THE DENIERS — PART XXIX

Models trump measurements

LAWRENCE SOLOMON

We are doomed, say climate change scientists associated with the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the United Nations body that is organizing most of the climate change research occurring in the world today. Carbon dioxide from man-made sources rises to the atmosphere and then stays there for 50, 100, or even 200 years. This unprecedented buildup of CO_2 then traps heat that would otherwise escape our atmosphere, threatening us all.

"This is nonsense," says Tom V. Segalstad, head of the Geological Museum at the University of Oslo and formerly an expert reviewer with the same IPCC. He laments the paucity of geologic knowledge among IPCC scientists — a knowledge that is central to understanding climate change, in his view, since geologic processes ultimately determine the level of atmospheric CO_2.

"The IPCC needs a lesson in geology to avoid making fundamental mistakes," he says. "Most leading geologists, throughout the world, know that the IPCC's view of Earth processes are implausible if not impossible."

Catastrophic theories of climate change depend on carbon dioxide staying in the atmosphere for long periods of time — otherwise, the CO_2 enveloping the globe wouldn't be dense enough to keep the heat in. Until recently, the world of science was near-unanimous that CO_2 couldn't stay in the atmosphere for more than about five to 10 years because of the oceans' near-limitless ability to absorb CO_2.

"This time period has been established by measurements based on natural carbon-14 and also from readings of carbon-14 from nuclear weapons testing, it has been established by radon-222 measurements, it has been established by measurements of the solubility of atmospheric gases in the oceans, it has been established by comparing the isotope mass balance, it has been established through other mechanisms, too, and over many decades, and by many scientists in many disciplines," says Prof. Segalstad, whose work has often relied upon such measurements.

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Then, with the advent of IPCC-influenced science, the length of time that carbon stays in the atmosphere became controversial. Climate change scientists began creating carbon cycle models to explain what they thought must be an excess of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. These computer models calculated a long life for carbon dioxide.

Amazingly, the hypothetical results from climate models have trumped the real world measurements of carbon dioxide's longevity in the atmosphere. Those who claim that CO_2 lasts decades or centuries have no such measurements or other physical evidence to support their claims.

Neither can they demonstrate that the various forms of measurement are erroneous.

"They don't even try," says Prof. Segalstad. "They simply dismiss evidence that is, for all intents and purposes, irrefutable. Instead, they substitute their faith, constructing a kind of science fiction or fantasy world in the process."

In the real world, as measurable by science, CO_2 in the atmosphere and in the ocean reach a stable balance when the oceans contain 50 times as much CO_2 as the atmosphere. "The IPCC postulates an atmospheric doubling of CO_2, meaning that the oceans would need to receive 50 times more CO_2 to obtain chemical equilibrium," explains Prof. Segalstad. "This total of 51 times the present amount of carbon in atmospheric CO_2 exceeds the known reserves of fossil carbon — it represents more carbon than exists in all the coal, gas, and oil that we can exploit anywhere in the world."

Also in the real world, Prof. Segalstad's isotope mass balance calculations — a standard technique in science — show that if CO_2 in the atmosphere had a lifetime of 50 to 200 years, as claimed by IPCC scientists, the atmosphere would necessarily have half of its current CO_2 mass. Because this is a nonsensical outcome, the IPCC model postulates that half of the CO_2 must be hiding somewhere, in "a missing sink." Many studies have sought this missing sink — a Holy Grail of climate science research — without success.

"It is a search for a mythical CO_2 sink to explain an immeasurable CO_2 lifetime to fit a hypothetical CO_2 computer model that purports to show that an impossible amount of fossil fuel burning is heating the atmosphere," Prof. Segalstad concludes.

"It is all a fiction."

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CV OF A DENIER

Prof. Tom V. Segalstad is head of the Geological Museum within the Natural History Museum of the University of Oslo. Formerly, he was head of the Mineralogical-Geological Museum at the University of Oslo, director of the Natural History Museums and Botanical Garden of the University of Oslo, and program chairman for mineralogy/petrology/geochemistry at the University of Oslo.

His research projects include geological mapping in Norway, Svalbard (Arctic), Sweden and Iceland, and have involved geochemistry, volcanology, metallogenesis (how mineral and ore deposits form) and magmatic petrogenesis (how magmatic rocks form). He was an expert reviewer to the UN's Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change's Third Assessment Report.