



KRAIG R. NAASZ
President & CEO

October 30, 2007

James E. Hansen
Columbia University
750 Armstrong Hall
2880 Broadway
New York, NY 10025 USA

Dear Dr. Hansen:

I was deeply distressed to read accounts of your recent testimony to the Iowa Utilities Board in which you likened freight cars carrying Powder River Basin coal to the box cars that carried Europeans to their deaths in crematoria during World War II. The suggestion that coal utilization for electricity generation can be equated with the systematic extermination of European Jewry is both repellant and preposterous.

Your advocacy on behalf of global warming is ill-served by an invidious comparison that manages not only to trivialize the suffering of millions but undermines your credibility as a rational observer of a complex phenomenon. Your suggestion that an additional coal-based power plant here in America could somehow constitute a tipping point in the build up of greenhouse gases, while China builds a new plant each week, defies common sense.

I believe you owe the hard working men and women of both the coal mining and railroad industries an apology and respectfully request that you refrain from making such comments in the future.

Sincerely yours,

Kraig R. Naasz
President and CEO

21 November 2007

Kraig R. Naasz
President and CEO
National Mining Association

Dear Mr. Naasz:

Your letter of 30 October regarding my testimony to the Iowa Utilities Board* appears to illustrate that you do not wish to have the message about the grave future consequences of unrestrained growth in coal-fired power plants publicly stated.

Yet you offer no evidence contradicting the scientific assessment in my testimony. There is overwhelming consensus about growing human-made climate change, which poses a threat to humanity and many other species on our planet.

Climatic zones have been shifting poleward for the past 30 years at a rate that is, as far as we know, unprecedented. This rapid change is caused by increasing human-made greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide (CO₂). If this movement continues or accelerates this century, it will become the predominant cause of extinction of species, many already threatened by other human-made stresses.

Fossil fuel contributions to the alarming rise of atmospheric CO₂ are well quantified. Cumulative CO₂ emissions, which properly apportion responsibility for climate change, are coal (~50%), oil (~35%), and gas (~15%). Potential emissions from coal are even greater on the long term, given coal's larger proven reserves. As my colleagues and I have shown, the only practical way to bring human-made climate change under control is by phasing out coal use except where the CO₂ is captured and sequestered.

Any implication that jobs created via increased emphasis on energy efficiency, clean renewable energies, and advanced safer nuclear power are somehow inferior to jobs in coal mining defies common sense.

America yearns for its native clear skies, reversal of the growing rates of asthma and other respiratory problems, an end to mercury and other water pollution that poisons our children, and a halt to mountain top removal with its spoliation of our streams.

Passenger travel by rail has become intolerable in parts of our country, at a time when it is most needed, because of delays caused by priority given to coal trains. This and other subsidies wrangled from the people by fossil fuel special interests soil our democracy, which our founding fathers intended to operate for the people, not for the financial benefit of the few.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK
THE EARTH INSTITUTE

Fortunately, young people are becoming aware of inequities, as too many special interests seek profits and ignore deleterious impacts upon the planet that today's children and grandchildren will inherit. I hope that you will hear more from the young generation, and I look forward to our policy makers appreciating and acting upon the concerns of young people.

Sincerely,

James Hansen
Director, NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies
Adjunct Professor, Columbia University Earth Institute

*For reference, I repeat here the paragraph from my testimony that you find objectionable:

“Coal will determine whether we continue to increase climate change or slow the human impact. Increased fossil fuel CO₂ in the air today, compared to the pre-industrial atmosphere, is due 50% to coal, 35% to oil and 15% to gas. As oil resources peak, coal will determine future CO₂ levels. Recently, after giving a high school commencement talk in my hometown, Denison, Iowa, I drove from Denison to Dunlap, where my parents are buried. For most of 20 miles there were trains parked, engine to caboose, half of the cars being filled with coal. If we cannot stop the building of more coal-fired power plants, those coal trains will be death trains – no less gruesome than if they were boxcars headed to crematoria, loaded with uncountable irreplaceable species.”

There is nothing scientifically invalid about the above paragraph. If this paragraph makes you uncomfortable, well, perhaps it should.

The only additional required explanation, clearly stated in my testimony, is that coal-fired power plants that capture and sequester the CO₂ are consistent with preserving creation, life on the planet as we know it, but the required technology is not yet ready. Until technology is ready, there should be a moratorium on construction of new coal-fired power plants in developed countries. Developing countries must phase out such construction within a decade. Realization that all coal-fired power plants without actual carbon capture will have to be “bull-dozed” in the next several decades, in all countries, should serve as an effective brake on new construction of coal-fired power plants during the next few years in all countries.

For better understanding, I recommend a more careful reading of my testimony.