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Al Gore, Global warming, Inconvenient Truth

The gods must be laughing

Al Gore's 'truth' has little to do with science, yet his influence continues to grow - we need to more closely assess what he is actually saying

By Tom Harris

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Albert Einstein once said, "Whoever undertakes to set himself up as a judge of Truth and Knowledge is shipwrecked by the laughter of the gods."

While the gods must consider "An Inconvenient Truth" the ultimate comedy, real climate scientists have been crying over Al Gore's global warming film, now to be released on [DVD](#) November 21st. This is not just because the ex-Vice President committed numerous basic science mistakes; they are also concerned that, as a movie that has grossed over \$20 million dollars (making it the 4th highest grossing documentary ever), many in the media and public have put great faith in the veracity of the film even though much of it amounts to little more than science fiction.

See also:

[Scientists respond to Gore's warnings of climate catastrophe](#)

Yet Gore's influence on the public debate continues to increase. Between late September 2006 to January 2007, he, and some of the educators and scientists who support him, plan to train "more than 1,000 individuals to give a version of his presentation on the effects of - and solutions for - global warming, to community groups throughout the U.S.", according to his Web site, www.climatecrisis.org. All this has obviously impressed the British government as Gore has just been appointed international adviser on climate change to Gordon Brown, U.K. Chancellor of the Exchequer and most likely the next Prime Minister.

Given Gore's increasing profile, it is worthwhile to more closely examine the science of his film.

Gore's credibility is damaged early in the movie when he tells the audience that, by simply looking at Antarctic ice cores with the naked eye, one can see when the American Clean Air Act was passed. Dr. Ian Clark, Professor of Earth Sciences at the University of Ottawa, Canada, responds, "This is pure fantasy unless the reporter is able to detect parts per billion changes to chemicals in ice." Air over

the US doesn't even circulate to the Antarctic before mixing with most of the northern, then the southern hemisphere air and this process takes decades. Clark explains that even far more significant events, such as the settling of dust arising from the scouring of continental shelves at the end of ice ages, are undetectable in ice cores by an untrained eye.

Gore repeatedly labels carbon dioxide (CO₂) as "global warming pollution" when, in reality, it is no more pollution than is oxygen. CO₂ is plant food, an ingredient essential for photosynthesis without which Earth would be a lifeless, frozen ice ball. The hypothesis that human release of CO₂ is a major contributor to global warming is just that - an unproven hypothesis, against which evidence is increasingly mounting.

In fact, the supposedly convincing cause and effect relationship between CO₂ and temperature that Gore speaks about so confidently is simply non-existent over all meaningful time scales. University of Ottawa climate researcher, Professor Jan Veizer demonstrated that, over geologic time, the two are not linked at all. Over the intermediate time scales Gore focuses on, the ice cores show that CO₂ increases don't precede, and therefore don't cause, warming. Rather they follow temperature rise - by as much as 800 years. Even in the past century, the correlation is poor - the planet actually cooled between 1940 and 1980 when human emissions of CO₂ were rising at the fastest rate in our history.

Similarly, the fact that water vapour constitutes 95% of greenhouse gases by volume is conveniently ignored by Gore. While humanity's 3 billions tonnes (gigatonnes, or GT) per year net contribution to the atmosphere's CO₂ load appears large on a human scale, it is actually less than half of 1% of the atmosphere's total CO₂ content (750-830 GT). The CO₂ emissions of our civilization are also dwarfed by the 210 GT/year emissions of the gas from Earth's oceans and land. Perhaps even more significant is the fact that the uncertainty in the measurement of atmospheric CO₂ content is 80 GT - making 3 GT seem hardly worth mentioning.

But Gore persists, labeling future CO₂ rise as "deeply unethical" and lectures the audience that "Each one of us is a cause of global warming." Not satisfied with simply warning of human-induced killer heat waves - events in Europe this past year were "like a nature hike through the Book of Revelations", he says - he then uses high tech special effects to show how human-caused climate changes are causing more hurricanes, tornadoes, droughts, floods, infectious diseases, insect plagues, glacial retreats, coral die-outs, and the flooding of small island nations due to sea level rise caused by the melting of the polar caps. One is left wondering if Gore thinks nature is responsible for anything.

Scientists who actually work in these fields flatly contradict Gore. Take his allegations that extreme weather (EW) events will increase in frequency and severity as the world warms and that this is already happening. Former professor of climatology at the University of Winnipeg (Canada) and now Chairman of the newly launched Natural Resources Stewardship Project, Dr. Timothy Ball, notes, "The theories that Gore supports indicate the greatest warming will be in Polar Regions. Therefore the temperature contrast with warmer regions - the driver of extreme weather - will lessen and, with it, storm potential will lessen."

This is exactly what Former Environment Canada research scientist and EW specialist Dr. Madhav Khandekar found. His studies show that there has been no increase in EW events in Canada in the last 25 years. Furthermore, he sees no indication that such events will increase over the next 25 years. "In fact some EW events such as winter blizzards have definitely declined", say Khandekar. "Prairie droughts have been occurring for hundreds of years. The 13th and 16th century saw some of the severest and longest droughts ever on Canadian/American Prairies." Like many other

researchers, Khandekar is convinced that EW is not increasing globally either.

On hurricanes, Gore implies that new records are being set as a result of human greenhouse gas emissions. Besides clumsy errors in the presentation of the facts (Katrina did not get "stronger and stronger and stronger" as it came over the Gulf of Mexico; rather, it was category 5 over the ocean and was downgraded to category 3 when it made a landfall), Gore fails to note that the only region to show an increase in hurricanes in recent years is the North Atlantic. Hurricane specialist Dr. Tad Murty, former senior research scientist, Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and now adjunct professor of Earth Sciences at University of Ottawa, points out, "In all other six ocean basins, where tropical cyclones occur, there is either a flat or a downward trend." Murty lists 1900, 1926 and 1935 as the years in which the most intense hurricanes were recorded in the US. In fact, Dr. Max Mayfield, Director of the National Hurricane Center in Miami has stated that global warming has nothing to do with the recent increase in hurricane frequency in the North Atlantic. Murty concludes, "The feeling among many meteorologists is that it has to do with the North Atlantic Oscillation, which is now in the positive phase and will continue for another decade or so."

In their open letter to the Canadian Prime Minister in April, 61 of the world's leading experts modestly expressed their understanding of the science: "The study of global climate change is an "emerging science," one that is perhaps the most complex ever tackled. It may be many years yet before we properly understand the Earth's climate system." It seems that liberal arts graduate Al Gore, political champion of the Kyoto Protocol, thinks he knows better.

Institut Pasteur (Paris) Professor Paul Reiter seemed to sum up the sentiments of many experts when he labeled the film "pure, mind-bendingpropaganda." Such reactions should certainly cause viewers to wonder if Nobel Prize winning French novelist Andre Gide had a point when he advised, "Believe those who are seeking the truth; doubt those who find it."

[A sample of experts' comments about the science of "An Inconvenient Truth"](#)

*[Tom Harris](#) is an Ottawa-based mechanical engineer and Executive Director of Natural Resources Stewardship Project. He can be reached at letters@canadafreepress.com
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