

## A NON – THINKING CONSENSUS

Being a politician and not a scientist, Al Gore is a great believer in spin and the importance of ‘consensus’ and made the following statement in his film “An Inconvenient Truth”.

*No scientists “disagreed with the scientific consensus that we’re causing global warming and that it’s a serious problem”*

He based this on a study of 928 scientific articles about global warming. The paper written by Naomi Oreskes<sup>1</sup> has some serious flaws in it, but even she would not have been bold enough to agree with Al Gore’s interpretation of her work.

Her statement was much milder:

*“Without substantial disagreement, scientists find human activities are heating the earth’s surface.”*

Once you have been shown that on lighting a single fire the earth’s surface is heated, no scientist could disagree with her statement, but they could strongly disagree that the fire was causing global warming and, that it is a serious problem. So her statement, as it stands, is not that useful, so what did her study really find?

Being suspicious of the cavalier way in which the results of this study were being misused, British social anthropologist Benny Peiser decided to not only try to replicate Oreskes’ work but expand it to cover many more scientific papers on global warming. His search discovered nearly 12,000 papers, however using Oreskes’ more restricted criteria; this number was reduced to 1,117 papers.

Unlike Oreskes, Benny Peiser took the time to read these papers to ensure he was correctly interpreting each scientist’s views. Not surprisingly, he found a very different result than Mr Gore would have liked.

Peiser found:

- *Only 13 out of the 1,117 authors explicitly endorsed the ‘consensus’.*
- *322 authors out of the 1,117 implicitly accepted the global warming theory as they were using this as a starting point in their studies to see what would happen to flora and fauna if **the predicted temperature rises occurred.***
- *42 authors out of the 1,117 made no link whatsoever – directly or indirectly- to human activities*
- *34 authors out of the 1,117 either cast doubt upon, or outright rejected the idea that global warming could be attributed to human activities in the past 50 years.*
- *The views of the authors, of the remaining 706 scientific papers, about the seriousness of global warming, and the extent of Man’s involvement could not be identified.*

This is the basis of Al Gore's comment about consensus. Whom is he trying to deceive? This is typical of the deceit used in this debate by the Greens, and it is extremely easy to twist facts this way.

For instance, since we are coming out of a mini Ice Age, one would hope, and want, the temperature to rise. Consequently, you will find a near consensus that global temperatures may be rising. Since you can also find a myriad of ways that Man can have a small influence on temperatures either cooling or warming it, you will generally find a consensus that Man can warm the planet. Both these "consensus" statements mean little, as the debate is about three completely different points. Do we think that this global warming is bad? And if so, how much, if any, is Man contributing to this bad global warming? Finally, how are we going to exploit the benefits of global warming, and adapt to the drawbacks of global warming?

We can still be misled by such over simplified studies, as these scientists may have been giving us their personal opinions on the subject, which may be lacking any scientific basis. In this case, their views should not be considered in any more privileged way than the views of the most ignorant in our society.

**Notes:**

1. Oreskes, Naomi, "The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change", *Science*, 306:5702, Page 1686, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2004.
2. Peiser, Benny, "100% Consensus! Science Publishes Soviet-Style Results on Climate Change", Cambridge Conference Network (CCNet), 6<sup>th</sup> December 2004.