

Copenhagen: Climate Alarmism meets its Waterloo

History may look back to the 2009 UN COP 15 Conference in Copenhagen as the high-water-mark of the Great Climate Scam. I have been campaigning for climate realism for years, and for much of that time it's seemed like a lost cause: now I believe that the tide is turning.

The ponderous UN process of consensus and acclamation was clearly failing to deliver anything substantive in Copenhagen, so the USA, China and a few other countries cobbled together their own Copenhagen Accord, and presented it to the plenary session on a take it or leave it basis -- you can have our text, or go home empty-handed. But the Accord itself lacks substantive content. No targets, no verification, no legal framework. Just aspirations and wishful thinking. Some weeks ago I predicted that the best they could hope for at Copenhagen was an agreement to keep talking. That, in effect, is what they have achieved.

Of course Obama, and the Chinese PM, and other leaders, were only too aware that any deal they struck in Denmark had to stand the test of their domestic political processes. Obama is clearly very conscious of the difficulties he will have in getting aggressive climate policies through the Senate. He will recall that the USA signed the Kyoto protocol -- but was unable to ratify it. Some of the most aggressive commitments were made by our own Gordon Brown -- happy in the knowledge that he will never have to deliver, but hoping that his legacy of extravagant promises will at least be an embarrassment for the next Conservative government.

And all those leaders are aware (or should be) that a majority of their electorates simply don't believe the doomsters, and certainly aren't prepared to pay the price of mitigation.

This all comes at a time when the scientific case on which alarmism is based is rapidly crumbling. The implications of the leaked CRU memos are sinking in. These were not just a few casual and thoughtless comments in an off moment. No. They are evidence of a deliberate and sustained campaign of misinformation, designed to achieve nothing less than a revolution in global governance. The phrase "Hide the Decline" has come to be a short-hand for the scandal. Yet it is poorly understood. Many commentators seem to think it refers to the decline in mean global temperatures over the last few years. But that decline is admitted (through gritted teeth), even by the alarmists. The decline the e-mails were referring to is much more fundamental.

For temperature records back in the nineteenth century and earlier, scientists have to rely on "proxies", since reliable measurements are not available. These proxies may be tree rings, ice cores, sediment layers or whatever. The issue is the overlap between the proxies and the measurements. In the early and mid twentieth century, the proxy data matched observation pretty well. But in the late 20th century, and especially from 1980, the proxies failed to show the sharp increases which were coming from the measured data (which may have been affected by the Urban Heat Island effect, and by some very creative selection and interpolation). So they decided to "hide the decline" (in the proxy data) by simply switching from proxies to measurements at the best point to support their case.

An honest scientist at this point would have said "We have a conflict in the data sets, and no major policy decisions should be based on our temperature data until this conflict is resolved". But instead they continued to assert the Gospel According to Climate Change, and refused to consider or debate any criticism. The fact is that if the proxies and the measurements disagree, then one or both must be wrong. In which case claims that the rise in temperature is too rapid to be caused by anything other than human action is unsustainable (it was always nonsense -- there are many examples in the records of more rapid natural changes). And claims that we are now experiencing "the warmest climate for a thousand years" cannot be sustained either. It was warmer in 1200.

I believe that the US Congress will now demand an independent statistical analysis of the data. That is the least they can do before they agree to cripple the US economy and pauperize their grandchildren. And the data will not sustain that analysis. We have seen the reluctance of world leaders to commit to major emissions reductions even on the assumption that man-made global warming is an established fact. As they come to realize that it is highly suspect, they will see that they cannot continue to press vastly expensive mitigation policies on their reluctant citizens.

On the BBC news summaries this morning (Dec 19th) the two lead stories were the failure of Copenhagen -- and the disruption of road, rail and air traffic by exceptionally cold weather. Who says that God lacks a sense of humor?

A few years ago, Britain and America were drawn into war on the basis of a "Dodgy Dossier". We are now being invited to undertake an even more expensive project, based on a new Dodgy Dossier, this time from the IPCC. But I suspect that in the end, we will come to our senses and avoid making the same mistake again.

By MEP Roger Helmer, 2009-12-19