

March 1, 2008

2008 International Conference on Climate Change Opening Remarks by Joseph Bast, president of The Heartland Institute

Good evening, and welcome to the 2008 International Conference on Climate Change. I am Joseph Bast, the president of The Heartland Institute, and along with James Taylor, I will be your cohost tonight and for the next two days.

This dinner kicks off a truly historic event, the first international conference devoted to answering questions overlooked by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. We're asking questions such as:

- * how reliable are the data used to document the recent warming trend?
- * how much of the modern warming is natural, and how much is likely the result of human activities?
- * how reliable are the computer models used to forecast future climate conditions? And
- * is reducing emissions the best or only response to possible climate change?

Obviously, these are important questions. Yet the IPCC pays little attention to them or hides the large amount of doubt and uncertainty surrounding them.

Are the scientists and economists who ask these questions just a fringe group, outside the scientific mainstream? Not at all. A 2003 survey of 530 climate scientists in 27 countries, conducted by Dennis Bray and Hans von Storch at the GKSS Institute of Coastal Research in Germany, found

- * 82 percent said global warming is happening, but only
- * 56% said it's mostly the result of human causes, and only
- * 35% said models can accurately predict future climate conditions.

Only 27% believed "the current state of scientific knowledge is able to provide reasonable predictions of climate variability on time scales of 100 years."

That's a long ways from "consensus."

It's actually pretty close to what the American public told pollsters for the Pew Trust in 2006:

- * 70% thought global warming is happening,
- * only 41% thought it was due to human causes,
- * and only 19% thought it was a high-priority issue.

The alarmists think it's a "paradox" that the more people learn about climate change, the less likely they are to consider it a serious problem. But as John Tierney with the New York Times points out in a blog posted just a day ago, maybe, just maybe, it's because people are smart rather than stupid.

And incidentally, 70% of the public oppose raising gasoline prices by \$1 to fight global warming, and 80% oppose a \$2/gallon tax increase, according to a 2007 poll by the New York Times and CBS News.

I've got news for them: reducing emissions by 60 to 80 percent, which is what the alarmists claim is necessary to "stop global warming," would cost a lot more than \$1 a gallon.

Al Gore, the United Nations, environmental groups, and too often the reporters who cover the climate change debate are the ones who are out of step with the real "consensus." They claim to be certain that global warming is occurring, convinced that it is due to human causes, and 100% confident that we can predict future climates.

Who's on the fringe of scientific consensus? The alarmists, or the skeptics?

These questions go to the heart of the issue: Is global warming a crisis, as we are so often told by media, politicians, and environmental activists? Or is it moderate, mostly natural, and unstoppable, as we are told by many distinguished scientists?

Former Vice President Al Gore has said repeatedly that there is a "consensus" in favor of his alarmist views on global warming. And of course, he's not alone.

Two weeks ago, Jim Martin, the executive director of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, when told of our conference, said "You could have a convention of all the scientists who dispute climate change in a relatively small phone booth." (*Denver Post*, February 12, 2008).

RealClimate.org predicted that no real scientists would show up at this conference.

Well ...

With we have us, tonight and tomorrow, more than 200 scientists and other experts on climate change, from Australia, Canada, England, France, Hungary, New Zealand, Poland, Russia, Sweden and of course the United States.

They come from the University of Alabama, Arizona State, Carleton, Central Queensland, Delaware, Durham, and Florida State University.

From George Mason, Harvard, The Institute Pasteur in Paris, James Cook, John Moores, Johns Hopkins, and the London School of Economics.

From The University of Mississippi, Monash, Nottingham, Ohio State, Oregon State, Oslo, Ottawa, Rochester, Rockefeller, and the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm.

And from the Russian Academy of Sciences, Suffolk University, the University of Virginia, Westminster School of Business (in London), and the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

And I apologize if I left anyone out.

These scientists and economists have been published thousands of times in the world's leading scientific journals and have written hundreds of books. If you call this the fringe, where's the center?

Hey Jim Martin, does this look like a phone booth to you?

Hey RealClimate, can you hear us now?

These scientists and economists deserve to be heard. They have stood up to political correctness and defended the scientific method at a time when doing so threatens their research grants, tenure, and ability to get published. Some of them have even faced death threats for daring to speak out against what can only be called the mass delusion of our time.

And they must be heard, because the stakes are enormous.

George Will, in an October Newsweek column commenting on Al Gore's Nobel Peace Prize, wrote that if nations impose the reductions in energy use that Al Gore and the folks at RealClimate call for, they will cause "more preventable death and suffering than was caused in the last century by Hitler, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot combined."

It takes more than four Norwegian socialists to win a Pulitzer Prize, so I'll put George Will's Pulitzer Prize and his recent Bradley Prize up against Gore's Nobel any day. You've probably read some of the attacks that have appeared in the blogosphere and in print directed against this conference, and against The Heartland Institute. Let me repeat for the record here tonight what appears prominently on our Web site:

- * No corporate dollars were used to help finance this conference.
- * The Heartland Institute has 2,700 donors, and gets about 16% of its income from corporations.
- * Heartland gets less than 5% of its income from all energy producing companies combined. We are 95% carbon free.

And let me further add to the record:

- * the honoraria paid to all of the speakers appearing at this conference add up to less than the honorarium Al Gore gets paid for making a single speech, and less than what his company makes selling fake carbon "off-sets" in a week.
- * it is no crime for a think tank or advocacy group to accept corporate funding. In fact, corporations that fail to step forward and assure that sensible voices are heard in this debate are doing their shareholders, and their countries, a grave disservice.

We're not doing this for the money, obviously. The Heartland Institute is in the "skeptics" camp because we know alarmism is a tool that has been used by opponents of individual freedom and free enterprise since as early as 1798, when Thomas Malthus predicted that food supply would fail to keep up with population growth.

We opposed global warming alarmism before we received any contributions from energy corporations and we'll continue to address it after many of them have found ways to make a fast buck off the public hysteria.

We know which organizations are raking in millions of dollars a year in government and foundation grants to spread fear and false information about climate change. It's not The Heartland Institute, and it's not any of the 50 cosponsoring organizations that helped make this conference possible.

The alarmists in the global warming debate have had their say – over and over again, in every newspaper in the country practically every day and in countless news reports and documentary films. They have dominated the media's coverage of this issue. They have swayed the views of many people. Some of them have even grown very rich in the process, and others still hope to.

But they have lost the debate.

Winners don't exaggerate. Winners don't lie. Winners don't appeal to fear or resort to ad hominem attacks.

As George Will also wrote, "people only insist that a debate stop when they are afraid of what might

be learned if it continues.”

We invited Al Gore to speak to us tonight, and even agreed to pay his \$200,000 honoraria. He refused. We invited some of the well-known scientists associated with the alarmist camp, and they refused.

All we got are a few professional hecklers registered from Lyndon LaRouche, DeSmogBlog, and some other left wing conspiracy groups. If you run into them in the course of the next two days, please be kind to them ... and call security if they aren't kind to you.

Skeptics are the winners of EVERY scientific debate, always, everywhere. Because skepticism, as T.H. Huxley said, is the highest calling of a true scientist.

No scientific theory is true because a majority of scientists say it to be true. Scientific theories are only provisionally true until they are falsified by data that can be better explained by a different theory. And it is by falsifying current theories that scientific knowledge advances, not by consensus.

The claim that global warming is a “crisis” is itself a theory. It can be falsified by scientific fact, just as the claim that there is a “consensus” that global warming is man-made and will be a catastrophe has been dis-proven by the fact that this conference is taking place.

Which reminds me ... the true believers at RealClimate are now praising an article posted on salon.com by Joseph Romm – a guy who sells solar panels for a living, by the way – saying “consensus”? We never claimed there was a ‘consensus!’”

And notorious alarmist John Holdren a couple weeks ago said “global warming”? We never meant ‘global warming.’ We meant “global climate disruption!”

I'd say this was a sign of victory, but that would suggest their words and opinions matter. It's too late to move the goal posts, guys. You've already lost.

It is my hope, and the reason The Heartland Institute organized this conference, that public policies that impose enormous costs on millions of people, in the U.S. and also around the world, will not be passed into law before the fake “consensus” on global warming collapses.

Once passed, taxes and regulations are often hard to repeal. Once lost, freedoms are often very difficult to retrieve.