

The Climate Is Cooling But Climate Wars Are Heating Up

President Obama will be hard put to satisfy his several campaign promises: to restore prosperity and jobs; to conduct a foreign policy backed by a strong economy; and to satisfy environmental demands to 'save the planet.' His job will be much easier if he listens to independent advice on climate science.

Get ready for a three ring circus. In one corner you find those concerned with the recovery of the economy; in the second corner those concerned about threats to national security; and in the third corner the global warmers who agonize about catastrophic climate change.

The battle between these three factions will revolve about the use of energy and will play out in the White House and in Congress, but also in the public arena. Obama's economic advisors, Treasury, and Budget Office will try to delay any major climate policies that could adversely impact economic recovery. The National Security Council and Defense Department, and to a lesser extent the State Department, will be concerned with maintaining a strong US economy to be able to act forcefully when foreign problems arise. The global warmers will be led by energy-climate czarina Carol Browner, EPA chief during the Clinton years, and by science adviser John Holdren, who testified that a billion people might die by 2020, unless greenhouse-gas emissions are sharply reduced. Using all the powers of the Clean Air Act, the EPA may try to impose severe regulations on carbon dioxide, which they would like to label as a pollutant; if successful, it would bring economic activity to a halt.

The outcome of such internal battles is never certain. In Germany, the Minister for Industry has just stepped down because he opposed the drastic climate actions demanded by Chancellor Angela Merkel. On the other hand, Australia's Prime Minister Rudd has walked away from the commitments of his Labor Party to institute a Cap & Trade scheme.

As these disputes continue, keep in mind three facts

1. Nothing can be achieved by way of controlling atmospheric levels of CO₂ without the active participation of China, India and other developing nations. It is a global issue, and the US cannot make a significant impact, even if it were to adopt extreme measures. By now, China has become the largest emitter of CO₂. Obama may still seem committed to his campaign promise to reduce emissions by 20% by 2020 and 60% by 2050 (or was it 80% -- does it matter?). But remember that the US Senate voted unanimously against anything like the Kyoto Protocol, which calls for a reduction of only 5%. And note that European nations and Japan, which signed up for Kyoto, will not come close to achieving even this modest goal by 2012 when Kyoto expires. Despite this, politicians are making grand promises for the far future as they approach the crucial Copenhagen-2009 negotiations to define the 'son of Kyoto.'

2. Remember also that global warming, whether natural or human-induced, may be good for you. Economists tell us that a modest warming would improve agriculture and forestry and increase GNP. And historic evidence backs their studies. In any case, the climate has been mildly cooling for the past decade and may continue to cool for another decade or more – even while CO₂ levels keep rising -- causing much suffering around the world.

3. Finally, be aware that carbon dioxide may not have as much of an impact on temperatures as projected by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). While their 2007 Report asserts a better than 90 percent certainty that the average temperature increase over the last 50 years is human-caused, they have produced no credible evidence to back this up. None! On the contrary, an independent assessment of the same published information by the *Non-Governmental* International Panel on Climate Change (NIPCC) reaches exactly the opposite result: Nature, not human activity, rules the climate.

Apparently, the ongoing scientific debate hasn't yet made much impact on politicians or the public. I would blame the media, which seem to give more play to the catastrophic scenarios advanced by the global warmers. But even Al Gore no longer claims that there are only one or two climate skeptics.

Their number has been growing steadily. Last year, 100 prominent climate scientists signed a letter to the UN Secretary General, warning against accepting the IPCC results. So far, 650 climate scientists have expressed their skepticism about anthropogenic global warming. And 31,000 scientists, about one third of them with Ph.D. degrees, have signed the Oregon Petition against the Kyoto Protocol.

In the United States, the 'cooler heads' seem to be gaining ground. But nothing is ever sure. So stay tuned.

Bio: Atmospheric physicist S. Fred Singer is Professor Emeritus of Environmental Sciences at the University of Virginia and served as the founding director of the US Weather Satellite Service. In the 1980s, he was vice chairman of the National Advisory Committee for Oceans and Atmosphere and later served as Chief Scientist of the US Dept of Transportation. He has received numerous awards for his research. After retiring from the University of Virginia, he founded the nonprofit Science and Environmental Policy Project on the premise that credible science must form the basis for major societal health and environmental decisions.

His most recent book "Unstoppable Global Warming – Every 1500 Years" (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007) presents the evidence for natural climate cycles of warming and cooling and became a NY Times best-seller. He is the organizer of NIPCC (Non-governmental International Panel on Climate Change) and editor of the NIPCC report [2008] "Nature – Not Human Activity – Rules the Climate" http://www.sepp.org/publications/NIPCC_final.pdf, with conclusions contrary to those of the UN-IPCC. However, as a reviewer of IPCC reports, he shares the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with Al Gore and over 2000 others.