagen' by Richard Black, BBC News website, 2 December 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8389706.stm>, and 'Coverage of Copenhagen climate conference', BBC News website, 7 December 2009, http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/theeditors/2009/12/bbc_news_coverage_of_copenhagen.html.

Not the least damaging thread in the emails was the light they shed on how the CRU's own scientists had, for even longer than Mann himself, been using tree-ring studies to concoct their own versions of a 'hockey stick' graph, using methods just as questionable as Mann's own to show temperatures having shot up in the late 20th century to unprecedented levels. The most quoted line in all the emails was one in which Jones talked of using 'Mike's Nature trick' to 'hide the decline'. This referred to the CRU team having substituted a late-20th century thermometer record for data from tree-rings, to give the desired 'hockey stick' shape, because their tree-ring data had embarrassingly appeared to show temperatures dropping sharply during recent decades, rather than rising.

The BBC's response was one of shocked denial. It immediately leaped to the defence of the CRU and IPCC establishment, insisting that the emails had been 'stolen' or 'hacked' and that they revealed nothing of any importance. One or two programmes, such as *Newsnight*, allowed 'sceptics' to utter brief criticisms, but these were immediately 'balanced' by defenders of the CRU. At no time did the BBC give anything but the most superficial account of what the emails had actually contained⁵⁶, and not the least revealing of them was one from Michael Mann on 12 October 2009.

This was the day when a BBC regional weather reporter, Paul Hudson, caused a modest stir around the internet by asking on his BBC blog 'Whatever happened to global warming?', discussing the fact that for eleven years there had been no rise in global temperatures.⁵⁷ This relatively insignificant event caught the eye of Mann in faraway America, prompting him to email Jones and other members of the IPCC's inner circle to say that he found it:

extremely disappointing to see something like this appear on BBC. It's particularly odd, since climate is usually Richard Black's beat at BBC (and he does a great job). ... it might be appropriate for the Met Office to have a say about this, I might ask Richard Black what's up here?⁵⁸

There could have been no clearer testimony to how firmly the climate establishment had come to rely on the BBC to give unquestioning support to its version of the story.

A fortnight after the Climategate storm broke, delegates from 192 nations gathered in Copenhagen for the largest conference the world had ever seen. As the first snows of yet another bitter winter fell outside the vast conference

⁵⁶ Noticeably, for instance, the BBC, like other media promoters of the 'consensus', consistently failed to explain what 'hide the decline' was about. They claimed that critics were suggesting that the 'decline' referred to global temperatures, not to that shown by tree ring data. When this misrepresentation was yet again repeated by Richard Black on 2 November 2011 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-15538845>), he was prompted by the GWPF to print a correction.

⁵⁷ Initially, when the Climategate scandal broke, it was reported that Hudson had been sent all the emails on 12 October, five weeks previously (see 'Climate change scandal deepens as BBC expert claims he was sent leaked emails six weeks ago', *Daily Mail* website, 26 November 2009, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1230943/Climate-change-scandal-BBC-expert-sent-cover-emails-month-public.html>.) In fact, this was not the case. Hudson had not been sent the emails.

⁵⁸ The email from Mann to Stephen Schneider, Myles Allen, Peter Stott, Phil Jones, 12 October 2009, can be seen on <http://yourvoicematters.org/cru/mail/1255352444.txt>.

centre, the BBC could scarcely conceal its dismay, as it reported the scenes of acrimony and chaos which followed. Two weeks of fractious wrangling ended without a treaty, just as had been predictable months previously.

In a long and pained post-mortem on the BBC website, Richard Black listed eight reasons why he thought Copenhagen had failed.⁵⁹ 'Key governments', led by the US and the main developing countries, had not wanted 'a global deal'. The US political system, with its separation of powers between President and Congress, had proved a nightmare obstacle to any agreement. Obama had not been long enough in office to win his country round. The Danish host government could be blamed for its inept mismanagement of the event. The conference's timing, with midwinter snow blanketing the city, could not have been more unfortunate. The '24-hour news culture', requiring Obama to be available for US TV audiences just when his full attention was needed behind the scenes, had hopelessly skewed the negotiating process. The EU had lost its nerve in agreeing to weak compromises instead of standing out for something stronger. The environmental campaigners, who had descended on Copenhagen in their tens of thousands, had 'got their strategies wrong', praising the developing countries for such offers as they had made to curb their emissions, going too easy on Obama and reserving their main fire for those they thought should have done more, such as the EU.

Such a confused mish-mash of recrimination, spraying blame in all directions, showed yet again how little the BBC had understood the real political dynamics which had doomed the hopes of any treaty months, if not years, earlier. For all those who had been so active in promoting the global warming scare, the collapse of Copenhagen was their darkest moment since the scare had been launched on its way 21 years before. But more shocks were to come.

Chapter Six: (2010) Trying to hold the line

From the IPCC scandals to the Climategate inquiries

Easily the most important player in the whole global warming story since 1990 had been the IPCC. Rarely had any international body enjoyed such extraordinary influence and prestige. Like so many others, the BBC had never questioned the IPCC's pronouncements, supposedly based as they were - and as its chairman Dr Pachauri constantly insisted to the world - only on the most unimpeachable 'peer-reviewed' science.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Richard Black, 'Why did Copenhagen fail to deliver a climate deal?', BBC News website, 22 December 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8426835.stm>.

⁶⁰ 'The 2007 IPCC report falls well short of its advertising', No Frakking Consensus, <http://www.noconsensus.org/ipcc-audit/not-as-advertised.php>.

In the weeks following Copenhagen, however, the IPCC's authority was challenged in a way far more serious than anything it had ever faced before. A succession of press investigations revealed that several of the more alarming and widely-quoted predictions of its 2007 report had been based not on 'peer-reviewed science' at all, but only on highly dubious claims originating from climate activists.

Curiously, a first portent of what was to come was published by the BBC itself. However this came not from any of its usual team of environmental specialists, but from an Indian journalist based in New Delhi. On 5 December, NDTV's science editor, Pallava Bagla, told readers of the BBC News website about a row which had broken out in India over a passage in the 2007 IPCC report on Himalayan glaciers. These were now retreating so fast, the IPCC had stated, that as early as 2035 it was very likely that many of them could have disappeared altogether, threatening to disrupt the water supplies for three quarters of a billion people.⁶¹

This claim was so startling that the Indian government had commissioned a report from the country's senior glaciologist, Dr Vijay Raina. He found no evidence for any recent acceleration in the retreat of the glaciers and that the IPCC claim was wholly without foundation. Raina's report had been dismissed by Pachauri as 'voodoo science'. But now, according to the BBC's man in Delhi, it seemed the IPCC's claim had been derived from three sources, none of which was 'peer-reviewed'. The chief source appeared to have been no more than an interview given by another Indian glaciologist, Dr Syed Hasnain, to the *New Scientist* in June 1999.

In January 2010 this story was sharpened up rather more precisely. It was revealed that almost the exact wording of the prediction that most of the glaciers would be gone by 2035 had come, not from the *New Scientist*, but from an interview given by Hasnain to a small Indian environmental magazine in April 1999. In 2005 this had been quoted by the WWF, and it was this reference which the IPCC report had given as its main scientific source. Even while the IPCC report had been in preparation, it appeared the claim had been strongly questioned by an IPCC lead author, Dr Georg Kaser, a leading Austrian glacier expert, calling it 'so wrong that it is not even worth discussing'. But the IPCC had insisted on publishing the claim regardless. Furthermore, it was also now revealed that in 2008 the author of the claim, Dr Hasnain, had been recruited by TERI, Pachauri's Delhi research institute, to head a new glaciology unit, and that on the basis of his prediction TERI had won a share in two very substantial research contracts.⁶²

'Glaciergate', as this inevitably became known, had become such an embarrassment to the IPCC that it was forced into an unprecedented admission that publication of the claim had been a mistake. 'The clear and

61 'Himalayan glaciers melting deadline "a mistake"', Pallava Bagla, BBC News website, 5 December 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8387737.stm>.

62 Christopher Booker, 'The real story behind the Glaciergate row', *Sunday Telegraph*, 24 January 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/christopherbooker/7062667/Pachauri-the-real-story-behind-the-Glaciergate-scandal.html>.

well-established standards of evidence required by the IPCC procedures', it said, had not been 'applied properly'.⁶³ Reporting this retraction on the BBC website, Richard Black nevertheless quoted a senior IPCC official insisting that this was 'only one error in a 3,000 page report', which 'did not change the broad picture of man-made climate change'.⁶⁴

By now, however, it was already clear that this was far from being just one isolated error. As 'Glaciergate' was followed by 'Amazongate', 'Africagate' and even 'Pachaurigate', further revelations about the IPCC's forth report were appearing on a weekly basis.⁶⁵

For instance, a much-publicised prediction that global warming threatened the survival of 40 percent of the Amazon rainforest had again cited the WWF as its source. But this turned out to have originated in a 1999 paper by a small Brazilian environmental group, linked to the WWF, which had not been about global warming at all, but the threat posed to the forest by logging and fires.⁶⁶ Another widely-quoted claim that global warming could lead to a 50 percent drop in African crop yields had been tracked down to a paper by a climate-campaigning Moroccan academic, who said that it was based on reports for three North African governments. But these turned out to have said nothing of the kind; indeed one of them had forecast that crop yields might actually rise.⁶⁷

All these predictions had been referred to by the BBC in its guide to 'Climate change around the world' at the time of the IPCC Report in 2007 (still on its website four years later). But none, it now emerged, was based in any way on 'peer-reviewed science'. The scale of the scandal coming to light was later to be confirmed by a meticulous examination of the IPCC report carried out by a team of 40 auditors from 12 countries. This showed that of the 18,531 scientific references cited in its 3,000 pages, no fewer than 5,587, nearly a third, had not been to 'peer-reviewed' academic studies at all, but to 'newspaper and magazine articles, discussion papers, MA and PhD theses, working papers and advocacy literature published by environmental groups'.⁶⁸

These revelations put the BBC's environmental experts on the spot. On 30 January Roger Harrabin published an article on the BBC News website, headed 'IPCC under scrutiny', discussing the IPCC's mistake over the Amazon. He gave one scientist involved in the row the chance to claim that, although the passage in the IPCC report had been 'poorly written and bizarrely

63 IPCC statement on the melting of Himalayan glaciers', 20 January 2010, <http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/presentations/himalaya-statement-20january2010.pdf>.

64 'UN body admits mistake' on Himalayan glaciers', <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8468358.stm>

65 In February the IPCC admitted a second error in its 2007 report, after it was pointed out that the report had claimed that 55 percent of the Netherlands was below sea-level when the true figure is only 29 percent. UN climate panel admits Dutch sea level flaw', *Reuters*, 13 February 2010. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/02/13/us-climate-seas-idUSTRE61C1V420100213>.

66 Christopher Booker, 'We reach the source of Amazongate', *Sunday Telegraph*, 11 July 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/christopherbooker/7883372/Amazongate-At-last-we-reach-the-source.html>.

67 Christopher Booker, 'The withering away of the IPCC', *Sunday Telegraph*, 14 February 2010.

68 See <http://nofrakkingconsensus.blogspot.com/2010/05/citizen-audit-report-is-now-pdf.html>. For a fuller account by the audit's organiser, see Donna Laframboise, *The Delinquent Teenager Who Was Mistaken for the World's Top Climate Expert*, Kindle Edition, 2011.

referenced', it was nevertheless 'basically correct'. Harrabin went on to opine that papers from bodies such as the WWF often offered 'an easy synthesis of already published evidence' and that, in his experience, they were 'often both accessible and accurate – though clearly written from a point of view'. But he thus defensively sidestepped the only real point at issue: that the IPCC/ WWF Amazon claim had no scientific basis whatever. It had been lifted from a propaganda leaflet published in 1999 by another environmental activist group discussing something quite different.

The IPCC was also now under fire on another front, following revelations in the *Sunday Telegraph* of how, since becoming the IPCC's chairman in 2002, Dr Pachauri had hugely expanded his Delhi research institute, TERI, opening branches in the USA, London, Abu Dhabi and several other countries in Asia. He had also been given positions worth millions of dollars with more than 20 major organisations, ranging from international banks, corporations, universities and foundations to carbon trading exchanges. When these disclosures were reported across the world, provoking calls for Pachauri to step down from the IPCC, the BBC website leaped to his defence with a laudatory profile. This touched on his business connections only very obliquely and without details. But it emphasised that he had dismissed the allegations, insisting that all payments for his services went to his institute and that 'not a penny goes into my own pocket'.⁶⁹

Clearly the BBC's journalists had been put on the back foot by all these blows levelled at an institution whose authority they had been used to treating with such unquestioning reverence. Something of this unease was shown in a remarkable interview Harrabin published on 13 February with Phil Jones, the now-suspended head of the University of East Anglia's Climatic Research Unit.⁷⁰

A first unusual point about this interview was Harrabin's explanation that some of the questions he put to Jones had been 'gathered from climate sceptics'. He began by asking the man who had been in charge of the world's most prestigious surface temperature record whether he agreed that 'the rates of global warming from 1860-1880, 1910-1940 and 1975-1998 were identical?'. Startlingly, Jones conceded that the warming rates for each of these periods had been 'similar and not statistically different from each other'. In other words, he was admitting that the rate of warming had been much the same during those decades in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, long before the panic over global warming began. Yet this rather contradicted all those claims that the late 20th century warming had been so abnormal that it could only be ascribed to human activity.

Harrabin went on to ask whether Jones agreed that 'from January 2002 to the present there has been statistically significant global cooling?'. Here again, Jones surprisingly conceded that there had indeed been a cooling trend during those years, but that this decline at a rate of 0.12C per decade had not been

69 'Profile: climate chief Rajendra Pachauri', BBC News website, 5 February 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8499845.stm>. The detailed investigation of Pachauri's business dealings was carried out by Dr Richard North and myself, and published in the *Sunday Telegraph* on three occasions in January 2010.

70 'Q and A: Professor Phil Jones', BBC News website, 13 February 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8511670.stm>.

'statistically significant'. Harrabin did not pursue this by asking why this drop in temperatures had not been predicted by those IPCC's computer models programmed to assume that, as CO₂ levels rose, temperatures must follow.

From there Jones's replies to the questions became increasingly ambivalent. When asked whether he agreed that the warming before 1998 could have been due to natural causes, he only mentioned the effects of volcanic eruptions and solar radiation, making no reference to shifts in ocean currents. Asked whether or not there had been a Medieval Warm Period, he gave the now-familiar reply that, although there was evidence for such a warming in the northern hemisphere, there was not enough evidence from the southern hemisphere to say whether this phenomenon had been global. It was therefore impossible to say whether or not global temperatures had been higher 1,000 years ago, and thus to know whether our contemporary warming was unprecedented.

Three months earlier, however, it would have been unthinkable that the BBC should have put such questions, or that Jones should have publicly given such frank answers. Although these issues had long since been the small change of discussion among informed 'sceptics', any attempt to raise them with upholders of the 'consensus' would previously have met only with scorn. The interview was another sign that the global warming story was again entering a new and very different phase.

Holding the line on Climategate

After all the shocks and sensations of that winter of 2009/10, the drama subsided into a prolonged quiescence. Initially, this was punctuated by the attempts of the climate establishment to hold the line by insisting that none of these minor aberrations had affected the overwhelming 'consensus' that the world was warming.

The most conspicuous of these in Britain were the three official inquiries into 'Climategate'. The first was hastily convened by a committee of MPs before the dissolution of Parliament for the 2010 election; the other two, chaired by Lord Oxburgh and Sir Muir Russell, were commissioned by the University of East Anglia to defend the reputation of its beleaguered Climatic Research Unit.

These inquiries were curiously perfunctory affairs. With two possible exceptions, the panel members were all committed supporters of the 'consensus'. Pointedly, none of the inquiries called as witnesses those critics, such as Steve McIntyre and Ross McKittrick, who had produced expert analyses of the profound scientific and professional shortcomings revealed by the CRU emails. When the three reports came out, it was clear that they had all glossed over the more disturbing aspects of the evidence brought to light by the emails. None had addressed the more important scientific and professional issues they had raised. The real purpose of the reports, it became clear, was simply to provide official-seeming

documents which could be quoted to show that the emails had revealed nothing of great concern, and that everyone involved had, with one or two minor exceptions, been cleared of any wrongdoing.

By and large the BBC's coverage of this exercise - typified by a report on its website headed "'No malpractice" by climate unit' in April - was all those responsible for setting up the inquiries could have wanted. Its coverage made no serious attempt to explain the more significant issues which the inquiries had managed to avoid examining. Its overall message - echoing that of the reports themselves - was that the 'consensus' view of climate change had been vindicated.

The one exception to this was a note published by Harrabin on 5 July. At least, in somewhat muddled fashion, this tried to highlight the peculiar way in which the more serious scientific issues raised by Climategate had been allowed to slip down the cracks between the three inquiries.⁷¹ But any doubts this raised about the value of the inquiries might have been allayed two days later when Richard Black commented in a long post on the publication of the report chaired by Sir Muir Russell, headed 'Climate scientists "did not withhold data"'.⁷² In a nod to impartiality, Black did include critical comments from Dr Benny Peiser and Lord Lawson of the Global Warming Policy Foundation. But the accusations of sceptics, Black asserted, had been 'largely dismissed by the report'. He quoted Russell as saying that 'the rigour and honesty' of the scientists was 'not in doubt', and that his report was 'not a whitewash ... we've gone to the heart of the issues'.

Had Black shown more familiarity with the issues himself, he might have been in a position to express considerable surprise at such a claim. But he simply took all the report's assurances on trust. He quoted someone who had worked with the CRU saying how delighted she was that the 'nightmare' was over for Jones and his colleagues, and that Russell had 'found nothing to undermine the IPCC reports'. And he cited the findings of a Dutch inquiry earlier that week into the mistake over Dutch sea-levels, that none of the IPCC's errors could undermine the fact 'that man-made climate change poses a significant threat in many regions of the world'.

71 Harrabin's Notes: Getting to the bottom of Climategate', BBC News website, 5 July 2010. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10507144>. Harrabin's account was muddled in various respects. Oxburgh's 'Science Assessment Panel', despite its name, had never been briefed by the University of East Anglia to look at the wider scientific questions raised by the emails, only at charges of professional misconduct. The scientific papers it examined were chosen not, as Harrabin implied, by the Royal Society, but by the UEA. Although Harrabin therefore asked a spokesman for Muir Russell whether his panel would be considering the science, it was not surprising that the answer was 'no', because Russell had made clear from the start that this was not his intention.

72 Richard Black, 'Climate scientists "did not withhold data"', BBC News website, 7 July 2010. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/1053819810>.

Chapter Seven: (2010-11) Whistling in the dark

With Cancun another fiasco, let's just attack the 'deniers'

Despite the best efforts of those Climategate inquiries, it was becoming evident that the events of the previous winter had shaken those inside the 'bubble' rather more severely than they liked to let on. In June 2010 the BBC's Panorama tried to hold the line in a different way with an edition entitled *What's Up With The Weather?* As its presenter, Tom Heap, wrote on the BBC website:

Climate change is often presented in religious terms, believers versus deniers, disputing the fate of mankind. In the last year, it really felt as though the gods unleashed a plague of events to test the faith. Dodgy e-mails gave us 'climategate'. The shifting jet-stream gave us a freezing winter. United Nations-backed climate scientists gave us crass errors of glacial proportions. And Copenhagen gave us, well, virtually nothing'.⁷³

In its bid to recover lost ground, Panorama fell back on the old BBC trick of purporting to take a fresh and wholly impartial look at the subject by pitching against each other spokesmen for what were presented as the two opposing sides of the debate.

On one hand were two advocates for the orthodoxy, Bob Watson, Pachauri's predecessor as chairman of the IPCC, and Bob Ward, a tireless lobbyist for the cause, who both believed fervently in man-made global warming. On the other, billed as 'sceptics', were the social scientist Bjorn Lomborg and the satellite temperature expert John Christy, who also both accepted a human contribution to global warming, although they differed from the 'consensus' as to its degree and the response this might call for.

The programme began by explaining to viewers that global temperatures were rising because greenhouse gases were trapping heat in the atmosphere - 'like the world putting on a woolly jumper', as the producer Mike Rudin helpfully added on the BBC website. The antagonists were then made to play a babyish game, pinning up tiles on a 'Wall of Certainty' to show the degree of confidence they attached to various statements. This, as Rudin put it, resulted in a surprising amount of agreement between the two sides 'on the fundamental science'.⁷⁴ To help them on their way, viewers were also treated to an interview with Michael Mann of the 'hockey stick'.

By the end, even though the two sides disagreed about how far we should worry about the dangers of the global warming they both believed in, the presenter was able to conclude 'you do not expect to crash your car, but you have plenty of expensive safety features fitted just in case you do'.

⁷³ 'After "Climate-gate": dissecting the science', Tom Heap, BBC website 28 June, 2010. http://news.bbc.co.uk/panorama/hi/front_page/newsid_8758000/8758352.stm.

⁷⁴ 'What's up with the weather?', Mike Rudin, BBC website, 24 June 2010. http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/theeditors/2010/06/whats_up_with_the_weather.html.

The kind of 'expensive safety measures' Panorama had in mind were those which, if they had been signed up to in Copenhagen six months earlier, would have presented mankind with by far its biggest bill in history. To the BBC's dismay, these had been rejected. Preparations were afoot to have another go at reaching a binding international agreement, when, in December, the UN staged yet another climate conference in Cancun, Mexico.

As thousands of officials, politicians, lobbyists and environmental activists converged on the Caribbean holiday resort, hopes for a deal were not high. Cancun was enjoying its lowest December temperatures on record, though nothing like so low as those back in frozen, snow-bound Britain, which was shivering through its second coldest December since local records began in 1659.

The BBC team did their best to whip up flagging spirits, as Richard Black reported that the talks had begun 'amid warnings that time is running out to curb climate change and save the UN process'. He led off with a plea from 'the top UN official Christiana Figueres' that 'the fate of low-lying islands should be "a wake-up call"' (the BBC had never been able to acknowledge that there was no physical evidence that sea-levels were rising round the Maldives and Tuvalu, as was only suggested by IPCC computer models).

Quoting spokesmen for the WWF and Oxfam, Black sadly had to agree that the prospects for any new treaty that would keep global temperatures from rising no more than 2 percent, as 'the vast majority of countries' wanted, were slim. But 'without a meaningful climate pact', he was told by Britain's climate change minister, Chris Huhne, there was a danger that the process would just 'peter out':

People next year won't send a senior minister, they will send a junior minister, and then the year after that they will send a senior civil servant. In a few years time it will be the local ambassador and it will wither on the vine'.

The best that could be hoped for, said Huhne, was that 'there is a renewed momentum so people are coming back next year with a real sense that they want a deal'.⁷⁵

A week later, when their worst fears had been realised and the conference ended in yet another non-binding fudge, Roger Harrabin tried to keep hopes alive with a Cancun retrospective headed 'No crash for climate bus'. He began by rejoicing that at least some kind of an agreement had emerged, assuring his audience that 'the climate bus' had not just been 'yanked back on the road – it was pointed in the right direction and it's still moving'. But even he, after a few hundred words of whistling in the dark, had to end by admitting that 'at this rate, the climate bus won't make it in time. And no amount of cheering its success in avoiding a fatal accident will change that'.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ 'Climate change warning at UN Cancun summit', Richard Black, BBC News website, 8 December 2010. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-11984066>.

⁷⁶ Harrabin's Notes: 'No crash for climate bus', Roger Harrabin, BBC News website, 13 December 2010. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-11984066>.

'Science Under Attack'

With the cause it had relentlessly promoted for so long falling apart in so many directions, it seemed all that was now left to the BBC was to lash out at those whom it had long tried to write out of the script – those 'deniers' who, four years before, it had decided were so insignificant, wrong and mad that they were best ignored.

On 24 January 2011, the BBC's leading science programme, *Horizon*, put out an hour-long documentary entitled 'Science Under Attack'. The formula the programme used to make its point was one familiar since *Climate Wars*. First a presenter with some scientific credentials comes on to pretend he is going to look dispassionately at the evidence. Supporters of the cause are allowed to put their case without challenge, as if they represent proper 'science'. Hours of film of 'deniers' are cherry-picked for sound bites which can be shown, out of context, to make them look ridiculous. The presenter can then conclude that the 'deniers' are just a tiny handful of eccentrics standing out against the overwhelming scientific 'consensus'.

The *Horizon* version perfectly exemplified this formula. The scientist picked to front the programme was Sir Paul Nurse, a Nobel Prize-winning geneticist now President of the Royal Society, which had been promoting global warming orthodoxy even longer than the BBC. The cue to justify the programme's title was the criticism which had greeted those emails from the University of East Anglia, which just happened to be Nurse's old university.

One of the two 'deniers' chosen to be stitched up was the journalist James Delingpole, who had first popularised the term 'Climategate' on his Telegraph blog. He was filmed at his home for three hours so that the programme makers could pick out two minutes of interview, including one question from Nurse to which Delingpole rather fumbled an answer because it was so unexpected. If Delingpole was diagnosed with cancer, Nurse asked him, and clinical consensus recommended a particular form of treatment, would he reject that consensus? When Delingpole paused before answering a question so loaded that it might have taken several minutes to explain the difference between a consensus of medical certainty arrived at by decades of genuine scientific research and one which in the case of 'climate science' was merely a tendentious artefact, this so excited the Guardian that it posted a whole article on its blog on how Delingpole had been 'torn apart'.⁷⁷

More blatant was the treatment of Professor Fred Singer, the distinguished veteran US astrophysicist. After Nurse was shown cosying up to Singer in a Washington coffee house, a brief clip showed Singer explaining how a particular stalagmite study had shown temperature fluctuations correlating much more

⁷⁷ 'Oh no, not another unbiased BBC documentary about "climate change"', James Delingpole's *Daily Telegraph* blog 24 January 2011. <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/jamesdelingpole/100073116/oh-no-not-another-unbiased-bbc-documentary-about-climate-change>. See also 'The TV interview that tied James Delingpole's tongue', *Guardian Environment Blog*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/blog/2011/jan/24/james-delingpole-tv-interview>.

neatly with solar activity than with levels of CO₂. This snippet enabled Nurse to imply that Singer seemed to base his scepticism just on one tiny local example, whereas real scientists look at the overall picture. No mention was made of the 800-page report recently edited by Singer in which dozens of expert scientists had challenged the CO₂ orthodoxy from every angle.

The most telling moment of the programme, however, came in an interview between Nurse and a computer-modelling scientist from NASA, presented in front of computer screens as a general climate expert, although he was only a specialist in ice studies. Asked to quantify the relative contributions of CO₂ to the atmosphere by human and natural causes, his seemingly devastating reply was that 7 gigatonnes were now being emitted each year by human activity while only 1 gigatonne came from natural sources such as the oceans. So much was this the message the programme-makers wanted that Nurse persuaded the man to repeat his claim that human emissions were seven times greater than those from all natural sources.

This was a mind-boggling example of the BBC's scientific and professional dishonesty. It is generally agreed that the 7gt of CO₂ annually emitted by human activity represent only just over 3 percent of 186gt emitted in total. That given off by the oceans is more than 100gt (57 percent). 71gt (38 percent) comes from animals. One can argue about how much, thanks to the carbon cycle, CO₂ the oceans and plants reabsorb. But, as so baldly stated, twice over, the point was simply a grotesque misrepresentation, included, like many of the programme's other assertions, only to give a wholly misleading impression.

Another came after Nurse had defended his old university's part in the Climategate emails. Inevitably he claimed that various reports had cleared the scientists involved of any wrongdoing, without mentioning that the inquiries had all avoided the more serious issues which the emails had raised about the methods and conduct of the scientists involved. But Nurse then held up a copy of the *Sunday Telegraph*, showing the headline over one of my own columns reading 'The worst scientific scandal of our generation'.⁷⁸ He implied that this was intended to refer only to Climategate, which would obviously have been absurd. The whole point of my article had in fact been to explain how the emails merely shed further light on all the other ways in which these scientists had for years been misusing and misrepresenting data crucial to the 'consensus' case.

Although Nurse constantly posed through the programme as the champion of objective science, he all too frequently showed that, for all his expertise in cell biology, he knew no more about climate science than the proverbial man in the pub. He and the prestige of his position had simply been used by the BBC to further a purpose which in recent years had become wearisomely familiar.

Indeed, by happy coincidence, the morning after the Horizon programme was first shown, the *Daily Mail* serialised extracts from a book by the former senior BBC journalist Peter Sissons, under the headline: 'The BBC became a propaganda

78 'Climate change: this is the worst scientific scandal of our generation', *Sunday Telegraph*, 28 November 2009. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/christopherbooker/6679082/Climate-change-this-is-the-worst-scientific-scandal-of-our-generation.html>

machine for climate change zealots ... I was treated as a lunatic for daring to dissent'. In a passage quoted at the beginning of this report, Sissons described how for years he had noted how fanatically his BBC colleagues had been carried away into pushing the 'consensus' orthodoxy, and how intolerant they had become of anyone who asked the kind of basic questions to which any serious journalist would have wanted answers.

As I commented on the *Horizon* programme in my column the following Sunday:

*"Far from it being 'science' which is under attack from all those experts who dispute the orthodoxy on global warming, the truth is the very reverse. It is the dissenters who are trying to speak for genuine science, against those who misuse its prestige to promote a cause which has too often betrayed the very essence of proper scientific method. The fact that the BBC has been turned, in Peter Sissons' words, into a mere 'propaganda machine' is scandal enough. But a far greater scandal is the way the authority of science has been hi-jacked to serve a fatally flawed belief system which threatens to inflict irreparable damage on the future of us all."*⁷⁹

The story the BBC missed altogether

Often just as important as what the BBC did report about the climate change story, as we have seen, was what it didn't report. Before we conclude therefore, brief mention must be made of one hugely important part of that story which for years the BBC had managed almost wholly to overlook.

One of the most disturbing consequences of the politicians' obsession with global warming had been the very dangerous way in which this had skewed national energy policy. For years it had been becoming increasingly obvious that this was posing a serious threat to Britain's continued ability to produce enough electricity to keep her lights on and her economy functioning.

As far back as 1992, thanks to the new-found obsession even then with the need to reduce CO₂ emissions, the Conservative government had decided that Britain should begin to generate much of its power from gas rather than coal (emissions from gas being only half those from coal). This green-inspired shift in policy was greatly reinforced after 2003 by the Blair government's decision to centre its energy policy on 'renewables' and wind turbines. In fact, even then, as was reflected in that year's energy White Paper, it was already obvious that, within little more than a decade, Britain would begin to face a massive shortfall in her electricity supplies.

This was because eight out of nine of her ageing nuclear power stations would be reaching the end of their life, and six major coal-fired power stations would be forced to close under an EU anti-pollution directive. Between them, this would knock out 22 gigawatts of the country's generating capacity, more than

⁷⁹ 'How BBC warmists abuse the science', *Sunday Telegraph* 29 January 2011, www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/christopherbooker/8290469/How-BBC-warmists-abuse-the-science.html.

a third of what is needed to meet peak demand of 60GW.

How was this shortfall to be remedied? It was no good pretending, as the politicians tried to do, that the gap could be filled by wind power, because, thanks to the intermittency of the wind, no amount of windmills could ensure a reliable supply. Even when, in 2008, the government belatedly recognised this by reversing its earlier opposition to building new nuclear power stations, none of these were likely to be on stream for well over a decade.

At the same time the building of new coal-fired power stations was effectly ruled out, because these could only be allowed if their CO₂ emissions were piped away to be buried in holes under the North Sea. A wholly Quixotic proposition which would double the cost of electricity and was never going to work anyway. The only hope of filling the gap therefore was a crash programme to build power stations burning gas which, with the North Sea's supplies running out, would have to be imported at ever rising cost from abroad. Only in 2011, with the first discovery of vast reserves of shale gas in Lancashire, did it seem that, miraculously, Britain might now be able to draw on almost limitless supplies of her own gas. But even this, the government viewed with little enthusiasm, because of the violent opposition of environmental groups to shale gas on the grounds that it was yet another CO₂-emitting fossil fuel, the exploitation of which they argued might be 'environmentally damaging'.

For years the unfolding of this extraordinary drama should have called for properly informed reporting by the BBC. But so many wires would this have crossed with the mindset of its journalists, hypnotised by their obsessions with CO₂ and windmills, that they would scarcely have known where to begin in covering what, in the real world, had long deserved to be treated as one of the more important national stories of the decade.

Epilogue: (2011) 'We need more bias, not less'

Professor Jones reports to the BBC Trust

There could be no more appropriate point on which to end the story told in these pages than a report by the BBC Trust published in July 2011. Its subject was 'the impartiality and accuracy of the BBC's coverage of science', Much of the report consisted of what was described as 'an independent assessment' by Professor Steve Jones, a geneticist who had long worked for the BBC on a range of science-related programmes.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ BBC Trust Review of impartiality and accuracy of the BBC's coverage of science. July 2011. http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/our_work/science_impartiality/science_impartiality.pdf.

Although only seven pages of the Trust's 102-page report were devoted to Jones's review of its climate coverage, it was clear from advance publicity given in the press that this was regarded as a very important part of what Jones had to say. There were few areas of BBC coverage which had more consistently come under fire for its lack of impartiality.

Even before the report was published, however, it was somewhat startling to see headlines such as 'Sceptics get too much air-time, BBC told'. Sure enough, it turned out that this was precisely what Jones was arguing. Indeed, to those who had followed closely the BBC's coverage of this issue over the years, almost everything he had written turned out to be quite bizarre.

From the moment he turned his attention to climate change, under the heading 'Man-made global warming: a microcosm of "false balance"', Jones made no secret about the line he was about to take. 'A belief in alternative medicine or in astrology', he began, is a symptom of 'a deep mistrust in conventional wisdom'. Scepticism may be healthy in its place, but 'mistrust can harden into denial' and this faced the media with a problem. In their desire to report objectively, 'they face the danger of giving equal coverage to the views of a determined but deluded minority'; and nowhere was this 'struggle to find the correct position better seen than in the issue of global warming'.

Jones thus made clear that he was about to take a very stern line against giving any credibility at all to those who dissented from the 'consensus' on global warming. Repeatedly speaking contemptuously of 'deniers', 'denialists' and 'denialism', he compared this 'deluded minority' not just to believers in astrology and quack medicine but to those who believed that the 9/11 terrorist attacks were 'a US government plot'.

He spoke of 'the drizzle of criticism of BBC coverage of the topic in some newspapers, much of it arising from a handful of journalists who have taken it upon themselves to keep disbelief alive'.⁸¹ He claimed that the BBC's coverage of the Muir Russell Climategate report had been seriously skewed by including interviews with sceptics 'whose claims had been refuted rather than accepted by the Report itself'. He even darkly hinted that all this denialism had originated 'twenty years ago' when 'an American organisation [unnamed] sent out press releases denying the truth of warming'. 'This whipped up a media storm', which had presumably continued to this day.

All this, Jones suggested, should make the BBC much more careful about giving the 'deniers' such an excessive amount of airtime, since although 'we are entitled to our own opinions' none of us are 'entitled to our own facts'. 'For at least three years', he said, 'the climate change deniers have been marginal to the debate, but somehow they continued to find a place on the airwaves'. The evidence for global warming was now so 'overwhelming' that it was quite wrong for the BBC to continue to report on it as if there was still any kind of two-sided debate on the matter. 'The real discussion has moved on to

⁸¹ I must plead guilty here, or at least declare an interest, since I fear that no journalist had criticised the BBC's coverage of global warming more often than me.

what should be done to mitigate climate change; but its coverage has been impeded by the constant emphasis on an exhausted subject whose main attraction is that it can be presented as a confrontation'.

At least, said Jones, there were signs that the BBC was beginning to report more fairly on this issue, as in the Horizon programme in which the interviews by the President of the Royal Society with various climate sceptics had 'revealed their marginal position'.

In making his case, however, there were several more very odd features of Jones's review. One was that he showed remarkably little sign of having studied the BBC's coverage of climate change in any detail. He referred by name to only a handful of individual programmes, all from the previous two years, and the little he said about them suggested that he was relying more on information provided by others than on having watched the programmes himself.

Any impression that both his homework and his drafting had been somewhat casual was reinforced, for instance, by a passage in which he criticised the BBC for its readiness to 'give space' to 'deniers' such as Lord Lawson and Lord Monckton, 'to make statements which are not supported by the facts'. To illustrate this point, he immediately went on to cite two programmes in which neither of these two men had appeared. This prompted an email from Lord Lawson to the chairman of the BBC Trust, Lord (Christopher) Patten, which was ignored. Only when this was followed by a lawyer's letter did the BBC Trust publish a grudging correction, acknowledging the 'ambiguity' of this passage and removing the two men's names.⁸²

Jones showed himself equally casual in his references to various well known controversies in the recent history of the global warming debate. He scornfully referred, for instance, to the way 'deniers' had used 'a single mistake in a report about Himalayan glaciers' as evidence of 'a conspiracy to exaggerate the impact of greenhouse gases'. This gave the impression that he was unaware that this had not come from some 'report on Himalayan glaciers' but from a major IPCC report in which dozens of other errors and exaggerations had been identified. He cited a survey of 'thousands of Earth scientists', which he claimed had found that 97 percent of 'specialists in atmospheric physics' agreed that 'human activity has been significant' in causing global temperatures to rise. But Jones seemed unaware that this survey had become the subject of widespread ridicule when it emerged that, after much finagling of the figures, the answers which yielded that 97 percent figure had been based on replies from only 75 of the 10,257 scientists originally approached.⁸³

82 See 'Listen up BBC, the climate debate is far from over', published by the *Sunday Times* on 16 October 2011, made available for non-paywall viewing by the GWPF on <http://www.thegwpf.org/opinion-pros-a-cons/4112-nigel-lawson-listen-up-bbc-the-climate-debate-is-far-from-over.html>.

83 See 'Climate "Consensus" Opiate: The 97% Solution', SPPI blog, 14 December 2010, http://scienceandpublicpolicy.org/originals/climate_aconsensusq_opiate_the_97_solution.html. The 2009 survey 'Examining the scientific consensus on climate change', by two academics from the University of Illinois, had originally been sent to 10,257 scientists, of whom only 3,146 responded. To arrive at their final headline figure, the researchers narrowed their sample down to just 79 who described themselves as 'climate scientists' (not 'atmospheric physicists' as Jones claimed). 75 of these had agreed that human activity had played a significant part in raising temperatures, two disagreed, and two did not give an answer.

The most curious surprise of all in Jones's report, however, was how remarkably little he himself appeared to know about climate science. For instance, in a passage demonstrating how the evidence for global warming was now overwhelming, he referred to the uncertainty still remaining over how much 'the feedbacks', such as 'melting ice, rising seas, dying plants', would multiply the effects of rising levels of CO₂. But anyone at all familiar with the scientific debate might have been surprised at the examples he gave ('rising seas', for instance, are not 'feedbacks' at all).

There had indeed been a long-running and very significant controversy over 'feedbacks', but this had chiefly centred on the effects of clouds and water vapour, the most abundant greenhouse gas. Is this feedback 'positive' and thus likely to amplify temperatures, as the IPCC has long tried to insist (because this enables its computer models to inflate their projections of warming)? Or is the feedback 'negative' and thus likely to diminish temperatures, as has for so long been argued by, among others, that world-ranking atmospheric physicist Dr Lindzen?

It was genuinely important issues like this which lay at the heart of the real scientific debate over global warming. Not only had they, like so much else, passed the BBC itself by, but Professor Jones seemed scarcely to have reached square one in trying to understand them. Like his fellow-geneticist Paul Nurse before him, as soon as he strayed outside his own area of expertise he seemed wholly at sea, speaking with no more authority than that 'man in the pub'.

How much easier it was just to remain within the cosy little 'bubble', sounding off about those dreadful 'deniers', who should be banned from the airwaves except to occasionally be ridiculed. In picking Professor Jones to advise on how to improve the impartiality of its coverage of climate change, the BBC had found exactly the man it deserved. Neither of them, it seemed, had a clue what the word impartiality meant.

Conclusions: Why did the BBC get its coverage of climate change so wrong?

It might have been hardly surprising that the BBC went so badly awry in its coverage of global warming. The BBC is now, of course, a very different animal from what it was in those far-off days when it won world-wide respect for the supposed professionalism and reliability of its reporting, and when 'Auntie' BBC was viewed as an almost over-staid and 'responsible' bastion of traditional values.

In keeping with the immense changes in social attitudes which have taken

place since the early 1960s, the BBC has developed over recent decades a very recognisable new 'institutional culture'. It likes to see itself as challenging, assertive, 'edgy'. It likes to think that it is 'setting the agenda'. And a corollary to this is BBC's programme makers and presenters have felt the freedom to become much more obviously opinionated. In itself this might not have been controversial, had those opinions represented a range of differing points of view. But what has been striking about the new BBC culture is how consistently its opinions come from only one direction, conforming with a particular set of 'politically correct' values and assumptions similar to those represented by the *Guardian* or the *Independent*.

Back in the 1980s, the BBC's then-director general, Alasdair Milne, liked to say that there was only one issue on which the BBC was proud to admit that it saw no reason to remain 'impartial', the apartheid regime in South Africa. But since then, on a whole range of political, social and moral issues, the BBC's coverage has become governed by a clearly identifiable 'party line', which dictates the subjects to which its programmes like to give prominence, opinions are aired on them and which are excluded.⁸⁴

One issue on which the BBC's bias has long attracted critical comment, for instance, has been Britain's political involvement with 'Europe'. As long ago as 1971, as has been well-documented (not least, curiously enough, by the BBC itself), the BBC was secretly enlisted by the Heath government to play an active part in swaying public opinion behind Britain's application to join the Common Market.⁸⁵ Ever since, its coverage of 'Europe' has essentially reflected the views of the 'pro-European consensus' between our main political parties. For a long time it liked to ignore anyone questioning this 'consensus', or to scorn them as merely part of a tiny 'xenophobic' fringe (in much the same way that they later ridiculed climate change 'deniers').⁸⁶ But just as significantly, the BBC has consistently failed to give its audience any clear picture of the real nature and workings of the 'European project', or of the serious issues raised by the increasingly central part the EU has come to play in how Britain is governed.

Never was this bias more obvious than in the quite obsessive support the BBC gave in the 1990s and early 2000s to the campaign to get Britain into the euro. Day after day, programmes such as *Today* would give a platform for its leading spokesmen such as Chris Patten, Michael Heseltine and Neil Kinnock, to make their case without challenge or any balancing contribution from the other side. In 2000, in the *Sunday Telegraph*, I gave chapter and verse on a whole series

84 So familiar have we become with this aspect of the BBC that it is a salutary shock to be introduced to the very different ethos prevailing in American radio, where talk shows in particular are free to be either 'liberal' or 'conservative'. Many times as I have enjoyed energetic discussions for up to an hour with intelligent, highly opinionated but well-informed presenters on popular US talk shows, I have thought (and even observed on air) that 'back in Britain a radio discussion like this on the BBC would be quite unthinkable. It would simply never be allowed'. But other US stations feature 'liberal' talk shows and presenters which conform to values and attitudes reminiscent of those represented in Britain by the BBC. The difference between the two countries in this respect is that one permits free speech (or at least a choice of prejudices), the other does not.

85 BBC Radio Four, Document: A Letter to the Times, 3 February 2000.

86 On one of the very rare occasions when I have been interviewed by the BBC, it was alongside the then-head of the European Commission in London, who had published a pamphlet attacking articles I had written on the damaging effect of EU directives on British businesses. After giving him a sympathetic few minutes to put his case, the interviewer's first question to me was 'Christopher Booker, at what point does coverage like yours become just xenophobic and evil?'

of BBC news programmes which had prominently reported that well-known multi-national companies were threatening to pull out of Britain unless she joined the euro. Each of the companies issued strong denials of these claims, but not once did the BBC correct its earlier reports.⁸⁷

Another area in which the BBC's coverage showed a clearly identifiable slant was its reporting on all those food and safety 'scares' which became such a feature of British life in the late 1980s and 1990s, from salmonella in eggs and BSE to the 'Millennium bug' and the dangers of lead in petrol. Some years back, when I was co-writing a book tracing the history of many of these scares, which showed how closely they tended to follow a consistent pattern, from the media frenzy when they were at their height to the moment when they turned out to have been wildly exaggerated or even wholly imaginary, it was striking just how many of them the BBC had played a leading part in promoting.⁸⁸

Again and again the BBC was only too eager to publicise the claims of the scientists and lobby groups who were pushing a scare, while disregarding those critics arguing for a calmer, more dispassionately science-based view, even when these were eventually shown to have been right. It was typical, for instance, that in March 1996, when the hysteria over 'mad cow disease' was at its peak, it should have been Jeremy Paxman on *Newsnight* who won headlines by pressing the government's chief BSE expert to predict that by 2005 eating BSE-infected beef could have killed half a million people. Yet when, only a year later, the same expert revised his forecast number of deaths downwards to just 100, the BBC never mentioned it.

All this might have predisposed the BBC, when global warming took off as the greatest scare of them all, to join much of the rest of the media in finding this story irresistible. Here was a narrative, with its sensational vision of an impending apocalypse, which offered journalists the chance to get involved in nothing less than a moral crusade to save the planet, complete with its far-sighted prophets, such as Al Gore, and its own cast of villains, such as 'Big Oil'. And nothing helped more to give credibility to the cause than to have it backed by all the authority of that supposed scientific 'consensus' represented by the IPCC.

As we have seen in these pages, however, it was at just the time when the BBC decided more than ever to throw its weight behind this cause that the real global warming story began to change. So convinced had those running the BBC become by the righteousness of their cause that an ever wider gulf began to open up between what they saw from inside their 'bubble' and what was going on in the world outside. It was this which led them ever more obviously into what, in my foreword, I called the three 'betrayals'.

The first was the BBC's betrayal of its statutory obligation to report on the world

87 'Sorry is the hardest word for euro-loving reporters at the BBC', Christopher Booker, *Sunday Telegraph*, 20 January 2000. For a discussion of BBC bias on 'Europe' see *Guilty Men* by Peter Osborne and Frances Weaver, Centre for Policy Studies, 2011, <http://www.cps.org.uk/publications/reports/q/id-8/>; and also *The Great Deception: Can the European Union Survive?* by Christopher Booker and Richard North, Continuum, 2005.

88 Booker and North, *Scared To Death: From BSE to Global Warming, Why Scares Are Costing Us The Earth*, Continuum, 2007.

with 'impartially'. In its own mind it got round this by creating its own definition of the meaning of the word. The IPCC, the scientific and political establishments, Al Gore, the developers of wind turbines and heaven knows who else, were all so unanimously convinced that man-made global warming was an unchallengeable fact that the BBC decreed that these were the only people who should be listened to. Anyone who dissented from this orthodoxy could be ignored as belonging to just a tiny minority of cranks, or venally corrupted hirelings of Big Oil, whose views it would be improper for the BBC to publicise.

The problem was that, outside the 'bubble', all sorts of things were beginning to contradict this cosy scenario. Ever more serious scientists were beginning to question the orthodox theory of what was influencing the world's climate. It emerged ever more clearly that the projections made by over-simplistic computer models no longer matched up with the observed evidence of what was actually happening to the climate. Ever more evidence came to light to suggest that the IPCC was not the unimpeachably objective and honest scientific body it was claimed to be.

It was all this which helped to illuminate the extent of the second 'betrayal' in the BBC's coverage of the story, the way it betrayed the principles of professional journalism. So committed to the cause were its journalists that, when important questions began to be raised as to whether the story was really as unarguable as was claimed, their only real response was simply to dig in their toes to defend it. They could no longer step outside the 'bubble', as independent-minded journalists should have been able, to consider all these questions in their own right. They could only stay within the mindset they knew, talking only to those within the orthodoxy who could provide them with the answers they needed to fend off all these tiresome 'deniers' appearing from outside the 'bubble' to ask awkward questions – such as how genuinely scientific were the methods used to create the 'hockey stick' graph?

One of the impressions it is hard to avoid in reviewing the BBC's coverage of this story is that its journalists, and those shadowy figures behind them in the BBC hierarchy, are not particularly well-informed about many of the issues they report on. This point was made as long ago as 2006 by the journalist Richard D. North, when he described his experience in attending that day-long seminar organised by Roger Harrabin. As North observed:

I was frankly appalled by the level of ignorance of the issue which the BBC people showed ... I heard nothing which made me think any of them read any broadsheet newspaper coverage of the topic (except maybe the Guardian and that lazily) ... it seemed to me that none of them had shown even a modicum of professional curiosity on the subject ... I spent the day discussing the subject and I don't recall anyone showing any sign of having read anything serious at all.

This may help to explain the third of the three 'betrayals' to which I referred at the start, the consistency with which the BBC's coverage of this story has shown so little understanding of the basic principles of science. We have seen how

again and again they have put out programmes designed to promote their cause which have contained quite rudimentary scientific errors. They have loved to wheel out front men such as Sir David Attenborough, Dr Iain Stewart or Sir Paul Nurse, claiming to speak with all the authority of being 'a scientist' - but who have then been shown, on matters outside their own disciplines, to be out of their depth. These people have been used to lend the prestige of 'science' for the purposes of what amounted to no more than clumsy exercises in propaganda.

Perhaps the most revealing example of all this misuse of the prestige of science was that truly bizarre report produced in 2011 for the BBC Trust by Professor Jones, arguing that, far from being too biased, the BBC's coverage of the story should in future become even more biased.

The sheer Alice in Wonderland dottiness of this report might serve as a suitable epitaph on what has been one of the saddest chapters in the BBC's history. Here is a hugely important and far-reaching issue on which for years it has been comprehensively misleading the audience from which it forcibly derives its funding. Yet tragically it seems so incapable of recognising just how badly it has failed us that there is little realistic prospect of it ever being likely to change its ways. The BBC is in denial!

The one body which in theory has the power to call the BBC to account when it is failing in its journalistic and statutory responsibilities is the BBC Trust (which in 2008 succeeded the old Board of Governors). But the Trust's present chairman Lord Patten, a former EU Commissioner and fervent Europhile, has been an unquestioning supporter of the 'consensus' on climate change ever since the days when he was Secretary of State for the Environment in 1990. He has more recently described it as 'the only really existential issue confronting the world today' and as 'the biggest issue we face'.⁸⁹

His 'vice-chair', Diane Coyle, married to the BBC's Technology Editor and a former economics editor of the *Independent*, has similarly parroted the mantras of the orthodoxy (just as in former times, like Patten, she was a fervent supporter of the campaign for Britain to join the euro, scorning those opposed to it as being driven only by a visceral 'anti-Europeanism' and 'Little England-ism').

It is hardly surprising that in such hands the Trust should have both commissioned and warmly endorsed Jones's report calling for the BBC to show even more bias than hitherto. So the BBC's position is therefore likely to remain - until that time when the great scare over global warming may come to be looked back on as having been one of the most significant examples in history of how easily human beings can be carried away by what was famously described in that book long ago, *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and The Madness of Crowds*. As its author Charles Mackay so aptly wrote in 1841:

Men, it has been well said, think in herds; it will be seen that they go mad in

⁸⁹ 'Today the world', interview in *Oxford Today*, 21, 2, Hilary 2009, <http://www.oxfordtoday.ox.ac.uk/page.aspx?pid=1042>.

herds, while they only recover their senses slowly, one by one.

Postscript: November 2011

Climategate 2.0 and the relationships of BBC journalists with outside bodies

Just as this report was going to press, two events took place which shed considerable further light on the story told in these pages.

One of these was 'Climategate 2.0', the release onto the internet on 22 November of another stack of emails involving the climate scientists at the University of East Anglia (UEA). Of these 157 mentioned the BBC. They showed links between the UEA scientists and BBC journalists as having been very much closer over the years than the outside world was aware – a relationship both parties clearly saw as being to their advantage. Each used the other to promote what they clearly regarded as a common 'cause', not least in finding ways to discredit or marginalise those 'sceptics' who dissented from the 'consensus'.

Back in 1999, for instance, the journalist Philip Eden, the then resident weather expert for Radio 5 Live, emailed Mike Hulme, a senior UEA academic who was about to set up the UEA's Tyndall Centre for Climate Research, to ask:

Do you have, or have you ever thought of producing, a rebuttal document outlining, in simple terms, the fallacies in the various arguments that the sceptics use? I'm sure weather forecasters, specialist journalists, etc, would be very grateful to lay their hands on something like that.⁹⁰

After launching his Tyndall Centre in 2000, Hulme was keen to enlist the services of the BBC's Roger Harrabin and Joe Smith of the Open University, who had set up their Cambridge Media and Environment Programme (CMEP) in 1996 to promote environmental coverage in the media, not least the BBC. In 2001, Harrabin and Smith emailed Hulme to say they were planning to lobby for coverage of a global conference the following year to mark the 10th anniversary of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. They told Hulme that this would give him:

an open opportunity to put forward ideas that will be collated and circulated amongst relevant BBC decision-makers. What should the BBC be doing this time in terms of news, current affairs, drama, documentaries, game shows, music etc? What are the strongest themes and specific issues that should appear in the media in the months and years following the conference?

They went on to say that they would be drawing 'on the information gathered in

⁹⁰ <http://foia2011.org/index.php?search=hulme+philip+eden+1999&id=7> (email 4689)

planning a new three-year programme of media seminars'.⁹¹

By 2002, Hulme had arranged for Tyndall to provide the CMEP with funding, which over the next three years would amount to £15,000. He also appointed Harrabin to Tyndall's advisory board, along with a representative of Greenpeace.⁹² In an email on 25 February 2002 headed 'Sceptics', Hulme expressed his irritation at a debate on that morning's *Today* programme on BBC Radio 4 between Sir John Houghton, recently retired as head of the IPCC's Working Group 1, and Professor Philip Stott, a prominent sceptic. It began:

*Did anyone hear Stott v. Houghton on Today Radio 4 this morning? Woeful stuff, really. This is one reason why Tyndall is sponsoring the Cambridge Media/Environment Programme to starve this kind of reporting at source.*⁹³

The annoyance of both scientists and journalists at the persistence of sceptical views and the exposure the BBC was still occasionally giving them is quite evident in these years. In December 2003 Stefan Rahmstorf of the Potsdam Institute suggested that the scientists at the heart of promoting the 'consensus' view should set up a website to counter the 'sceptics' arguments,

When this was discussed by the Tyndall Advisory Board, Rahmstorf received the reply that:

*the consensus was very much in line with your views, except for the journalist present (Roger Harrabin), who wanted something more pro-active.*⁹⁴

Harrabin's more aggressive attitude was shared by another BBC environmental correspondent, Alex Kirby, who in 2004 emailed Phil Jones, director of the UEA's Climatic Research Unit, to say that he had managed to 'spike' some item on the BBC website featuring sceptical views as being 'pure stream-of-consciousness rubbish'. But he added that he could understand why Jones was unhappy about another item the BBC had allowed, explaining that:

*we are constantly being savaged by the loonies for not giving them any coverage at all, and, being the objective impartial (ho ho) BBC that we are, there is an expectation in some quarters that we will every now and then let them say something. I hope though that the weight of our coverage makes it clear that we think they are talking through their hats.*⁹⁵

Later in 2004, following the launch of the Real Climate blog by Michael Mann's 'Hockey Team', to answer critics of his 'hockey stick' and other sceptics with 'real science' – very much a version of Rahmstorf's proposal the previous year – Jones congratulated him on this counter-attack, referring to the 'appalling drivel' and 'garbage' the sceptics were now coming up with. When he had

91 <http://foia2011.org/index.php?id=3707>. (email 3757)

92 Check out the Wayback Machine on <http://www.archive.org/web/web.php>, then search for http://www.tyndall.ac.uk/general/advisory_board.shtml.

93 <http://foia2011.org/index.php?search=hulme+stott+houghton&id=4>. (email 2496)

94 <http://foia2011.org/index.php?id=2924> (email 2974)

95 <http://foia2011.org/index.php?id=4844>. (email 4894)

complained about one example, which had appeared on the BBC website, its editor told him that it had:

'sneaked through without being read. Apparently they get loads of these and reject most, but then get accused of bias.

Mann replied that such things were bound to happen, but that the important thing was to make sure the sceptics were 'loosing [sic] the PR battle. That's what (our Real Climate) site is about'.⁹⁶

It was around this time that the BBC moved towards taking a much more actively committed line in its coverage on global warming, as was notably reflected in that 'high-level seminar' organised by Harrabin and Smith's CMEP in January 2006. It was here, as Harrabin has lately confirmed, that Lord May, speaking with all the prestige of a former President of the Royal Society, advised the BBC's senior staff that the 'debate on climate change was "over"' and that they should 'stop reporting the views of climate sceptics'. As Harrabin himself proudly put it in 2006, the work of the CMEP:

*has had a major impact on the willingness of the BBC to raise these issues for discussion, Joe Smith and I are now wondering whether we can help other journalists to perform similar tasks in countries round the world.*⁹⁷

In 2006, when the BBC went onto the offensive with its *Climate Chaos* season and much more aggressively partisan coverage of the warming threat, the partners in CMEP were themselves playing a leading role: Harrabin through his work on radio and television as the BBC's new Environmental Analyst, and Smith behind the scenes as 'scientific adviser' to various prominent television programmes. Among those Smith lists on the Open University website were the *Climate Chaos* season, in particular David Attenborough's *The Truth About Climate Change* (2006), *Climate Change: Britain Under Threat* (2007), the global warming drama *Burn Up* (2008); and the series *Coast* (2005), which made many references to the likely impacts of global warming.

Another BBC documentary about which the Climategate emails are very revealing was one called *Meltdown: A Global Warming Journey* (2006). When this was being shot, its producer Jonathan Renouf emailed Keith Briffa, one of Jones's senior colleagues at the CRU, clearly expecting to be filming him the following day for what was intended to be a key sequence in the programme.⁹⁸ He explained that his presenter Paul Rose, a scientist, was going to pose as someone dubious about the warming theory because he was troubled by talk of the Medieval Warm Period and the Little Ice Age. What Renouf wanted was a sequence in which Briffa would explain how climate history had been dramatically rewritten by Mann's 'hockey stick' graph, all but eliminating the MWP and showing how in recent years, in a way which could only be due to man-made global warming, temperatures had soared to levels quite

⁹⁶ <http://foia2011.org/index.php?id=1435> (email 1485).

⁹⁷ Email quoted in Montford and Newbery, *Submission to the Review of Impartiality and Accuracy of the BBC's Coverage of Science*, op.cit.

⁹⁸ <http://foia2011.org/index.php?search=renouf+briffa&id=7> (email 1683)

unprecedented in the past 1,000 years.

Briffa's job, the producer went on, would be:

to "prove" to Paul that what we're experiencing now is NOT just another of those natural fluctuations we've seen in the past. The hockey stick curve is a crucial piece of evidence because it shows how abnormal the present period is - the present warming is unprecedented in speed and amplitude, something like that. This is a very big moment in the film when Paul is finally convinced of the reality of man made global warming.

In fact, for whatever reason, Briffa did not appear in the finished programme (which can still be seen on YouTube).⁹⁹ Instead, his part as the 'talking head' climate scientist was played by a young professor from Imperial College, Joanna Haigh. She went through precisely the routine Renouf had outlined to Briffa, enabling Rose to pose initially as something of a sceptic who, after hearing the argument, at last finds the evidence for man-made global warming wholly convincing.¹⁰⁰

This is a formula with which we have become familiar in these pages; but rarely do we get such an insight into how calculatedly the BBC is prepared to stage such a charade, to put over the point the programme makers have wanted to make all along.

By 2008, it seems, the UEA scientists are happy that, not least thanks to the support of the BBC, they have won the propaganda battle. In an email to a colleague, Phil Jones proposes a study project for students on why the 'science is done and dusted'. The Kyoto Protocol has been ratified, the UK has its climate change bill, in the US it looks as though Congress is about to pass a Cap and Trade Bill, and:

the reporting of climate stories within the media (especially the BBC) is generally one-sided, i.e. the counter argument is rarely made. There is, however, still a vociferous and small majority of climate change skeptics (also called deniers), but ...most of these skeptics/deniers do not write regular scientific papers in peer-review journals'.

The questions Jones suggests that his project might address include:

should a vociferous minority be able to bully mainstream scientists? should mainstream climate scientists have to change the way they have worked for generations (through the peer-review literature)? and should the science be conducted across blogg (sic) sites?¹⁰¹

With the aid of all that 'one-sided' reporting by the BBC, the battle it seemed was over. What Jones did not realise was that, just when he was writing these words, the story was already moving into a new and very different phase. The

⁹⁹ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMuhvo_TUlo (Pt.4).

¹⁰⁰ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMuhvo_TUlo&. (email

¹⁰¹ <http://foia2011.org/index.php?id=4613> (email 4663)

following year would bring Climategate, the collapse of Copenhagen, and much else. By 2010, Jones and his colleagues would be so beleaguered that almost all they could find to cheer their spirits was the sham of those inquiries set up to defend their own emails.¹⁰²

The scandal of outside funding

When Roger Harrabin was at the forefront of the BBC's reporting on Climategate and those subsequent inquiries into the UEA's emails, few listening to him would have been aware that he and the CMEP had in previous years received funding from the same university.¹⁰³

But Climategate 2.0 was not the only scandal involving the BBC to break in November 2011, even though the second won much less public attention. Just before the release of the emails, another report emerged from the BBC Trust, this time by its Editorial Standards Committee. This resulted from an inquiry into the funding of documentaries broadcast by BBC World News. From a sample of 60 programmes, the committee found that 15 had actually been funded or sponsored by outside bodies with a vested interest in their content.¹⁰⁴

The inquiry was launched after the BBC Trust had received a complaint about a programme broadcast in 2009 called *Taking the Credit*. This had lauded the work of an environmental company, Envirotrade, a Mauritius-based outfit set up to benefit from the global warming scare by selling 'carbon offsets'. But the inquiry found that the BBC had been given money by the company to make the programme.

Also singled out for the Trust's criticism was *Earth Reporter: Sea Change*, broadcast in March 2011. This focused on a team of scientists researching into the impacts of global warming on the world's oceans, whose work had been much cited by the IPCC. But the film, it turned out, had in fact been sponsored by another UN body, UNESCO. The report found that, in accepting funding for what amounted to little more than propaganda, the BBC had not made its audience 'appropriately aware that a financial relationship existed between the sponsor and the programme maker'.

Another aspect of this programme, however, takes our story back to where it began. Billed as its 'scientific adviser' was Dr Joe Smith of the Open University, the self-described 'action researcher' who, as Harrabin's partner in the CMEP, had helped organise all those seminars to brief BBC staff on climate issues, notably the gathering in 2006 which played such an important part in leading the BBC to adopt a more committed stance in its coverage of global warming.

¹⁰² See A. Montford. *The Climategate Inquiries*, report for GWPF, <http://www.thegwpf.org/images/stories/gwpf-reports/Climategate-Inquiries.pdf>.

¹⁰³ Montford and Newbery, *op.cit.*

¹⁰⁴ Report by BBC Trust Editorial Standards Committee on 'Funding arrangements and sponsorship of documentary and feature programmes on BBC World News', 15 November 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/appeals/esc_bulletins/2011/world_news.pdf

As Smith himself put it, talking about his research on the Open University website:

*In the tradition of action research my findings are feeding directly back into decision-making within media and related organisations. The seminars have been publicly credited with catalysing fresh thinking in BBC outputs across platforms, leading directly to specific and major innovations in programming.*¹⁰⁵

Among the recommendations of the BBC Trust's November 2011 report was a general ruling that:

'the BBC must be satisfied that individuals involved in the production of its content are free from inappropriate outside commitments and connections'.

Whether the rest of us should always be as easily satisfied in this respect as the BBC has often appeared to be in recent years is a matter on which readers of this report can form their own opinion.

¹⁰⁵ http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/staff/people-profile.php?name=Joe_Smith.

Acknowledgements

Although I alone am responsible for the views expressed in this report (and for any errors it may contain), I must thank all those distinguished scientists and other experts whose suggestions helped to improve my text in 'peer-review'. I am also grateful to Dr David Whitehouse of the Global Warming Policy Foundation, formerly Science Editor of the BBC News website, and to Andrew Montford and Tony Newbery, for providing valuable background information on how the BBC arrived at its editorial policy decision to take a more actively partisan line in reporting on climate change.

The Global Warming Policy Foundation is an all-party and non-party think tank and a registered educational charity which, while open-minded on the contested science of global warming, is deeply concerned about the costs and other implications of many of the policies currently being advocated.

Our main focus is to analyse global warming policies and their economic and other implications. Our aim is to provide the most robust and reliable economic analysis and advice.

Above all we seek to inform the media, politicians and the public, in a newsworthy way, on the subject in general and on the misinformation to which they are all too frequently being subjected at the present time.

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Published by the Global Warming Policy Foundation
ISBN: 978-0-9566875-5-5

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