

From the Spring 2008 NES APS Newsletter

Please Note: These remarks should not be construed as representing any official position of the Executive Board of the New England Section of the American Physical Society.

[Clickable links contained in this article can be accessed through the on-line version at the NES-APS website (<http://www.physics.ccsu.edu/aps-nes/News.htm>) or through my own website (<http://uhaweb.hartford.edu/LGOULD>)]

RESPONSES TO THE EDITORIAL
GLOBAL WARMING from a CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE
Published in the Fall 2007 issue of the New England Section Newsletter
<http://www.physics.ccsu.edu/aps-nes/News.htm>

Email LETTER to the Editor(s) by Alan Chodos —

26 Sep 2007

Dear Paul and Laurence,

As a member of the New England Section, who also happens to be the editor of APS News, I'm writing in response to the editorial about global warming that appeared in your Fall '07 newsletter. I do not want to enter into the debate about global warming per se, but I was distressed at your implication that APS News was somehow deliberately distorting the issue by only publishing one-sided articles.

We tried to get a Back Page by Michael Crichton in early 2004, well before we published the articles by James Hansen and Spencer Weart that you mention. We asked if we could reprint edited versions of either of two speeches he had given in 2003, but we were told that since he had a book coming out he was unwilling to allow reproduction of his speeches. I guess he was worried about scooping himself. James Hansen and Spencer Weart are both well-qualified to write about climate change, and I have no apologies for publishing their work. You failed to refer to another Back Page (May 2007) by a colleague of Hansen's, Drew Shindell, whom I asked to contribute after I heard his testimony at a Congressional hearing. Although he is on the same side of the debate as Hansen and Weart, his article is not incendiary and sticks close to the science. Perhaps that's why you chose not to mention it.

You take us to task for not printing rebuttals by Crichton or Pat Michaels. These, of course, were never received, or we would have indeed printed them. We also did not receive dissenting comments from any APS members, including the editors of this newsletter. We would have been happy to print those as well.

The extensive bibliography at the end of your editorial includes nothing from the peer-reviewed literature. Should that not concern your audience, who are after all mostly practicing scientists, if they want to know whether the material is credible or not?

Alan Chodos
Editor, APS News

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Email LETTER to Alan Chodos by Paul Carr —

Dear Alan,

Thank you for your interest in Larry Gould's Editorial in the Fall 2007 issue of our NES-APS Newsletter below.

You should note that it is my co-editor Larry Gould's Editorial, not mine. I identify with the IPCC scientists who in 2007 issued the following statement.

“From new estimates of the combined anthropogenic forcing due to greenhouse gases, aerosols and land surface changes, it is *extremely likely (95 % probable)* that human activities have exerted a substantial net warming influence on climate since 1750.”

A Sigma Xi Expert Group has issued the following report “Confronting Climate Change: Avoiding the Unmanageable and Managing the Unavoidable.” (see www.sigmaksi.org)

Larry Gould's editorial can hopefully increase our interest in the national energy challenge. I hope a debate about whether humans are causing global warming will not divert this interest from our national need to develop economical wind, solar, fission, fusion, and biomass energy, as well as to improve the efficiency of our present economy.

One third of our balance of payments deficit is due to imported oil from unstable foreign countries.

Americans and Canadians use 11 kW per capita, the highest in the world, which makes our economy vulnerable to price increases. European countries and Japan with an equal to higher standard of living use 5 kW per capita.

The price of oil and gas has doubled since 2000 due to the increased demand from developing countries for these limited resources.

In Walden, Thoreau depicted nature's intrinsic beauty and value as worthy of conservation, as per Chapter 9 "Nature's Beauty versus its Use: The Environmental Challenge" of my book Beauty in Science and Spirit.

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With gratitude,

Paul H. Carr
Co-Editor, NES-APS Newsletter
www.MirrorOfNature.org

REPLY to Alan Chodos by Larry Gould —

Dear Alan,

I will comment on each of the issues that you put forth in the order, roughly, of its appearance.

Although I am glad to know that you attempted to get articles by Michael Crichton, even if you succeeded that would not address my criticism. As I said: “What is disturbing about Hansen’s article is that he gives no explicit references to works by Crichton or by Michaels to substantiate the accusations he makes against them. And even more disturbing is that I have seen no reply in the APS News from either Crichton or from Michaels.” Although you mention that “These [replies], of course, were never received, or we would have indeed printed them,” it is not clear that Crichton and Michaels were notified. What would have been fair play would be to have sent both Crichton and Michaels a copy of Hansen’s attacks on them with the invitation to give a printed response. If either of them, after acknowledging the attacks, then declined to respond, that fact should have been made evident to readers of the APS News.

You mentioned that: “James Hansen and Spencer Weart are both well-qualified to write about climate change, and I have no apologies for publishing their work.” I was not criticizing you for publishing their work since I believe that different views should be made known to your readers. And I was not addressing the qualifications of James Hansen or Spencer Weart. Their qualifications are not at issue. I was criticizing Hansen for what was a gratuitous unsupported attack on both Crichton and Michaels. And I was criticizing Weart for a similar attack on scientists who do not agree with his views.

Given the prominence of the topic, it is certainly worthwhile to have the Back Page feature articles about global warming. And I am glad that you got Drew Shindell to write such an article. However, as you say, “he is on the same side of the debate as Hansen and Weart”; as a result, readers do not get the benefit of considering the views of an expert climatologist who strongly takes issue with the claims about dangerous anthropogenic global warming (AGW). There are many such experts. One is Richard Lindzen of MIT, who has for years been writing critical articles and speaking against the alarmist claims of AGW. Another expert, who has also written many critical articles and given talks against alarmist claims of AGW, is John Christy of the University of Alabama. Both of those scientists have been on the IPCC and continue to be actively engaged in climate research. Their views could have been very enlightening for your readers about the other side of

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the AGW issue. But I do not recall ever seeing any such serious scientific arguments presented in rebuttal of those printed in the pages of the APS News (or in the pages of Physics Today).

You mentioned: “The extensive bibliography at the end of your editorial includes nothing from the peer-reviewed literature.” My editorial (which I should have better titled as a “considered opinion” piece) does give references to articles I cited that have appeared in the APS News (and in Physics Today) and is followed directly by a longer article about Global Warming and Critical Thinking. I was intending that it would be read next so people could indeed see the many references from the peer-reviewed literature.

Laurence I. Gould
Co-Editor, NES-APS Newsletter
<http://uhaweb.hartford.edu/LGOULD/>

REPLY to Paul Carr by Larry Gould —

Dear Paul,

As you correctly mention, and as I indicated there, the “Editorial” is solely my considered position on the matter of anthropogenic global warming (AGW).

Regarding your quotation from the IPCC 2007 report: “... it is *extremely likely* (95 % *probable*) that human activities have exerted a substantial net warming influence on climate since 1750.” (I assume the stress is in the original.) From what I have read, this claim is strongly contested. One very recent argument against a similar claim is in the report, “Nature, Not Human Activity, Rules the Climate” (Science and Environmental Policy Project, edited by S. Fred Singer, March 2008; <http://heartland.temp.siteexecutive.com/pdf/22835.pdf>)

AR4 [p. 10] claims “most of the observed increase in global average temperatures since the mid-20th century is *very likely* due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations” (emphasis in original). AR4's authors even assign a better-than-90 percent probability to this conclusion, although there is no sound basis for making such a quantitative judgment. They offer only scant supporting evidence, none of which stands up to closer examination. Their conclusion seems to be based on the peculiar claim that science understands well enough the natural drivers of climate change to rule them out as the cause of the modern warming. Therefore, by elimination, recent climate changes must be human-induced.

Note: As mentioned in the report, “AR4” stands for “The Fourth Assessment Report of

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the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Working Group-1 (Science) (IPCC-AR4 2007), released in 2007.”

I am reading the Sigma Xi report that you mentioned: “Confronting Climate Change: Avoiding the Unmanageable and Managing the Unavoidable” (a more direct link to that document is: <http://www.docuticker.com/?p=11364>). The first sentence of the Executive Summary is: “Global climate change, driven largely by the combustion of fossil fuels and by deforestation, is a growing threat to human well-being in developing and industrialized nations alike.” The alarm expressed in that statement is not justified by the mass of scientific evidence to the contrary. I will explain this more in my Open Letter that follows.

I certainly believe that we should look for alternative sources of energy. And I am certainly opposed to defiling our planet with harmful wastes (even though CO₂ is not one of them). But we need to approach problems of energy and waste through an open and honest discussion of the scientific issues. That will give our policy makers information needed to make intelligent decisions.

I also love Nature. But I do not think that it has “intrinsic” beauty. For beauty (like value) is a relation between the “beholder” and the thing deemed beautiful (or valuable).

Larry

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