

THE HEARTLAND INSTITUTE

19 South LaSalle Street #903
Chicago, IL 60603
phone 312/377-4000 · fax 312/377-5000
<http://www.heartland.org>
<http://www.globalwarmingheartland.org>

Lord Monckton Thrashes DeSmog Blog Editor in High-Profile Global Warming Debate

DeSmog Blog editor Richard Littlemore concedes defeat
Author: transcription and analysis by James M. Taylor
Published by: The Heartland Institute
Published in: *News Releases*
Publication date: August 2008

Lord Christopher Monckton, a global warming expert and former senior policy advisor to British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, has challenged Al Gore, and other ardent proponents of the theory that humans are causing a global warming crisis, to publicly debate the issue.

While Gore and most other prominent proponents of alarmist global warming theory refuse to publicly debate or defend their claims, Richard Littlemore, editor of the DeSmog Blog Web site, agreed to debate Lord Monckton on Sunday, August 17, on Canada's Corus radio network. Corus host Roy Green moderated the debate.

A transcript of all pertinent parts of the debate appears below, followed by some post-debate analysis by James M. Taylor, senior fellow for The Heartland Institute. Audio of the Monckton-Littlemore debate can be found at <http://libertynewscentral.blogspot.com/2008/08/monckton-vs-littlemore-debate-audio.html>.

The Debate

Green

Richard, in layman's terminology, make the case for the IPCC human-induced climate change position.

Littlemore

I'll give you the brief spiel. After a long peace and period of climate stability, the Earth's climate has started to change, and change quickly. In an effort to answer why, the Earth's great scientists have gathered all the best research in a report by the IPCC -- the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The IPCC's last report says that there is a 90-plus percent certainty that humans are causing the problem, mostly by burning fossil fuels.

The governments of Stephen Harper in Canada, George Bush in the United States, the governments of Britain, France, Germany, China, India, and 137 other countries all signed off on that report. It's not some like weird socialist thing. Everybody signed it.

Are there still scientific uncertainties? You bet. Real scientists are arguing all the time in labs and in peer-reviewed scientific journals, not in newsletters. Are we going to argue serious science today in 22 minutes in a debate between two guys, neither of whom has a degree in any scientific field or is doing any scientific research? I don't think so.

The public debate about climate change is not about science, it's about public relations. That's what we do at DeSmog Blog, which is a climate change Web site. We do research on the credentials and the funding of people who argue that climate change isn't happening, that it doesn't matter, or that it can't be stopped. Then we publish the results, and I can tell you it's all about public relations.

Green

Let me have Lord Christopher respond to that.

Monckton

Well let's first of all begin on this question of funding, and let us talk about the funding for DeSmog Blog. Now DeSmog Blog was founded with \$300,000 of money from a man called John Lefebvre who is an Internet gaming fraudster convicted last year of making hundreds of millions of dollars -- a large chunk of which he is now being made to pay back to the U.S. government -- by unlawfully laundering money to do with unlawful Internet gaming.

He is the person who got into bed with Mr. Littlemore's boss at a PR [public relations] company, a Mr. James Haugen, and they took up the DeSmog Blog, whose job of course is not to debate the science of climate, but to inaccurately misrepresent the alleged or supposed or imagined funding of anyone who dares to challenge the supposed consensus on the climate. So let's get that thing clear first of all. DeSmog Blog was founded, is funded, and is run by a convicted and self-confessed crook, and furthermore that crook is now in the business of running a solar energy corporation and therefore has a direct vested interest in peddling the climate change scare.

I would start by making it clear that Mr. Littlemore is a public relations executive working for a convicted Internet fraudster.

Green

Lord Christopher, let me just jump in here if I may. I appreciate you saying this, and I want Richard to respond, because I have the stories and the news stories as well. But I really want to get to the climate change issue because that is what our listeners want to hear most about from each of you. So Richard, respond to that and then let's get to the issue of climate.

Littlemore

John Lefebvre hasn't been convicted of anything. He had a legitimate Internet banking company that was registered in your country because it wouldn't have been legal if it was registered in the United States. Yeah, he gave us our money. I didn't start off by saying that you're the senior policy advisor for the 'Spinstitute,' for an organization whose Web site is the 'Spinstitute,' which was started with \$100,000 that the Frontiers of Freedom spun off from ExxonMobil to begin the Science and Public Policy Institute. I told you this wasn't going to be about science, so this is about public relations in every aspect.

Green

Let me turn it around then. Let me ask you each a question. I have one question. We'll start with this, and then we'll take a break, and you'll think about the question and then we'll come back and we'll debate it and see where it goes from there.

The question I have is this: I have done a lot of research on this issue as well. Have global temperatures -- and please listen to the question carefully -- have global overall temperatures increased in the past 50 years -- not the past 100 years -- because we know the temperatures globally rose after the end of the Little Ice Age in the 1700s, and that global temperatures have risen about 1 degree Celsius in the past 100 years. But have global temperatures risen in the past 50 or 60 years, or have global temperatures been stable during that period?

And remember warming temperatures globally swung upward -- at least my information tells me this -- in the first half of the twentieth century before World War II and the post-war industrial boom -- and the second half of the century, with all of the industrial activity, didn't global temperatures remain fairly static?

[BREAK]

Green

My question is, did it [global temperature] go up 1 degree in the last 100 years or did it go up 1 degree in the first half of the twentieth century with very little increase in temperature in the second half of the twentieth century? Lord Christopher, perhaps you first.

Monckton

Just to clear up one thing, Mr. Littlemore said that his paymaster, the crook Lefebvre had not been convicted. He was in fact convicted by a U.S. court in July 2007. So you are not going to get straight facts from him, but you will get them from me.

Now the temperature record is like this; the temperature went up very fast between about 1906 and 1940. Indeed in the 1920s and 1930s it went up very fast indeed. From 1940 until about 1975, it fell a little. From 1975 until 1998 it went up quite a lot -- about 0.5 Celsius overall over the 50 years you are asking about. And that is of course preceded by a 0.5 degree Celsius increase long before humankind could have had anything to do with it in the first 50 years of the twentieth century.

So yes there has been an increase, however that increase has been going on at a rate on average of about 0.5 Celsius per century for 300 years, during 250 of which we could not possibly have had anything to do with it. And now that temperatures have been falling for the last seven years and falling at a rate of about 0.4 degrees Celsius per century according to the Hadley Center's records, or per decade I should say, the overall effect is that there has been no increase in the long-run warming rate over the past 300 years. There has been no particular change in the second half of the twentieth century.

Green

Richard Littlemore, respond to that please.

Littlemore

I don't know where you're getting a lot of this. But if your listeners would like to Google, climate or um, global warming, um, or go to Wikipedia and look up global warming, they can get a nice graph from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration -- a pretty reputable organization -- that will show you some of the ups and downs that have been mooted here. But from 1950 until now, if you put a ruler on the curve it goes up at about a 45 degree angle. Eleven of the hottest years in recorded history occurred in the last 13 years. How that can be characterized as anything other than a considerable increase. ... I mean it's not just 11 of the hottest years in recorded history. According to some very good climate reconstructions going back at least 1,000 years, we're talking about the hottest decade in 1,000 years at least.

Green

Lord Christopher?

Monckton

Well no, we're not. The 'hockey stick' graph that is purported to abolish the Medieval Warm Period was based on bristlecone pine reconstructions from tree rings using a process which the UN climate panel had itself said ought not to be used. If you take out the bristlecone pine record and use all the other datasets you find that, just as history confirms, there was a Medieval Warm Period during which temperatures were considerably higher than they are now. Indeed, in the 10,000 years of the present interglacial period between ice ages, the temperature has been warmer than today about two-thirds of the time. And in each of the previous four or five interglacial periods, which occur every 125,000 years, the temperature has been up to 5 degrees Celsius warmer than it is

today, and humankind cannot have had anything to do with it.

What is more, the Sun has been more active and for longer over the last 70 years than at almost any previous similar period over the past 11,400 years since the end of the last ice age.

Green

Make your point, Richard.

Littlemore

I'm sorry that we're not on television instead of radio, no offense. If you go to DeSmogBlog.com, or if you just Google this is not a hockey stick, you will find that the story that has just been told to you about the hockey stick debunking is flagrantly incorrect, um not to say false, um, well and to say false. The bristlecone records which are featured in the hockey stick, and this gets really, this is why we shouldn't be talking about science on the radio. But anyway, the bristlecone record is corroborated by ocean sediments, by lake sediments, by glaciers. I've got eight other graphs on the DeSmog Blog, none of which has been questioned in the least, all showing a hockey stick shape in the temperature from 1,000 years ago to today, and all of them showing a pretty similar -- the idea that there was a Medieval Warming Period during which the temperature was higher than it is now is, that is like, flagrantly incorrect is the nicest way that I can say it.

Green

Well wasn't it called the Medieval Climactic Optimum -- optimum meaning the best?

Littlemore

[laughter]

Monckton

Yes it was. And of course, the IPCC's report in 1990 shows the graph which illustrates the existence of the Medieval Warm Period very clearly. I can produce 30 graphs from different scientific papers from all around the world from ocean sediments, from Lake Vikal, from the Alps, from all over the place establishing that the Medieval Warm Period was real and it existed.

That's when the great cathedrals of Europe were built. That's when civilization began to flower because of the warmer weather. We know this perfectly well. If you go to Valsay in Greenland, where the archaeologists have been digging recently, they have found the burial site where the major Viking settlement there used to exist. That burial site was not under permafrost when people were buried there because they wouldn't have been able to dig into it. It is under permafrost still today. Why? Because Greenland is cooler today than it was in the Medieval Warm Period.

Records from all over the world show, in the peer-reviewed scientific literature -- paper after paper after paper -- that the Medieval Warm Period was real.

Green

Richard, when I said Medieval Climactic Optimum -- optimum meaning the best -- you laughed.

Littlemore

Yeah, it gets to the question of 'Gee, wouldn't it be nice if it was warmer.'

Green

Well, many people are saying that. Many people are arguing that if the planet is getting warmer, it is not necessarily a bad thing.

Littlemore

Many people don't live in Bangladesh, which if the oceans go up a meter 60 million people are in danger of losing their home. You know, whether somebody in Whitehorse thinks that there is going to be a slight advantage to having climate change, doesn't address the significant risks that tend to -- climate change at a pace that could be faster than at any time in the last [unintelligible]. ...

Green

Over how long a period of time does the IPCC suggest the oceans will rise? And are we talking all the oceans or just some of them by a meter?

Littlemore

It's a moving target. The IPCC -- Andrew Weaver, who is like the best climate modeler in Canada or one of the best, said you know, meter, two meters at the outside is all that he can show in models in this century. So you know, everybody can build dikes or can perhaps build dikes and not worry about it.

[BREAK]

Green

Can we address this whole issue of the Great Red Spot on Jupiter influencing Earth and other planets? Triton, Neptune's moon, is experiencing melting of its surface of frozen nitrogen. Pluto has warmed some 3 degrees. The Red Spot has a mass I understand of more than 300,000 times greater than Earth, with a temperature of roughly 20 million degrees Celsius at its core. Doesn't it stand to reason that the Red Spot may be responsible for any modest increase in global temperatures? Lord Christopher, first to you.

Monckton

Well, I don't think it would cause any increase in global temperatures. But certainly what I think is happening is there is a giant, bright object at the middle of the solar system, from which the solar system gets its name, that has indeed been becoming more active recently, as I was saying earlier. And it is that which is probably causing the simultaneous warming that has been observed over recent years on many of the planetary bodies in the solar system.

But to just very quickly go back on the sea level rise point, Mr. Littlemore didn't answer your question about what the IPCC said. What it said is that a 43 centimeter -- that's 1 foot, 5 [inches] -- is their projected sea level rise for the next century. That's their best estimate. They have reduced their top end estimate down from 3 feet down to less than 2 feet. So we are looking at really quite a small sea level rise which is really not going to threaten anybody very much. And there's no real expectation that there is going to be any more than that.

Indeed, I was consulting [unintelligible] the other day, who is the world's greatest expert on sea level, and has written several papers on it, and he said he is not expecting it to rise very much more than the eight inches we saw in the last century, and that in itself is only about a fifth of the 4 feet per century which has been the average sea level rise per century over the last 10,000 years, with sea level rising over 400 feet in that time.

Green

Let's go to Richard Littlemore for a response to that, and then a question for you both.

Littlemore

Well I'm not sure what I'm responding to. The bamboozling on science. ... We're looking at the most serious collapse of Arctic ice in all of recorded history. This is the third year in a row when the Northwest Passage is navigable and this could be as bad as last year, which was the biggest melt in history. You know when the ice melts the sea level rises. It's melting way faster than anybody anticipated that it would. So it stands to reason that the sea levels might rise a little more quickly.

Green

[Asks about extent of Arctic ice decline.]

Littlemore

The last two years have seen a catastrophic decline. If you go back to three weeks ago and look at what the Canadian ice service was saying, they were saying, 'Hey, big recovery after last year. This is great news. We had a good cold winter and there looks like really a fabulous recovery.' Last week they said, 'Oops, just kidding. It's got quite stormy up there. All that ice is broken up. It's looking now like we're on track to have again one of the Earth's worst years ever.'

On the solar thing, the idea that the Sun -- I mean it's -- there are all these side issues but first of all, all the people who say, 'Ooh, it's solar forcing, not CO2 forcing, they bring out these charts and graphs, and the charts and graphs all end sort of in 1980.

And the reason they all end in 1980 is that the Sun's activity graph and the global average temperature graph track almost perfectly until 1980. And then, oops, the Sun's activity goes straight into the dumpster and the temperature goes straight up. So you get a guy like Tim Patterson from the University of Ottawa who does speeches about this all over town, his graph always ends at 1980, like there's something really unsavory about that. If as well, you were to think that so much additional energy is coming from the Sun that it's lighting fire to Jupiter, if that much energy is getting to Jupiter to be creating that spot, if there isn't some other function happening out there, then we would all be toast like.

Green

On that point, Lord Christopher, how do you want to wrap this up?

Monckton

Very quickly, let's deal with the Arctic ice which is a little bit nearer to home. The fact is that there has been far less Arctic ice around than there is now. In the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth centuries, when sailing ships had been able to sail through the Northwest Passage. It was free again in 1945, it's free again now. These things come and go.

In any case, even if the entire Arctic ice cap was melted, it is floating and therefore doesn't add a single millimeter to sea level rise.

In any case, all his point about the fact that the Arctic has been showing some signs of warming was disposed of very thoroughly by NASA last year in a paper saying that most of that warming is attributable to changes in the great ocean currents as they push more warmer water up to the Arctic and this has nothing to do with global warming.

The point is that merely because you see a phenomenon of warming somewhere doesn't mean the whole planet is warming. It doesn't mean that the cause of the warming has anything to do with us. There is more Antarctic ice than ever there was and the overall ice mass of the planet -- if you take the Arctic, Greenland, and the Antarctic together -- has shown no trend whatsoever, up or down in the last 50 years since we have been keeping detailed records. There has been no change.

Green

I thank you both very much. All the best to you both.

Post-Debate Analysis

The above transcript merely begins to convey the overall tone of the debate. Lord Monckton fluidly presented his analysis and the scientific data he was citing, while Littlemore, clearly flustered, stammered painfully throughout the debate and made multiple serious gaffes (for example, claiming that melting Arctic sea ice would raise sea levels, when melting sea ice in fact has no effect on sea level).

On Littlemore's own DeSmog Blog, even his most ardent supporters conceded that Littlemore was taking it on the chin throughout the debate.

"Richard, you've got to show them you've got more than insults," wrote one sympathetic DeSmog Blog reader.

"I'd have to say that Monckton 'won' the debate. He came across as more prepared and had answers at his fingertips, whereas Richard appeared to verbally stumble on occasion," wrote another.

After the debate ended, Littlemore himself admitted defeat on his DeSmog Blog.

"In hindsight," wrote Littlemore, "I played perfectly into the hands of Monckton and his happy radio host, Roy Green, who share the same goal -- not to win an argument about global warming science, but merely to show that there still IS an argument. Of course there's not. But while we danced angels around the head of a pin, I can imagine Green's listeners thinking, 'Oh my. This is very confusing. No wonder the government says it's too early to take action.'

"Score one for Monckton. ... Thanks (and my apologies) to those of you who volunteered some much-preferable debating strategies. Maybe next time."

While Littlemore blamed Monckton and the moderator for his poor showing, the reality is that poor showings by global warming alarmists are par for the course. On March 14, 2007, an audience at New York City's prestigious Intelligence Squared debating society declared three prominent global warming skeptics the winners in a debate against three prominent global warming alarmists.

The debate was taped by National Public Radio (NPR) and distributed to NPR affiliates across the nation. A pre-debate poll indicated that by a 2-to-1 margin (57 percent to 29 percent, with 14 percent undecided) the on-site audience believed global warming has become a crisis. After the debate, however, the audience indicated by 46 percent to 42 percent they do not believe global warming is a crisis, with 12 percent undecided.

Since the 2007 Intelligence Squared debate, prominent global warming alarmists such as Al Gore, James Hansen, Michael Mann, Gavin Schmidt, Susan Solomon, etc., have refused to publicly debate the science and defend their assertions.

Transcription and analysis by James M. Taylor (taylor@heartland.org), a senior fellow of The Heartland Institute.