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cc:
Subject: EPW: CLIMATE-GATE

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CLIMATE-GATE

"Climate-Gate" is getting a lot of attention. What is the White House being accused of, exactly? Let's take a closer look:

1) The White House is denying a "scientific consensus" that global warming is occurring and that human beings, through the use of fossil fuels, are "largely" responsible.

FACTS: First, does this statement really say much? How much warming are humans responsible for? 1 degree? 3 degrees? 10 degrees? Second, media reports said the White House took out a reference to a graph showing the 20th century as the warmest on record. This graph, called the hockey stick, provides the scientific basis for the Kyoto Protocol and international climate negotiations. Is it credible? Does it command consensus?

Just ask the 4,000 scientists from 106 countries who signed the Heidelberg Appeal, which includes 72 Nobel Prize winners. The appeal warns industrialized nations that no compelling scientific consensus exists to justify mandatory greenhouse gas emissions cuts.

What about the Oregon Petition (<http://www.oism.org/pproject/>), sponsored by Dr. Frederick Seitz, former past president of the National Academy of Sciences? It has over 17,000 independently verified signatures from scientists. It reads, in part:

"There is no convincing scientific evidence that human release of carbon dioxide, methane, or other greenhouse gasses is causing or will, in the foreseeable future, cause catastrophic heating of the Earth's atmosphere and disruption of the Earth's climate. Moreover, there is substantial scientific evidence that increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide produce many beneficial effects upon the natural plant and animal environments of the Earth."

Or, what about the 46 climate scientists who sent a letter, printed in the June 3 edition of Canada's National Post, to a Canadian member of Parliament, questioning the theory that mankind is responsible for global warming?

According to the signatories, the Kyoto Protocol "lacks credible science." Moreover, "Many climate science experts from Canada and around the world, while still strongly supporting environmental protection, equally strongly disagree with the scientific rationale for the Kyoto Accord."

What do state climatologists say? According to a survey of state climatologists by Citizens for a Sound Economy, 58 percent surveyed said they disagreed with the claim that "the overwhelming balance of evidence and scientific opinion is that it is no longer a theory, but now fact, that global warming is for real" and with the statement that "there is ample evidence that human activities are already disrupting the global climate." Only 36 percent of the climatologists agreed with the assertion.

The National Academy of Sciences also doesn't see consensus. As it wrote in 2001: "Because of the large and still uncertain level of natural variability inherent in the climate record and the uncertainties in the time histories of various forcing agents (and particularly aerosols), a causal linkage between the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and the observed climate changes in the 20th Century cannot be unequivocally established."

2) The hockey stick graph represents scientific consensus and is the best science on the subject of global warming.

FACTS: The hockey stick was developed by Dr. Michael Mann, of the University of Virginia, and others. Despite reporting that says the hockey stick represents "consensus," it is in fact widely disputed within the scientific community. Why?

Unlike the more comprehensive Harvard study, Mann uses only 12 sets of proxy data, drawn from the Northern Hemisphere. Mann extrapolated that data to reach the conclusion that global temperatures remained relatively stable and then dramatically increased at the beginning of the 20th century. That leads to Mann's unfounded conclusion that the 20th century has been the warmest in the last 1000 years.

How does Mann get the blade on the stick? The blade is formed by crudely grafting the surface temperature record of the 20th century onto a pre-1900 proxy tree ring record.

As is widely recognized in the scientific community, two data series representing radically different variables (temperature and tree rings) cannot be grafted together credibly to create a single series.

Even Mann and his coauthors admit that if the tree ring data set were removed from their climate reconstruction, the calibration and verification procedures they used would fail.

How confident is Mann of his conclusions? Does the author of the hockey stick even think the science is settled? "Our results suggest that the latter 20th century is anomalous in the context of at least the past millennium. The 1990's was the warmest decade, and 1998 the warmest year"-here's the key phrase-" at moderately high levels of confidence."

3) The White House replaced the hockey stick graph with a reference to a new study that, according to AP, was "partly sponsored by the American Petroleum Institute."

FACTS: This is the 1,000 year Harvard-Smithsonian study, which is based on 240 independently peer reviewed climate studies (<http://cfa-www.harvard.edu/press/pr0310.html>). Notably, it was also funded by NASA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (within Commerce), and the Air Force Office of Scientific Research. Somehow its connection to API makes it inherently suspect. But this is a totally irrelevant issue. Why not rigorously critique the study? Where is the proof that its scientific conclusions are flawed?

The study, unlike the hockey stick, relies on climate proxies from all over the globe. It found that the Medieval Warm Period (800 to 1300), a widely recognized phenomenon in the scientific literature (as is the Little Ice Age, 1300 to 1900), was actually warmer than the 20th century.

4) President Bush made a mistake by pulling the U.S. out of Kyoto.

FACTS: Dr. Tom Wigley, a senior scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research, found that if the Kyoto Protocol were fully implemented by all signatories, it would reduce temperatures by a mere 0.07 degrees Celsius by 2050, and 0.13 degrees Celsius by 2100. What does this mean? Such an amount is so small that ground-based thermometers cannot reliably measure it.

Dr. Richard Lindzen, an MIT scientist and member of the National Academy of Sciences, who has specialized in climate issues for over 30 years, told the Committee on Environment and Public on May 2, 2001 that there is a "definitive disconnect between Kyoto and science. Should a catastrophic scenario prove correct, Kyoto will not prevent it. If we view Kyoto as an insurance policy, it is a policy where the premium appears to exceed the potential damages, and where the coverage extends to only a small fraction of the potential damages."

Similarly, Dr. James Hansen of NASA, considered the father of global warming theory, said that Kyoto Protocol "will have little effect" on global temperature in the 21st century. In a rather stunning follow-up, Hansen said it would take 30 Kyotos-let me repeat that-30 Kyotos to reduce warming to an acceptable level.