

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE 'SETTLED SCIENCE' BULLIES

Exclusive: Ronald J. Rychlak defends creators of new model that defies U.N., Al Gore

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The controversy over man-made global warming is far from settled. Despite claims that “the science is all in” and “there is no room for debate,” the scientific method, with repeatable and falsifiable hypotheses, cannot really work when applied to the environment. Instead, scientists develop models – hypotheses, if you will – that set forth well-informed explanations about how various parts of the environment interrelate. Models are then evaluated to see how well their projections correlate with actual, measured data.

With global warming, the principal components of most common models are carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and global temperatures. The hypothesis is that there is a causal relationship between high concentrations of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and increasing temperatures. Certainly, across most of the 20th century there was at least a correlation between these variables. Projecting forward, former Vice President Al Gore, the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and others have called for significant political actions to limit the devastation these models suggest will come without drastic action.

The problem for Gore and others is that the models they use to justify legislative action are failing. Global temperatures have not climbed as projected, and scientists have noted periods in the 20th century (mainly before the 1930s) where the models do not account for the observed temperatures. So, good climate scientists have been looking

for new and improved models that better explain the measured data.

Enter Dr. Wei-Hock Soon, a climate scientist employed at the prestigious Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. In January, he and three colleagues ([Lord Christopher Monckton](#), climatologist and geologist Dr. David Legates and statistician William Briggs) wrote an article that appeared in the peer reviewed Science Bulletin. The paper, “Why Models Run Hot: Results from an Irreducibly Simple Climate Model,” made a strong case that the Earth’s climate is less sensitive to atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations than most other models suggest.

Soon and his colleagues set forth a simple new model that tracks temperatures and temperature trends more closely than the climate models used by Al Gore and the others. Using this model, they showed that the IPCC has probably overstated climate sensitivity to carbon dioxide by a factor of three.

The paper drew immediate attention. It (or its abstract) was downloaded from Science Bulletin’s website more than any other paper ever published by the journal (about 22,000 times). Several news outlets took note of this new climate model, with Physics.org publishing an article entitled “Peer-reviewed pocket-calculator climate model exposes serious errors in complex computer models.” Clearly, Soon’s paper presented a serious threat to the prevailing models and the politics that are built on them.

Activist groups such as Greenpeace and MoveOn.org immediately set out to smear Soon and his coauthors. They claimed that Soon violated academic ethics by failing to disclose to Science Bulletin that certain funding grants supporting his work might pose conflicts of interest. This debatable charge was given prominent coverage in the New York Times, the Daily Mail, the Washington Post and various other media outlets.

Politicians could not resist joining in. Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva, an Arizona Democrat who is the ranking member of the House Committee on Natural Resources, sent requests to the universities that employ scientists who have testified before Congress about climate change. He asked for each institution's policies related to financial disclosure and outside funding. Three Democratic senators (Edward J. Markey of Massachusetts, Barbara Boxer of California and Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island) sent about 100 letters to fossil fuel companies, trade groups and other organizations asking about their funding of climate research.

These actions were all undertaken in the context of bullying Soon into silence. Even if there were a failure to report on funding (and that is hotly contested by Soon and his supporters), true science – with repeatable tests and falsifiable hypotheses – cannot ultimately be faked. The only way for bad science to triumph is to suppress all dissent, possibly by arguing that “the science is all in,” “the debate is over,” and by assaulting the character of anyone who dares to dissent.

According to Soon, “No amount of money can influence what I have to say and write, especially on my scientific quest to understand how climate works, all by itself.”

The *ad hominem* attack that his critics set forth does not address the merits of his climate model, but that was never their goal. They simply wanted to intimidate those who dare to question the IPCC's findings. Soon's own analysis is that it is “a shameless attempt to silence my scientific research and writings and to make an example out of me as a warning to any other researcher who may dare question in the slightest their fervently held orthodoxy of anthropogenic global warming.”

True scientists, like Greenpeace co-founder Patrick Moore, Ph.D., remain open to new discoveries. Moore has been a leader in international environmentalism for more than 40 years. [He now calls himself a climate change skeptic](#). Why? He followed the science. These environmental issues are too important to do anything less. (He has also noted that by its very constitution, the IPCC has a “hopeless conflict of interest.”)

Environmental bullies should not be permitted to argue that the science is in and that the debate is over. No longer should public voices be permitted to call for the arrest of those who question the conclusions of climate scientists. That kind of thinking is behind the attempted character assassination of Dr. Soon and his colleagues, and it is very bad for the environment.

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