

THE SALE'S PITCH

The IPCC has lounged, for more than two decades, in a large comfy chair atop a pedestal. When the IPCC is mentioned in broadcasts, newspapers, and books it is portrayed as a paragon of scientific truth and authority. Here are some direct quotes from people describing the IPCC:

- phenomenally successful
- a remarkable history of accomplishments
- there is not a parallel on this planet, in any field of endeavour
- its place in the history books is clear
- if the IPCC says something, you had better believe it. [1]

Journalists are among the IPCC's most ardent admirers. They say the Climate Bible is written by thousands of the world's top experts who all agree with its conclusions. They routinely use words such as *gold standard*, *authoritative*, and *pre-eminent* to describe it. Indeed, when discussing the IPCC the media sound more like cheerleaders than hard-nosed reporters:

- the IPCC...has shown us the way (*Time* magazine)
- It is chapter and verse, it is Holy Writ (Irish *Independent*)
- most scientists have been awed by the IPCC's deliberate work (*New York Times*)
- The greatest feat of global scientific cooperation ever seen...utterly unique and authoritative (UK *Guardian*) [2].

In 2007, the Nobel committee joined the chorus of praise singers and crowned the IPCC with a Nobel Peace Prize. During his presentation speech, the Nobel chairman thanked the IPCC for its "outstanding scientific work" and for all it has done "for mother earth." According to the Nobel committee, although it was once unclear whether human activities were causing global warming, "Thanks to the IPCC there is very little such doubt today."

If you know a bit about history, though, that Nobel speech may have left you uneasy. This is how it ended: "Action is needed now. Climate changes are already moving ***beyond human control.***" [3]

Let us be sensible for a moment. Planet Earth is 4.5 billion years old. During that time, it has endured all sorts of perfectly natural climate transformations. As recently as 20,000 years ago 97% of Canada was covered by ice. [4] That ice melted and retreated and the Ice Age ended all on its own. The Egyptian pharaohs, remember, only came into the picture 5,000 years ago, while the Romans ruled 2,000 years ago. To suggest that the climate has ever been within *human control* is surely a bit silly.

Mark Twain once observed that:

"...people's beliefs and convictions are in almost every case gotten at second-hand, and without examination, from authorities who have not themselves examined the questions at issue but have taken them at second-hand from other non-examiners, whose opinions about them were not worth a brass farthing."

If Twain were alive today, he might have sharp words for all the hype surrounding the IPCC. Twain was talking about religion and politics when he made the above remarks and, for some people, environmentalism has become a substitute religion. It is their worldview, the lens through which they interpret everything. Moreover, because the IPCC is a child of the United Nations - the stage on which so many of the world's power blocs jostle with one another - whether we like it or not the IPCC is also mixed up with politics.

It has long been fashionable to be green. For half a century we've taught our children that the planet is fragile, that humans treat it carelessly, and that we are on the brink of ecological disaster. Smart individuals armed with plenty of facts and figures argue that the opposite is actually the case. They say the state of the world is steadily improving, that it's becoming cleaner and healthier. But their voices barely register.

The larger point is that because we have been told so frequently that humans are a threat to the planet, we are all *predisposed* to believe that our actions might trigger dangerous climate change. Most of us have never seriously questioned this idea. Among us are prime ministers, regulators, and supreme court judges. Among us are educators, community activists, and parents understandably concerned about the world their children will inherit.

This is why the IPCC has received so little scrutiny. This is why no one noticed that conflict-of-interest guidelines were missing. We all made the mistake of believing the IPCC was a gem of an organization simply because it is connected to protecting the environment.

Closer examination reveals that many of the things we've been told about the IPCC are mistaken. For instance, a great deal of noise is made about the allegedly rigorous manner in which its reports get written. The implication is that the IPCC has procedures and that these procedures are followed diligently.

But while the IPCC has taken the time to write down some rules of the road, it has never hired any traffic cops. Since many people exceed the speed limit when police officers are plentiful, what do we suppose happens when they're entirely absent?

In the real world, when undisciplined youngsters slide behind the wheel of a fast car, how many of them can be counted on to behave?

Notes:

1. Laframboise, Donna, "*The Delinquent Teenager – Who Was Mistaken for the World's Top Climate Expert*", Ivy Avenue Press, Toronto, Canada, 2011, Page 192, Footnote 2-1
2. *Ibid*, page192, Footnote 2-2.
3. *Ibid*, page192, Footnote 2-3.
4. *Ibid*, page192, Footnote 2-4.