

The Washington Times

October 15, 2006

Inhofe correct on warming

By David Deming

Sen. James Inhofe, Oklahoma Republican, has been taking a lot of heat lately for his skeptical stance on global warming. He's been called a "social dinosaur" for his failure to accept the politically correct view. Yet Mr. Inhofe is absolutely correct to be skeptical. As the Enlightenment philosopher Denis Diderot said, "Skepticism is the first step toward truth."

I'm a geophysicist who has conducted and published climate studies in top-rank scientific journals. My perspective on Mr. Inhofe and the issue of global warming is informed not only by my knowledge of climate science but also by my studies of the history and philosophy of science.

The media hysteria on global warming has been generated by journalists who don't understand the provisional and uncertain nature of scientific knowledge. Science changes. For years we were told drinking coffee was bad for our health and would increase our risk for heart disease. But more recent studies have shown that not only is coffee

safe for our hearts, it can decrease the risk of liver cancer and is chock full of healthy antioxidants.

It is frequently reported that temperatures are now higher than at any time in the last 12,000 years. The fact that the thermometer wasn't invented until the year 1714 ought to give us pause when evaluating this remarkable claim. Reconstructions of past temperatures are not measurements, but estimates based on innumerable interpretations and uncertain assumptions, all invisible to someone who only reads the headline. Better studies -- completely ignored by the major media -- have shown that late-20th-century temperatures are not anomalous or unusually warm.

It has also been reported that in a mere 50 years mean global temperatures on Earth will be higher than they have been for the last million years. We all know that in recent years weather forecasts have become more accurate. But meteorologists can't predict what the temperature will be in 30 days. How is it we are supposed to believe they can

reliably forecast what the temperature will be in 50 years? They can't, because Earth's climate system is complex and poorly understood.

It is not surprising some scientists today find evidence to support global warming. True believers always find confirming evidence. In the late 18th century, a school of geologists known as Neptunists became convinced all of the rocks of the Earth's crust had been precipitated from water. British geologist Robert Jameson characterized the supporting evidence for Neptunism as "incontrovertible." The Neptunists were completely wrong, but able to explain away any evidence that appeared to contradict their theory. A skeptic pointed out that not all rocks had their genesis in the ocean because he had observed molten lava from a volcano cool and solidify into rock. Unperturbed, the Neptunists calmly explained the heat of the volcano had merely melted a rock that had been originally generated in water.

Around 1996, I became aware of how corrupt and ideologically driven current climate research can be. A major researcher working on climate change confided in me that the factual record needed to be altered so people would become alarmed over global warming. He said, "We have to get rid of the Medieval Warm Period."

The Medieval Warm Period was a time of unusually warm weather that began around 1000 A.D. and persisted until a cold period known as the "Little Ice Age" took hold in the 14th and 15th centuries. The warmer climate of the

Medieval Warm Period was accompanied by a remarkable flowering of prosperity, knowledge and art in Europe. But the existence of the Medieval Warm Period was an "inconvenient truth" for true believers in global warming. It needed to be erased from history so people could become convinced that present temperatures were truly anomalous. Unfortunately, the prostitution of science to environmental ideology is all too common.

Sen. Inhofe is not only correct in his view on global warming, but courageous to insist on truth, objectivity and sound

science. Truth in science doesn't depend on human consensus or political correctness.

The fact that the majority of journalists and pundits bray like sheep is meaningless. Galileo, another "social dinosaur," said, "The crowd of fools who know nothing is infinite."

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