

WEBCommentary Editor

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ABC Journalism: Fraudulent or Truthful?

ABC's Dan Harris smears respected physicist, Dr. Fred Singer as a "global warming denier"

The only useful measure of the value of journalism is the degree to which an article informs the public with objective truth. On that basis, the recent article by ABC (Global Warming Denier: Fraud or 'Realist'? Physicist Says Humans Will Benefit From Warmer Planet - Dan Harris) scores an abysmal zero.

ABC News' recent smear of Dr. Fred Singer is reproduced on its web site (story dated March 23, 2008, "Global Warming Denier: Fraud or 'Realist'/Physicist Says Humans Will Benefit From Warmer Planet"). That story is dissected below with appropriate comments.

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The article begins, *His fellow scientists call him a fraud, a charlatan and a showman ...* which is neither true nor objective. Further, it is a smear as it fails to identify any of the claimed "fellow scientists" (how very convenient!).

The article continues: *Singer, an 84-year-old Princeton-trained physicist, is the grandfather of the global warming skeptics who dispute the established scientific consensus that global warming is real, that it is caused by the pollution humans are pumping into the atmosphere, and that it will be catastrophic if measures are not taken immediately.*

Why is age important here? Is ABC's intent to put Dr. Singer in a box labeled "old fool"? If so, then it's failed to consider that his age suggests wisdom and subject-matter knowledge far beyond that evidenced by the writers of this article. While Dr. Singer is certainly a key player in the scientific effort to inject perspective and sanity into the global warming issue, I suggest the characterization of Dr. Singer as the "grandfather of the global warming skeptics" is inaccurate because the truth is (that terribly inconvenient "truth") that real science, historic climate, and the scientific method are the principal foundation upon which skepticism of the IPCC/Gore theory are built. As a scientist (mathematician) who has had a strong fascination and interest in both meteorology and climatology for over 50 years, I have studied paleoclimatology and earth sciences throughout my adult life. As anyone with a similar background in the scientific method and scientific inquiry would understand, virtually any nominal interest and associated knowledge in these areas is sufficient to cast serious doubt on the theories professed by policymakers of the IPCC and Mr. Gore that Dan Harris supports. Then there is the inconvenient science that completely debunks the unsustainable conclusions of the IPCCs Summary Reports (note that March 1, 2007 through February 29, 2008 was the coldest global 12 months in many decades, losing nearly 1°C).

The paragraph under scrutiny also contains several conjectures that are simply not true. First, of course, being that Dr. Singer is the "grandfather" of skeptics when, in fact, science and truth are the grandfather of skeptics. Second is the brazen statement that there is "scientific consensus" that humans are causing global warming. That is an oft-repeated claim whose veracity is simply not reflected in any true assessment of the positions of subject-matter experts (i.e., those trained in climatology, meteorology, and/or atmospheric science). Next is the totally unsupportable claim that human "pollution" pumped into the atmosphere will cause catastrophic warming. First, climate warming has historically been associated with advances in human civilization (the Minoan warm period, the

Roman warm period, and the Medieval warm period - each of which were warmer than anything we've experienced in the 20th-21st centuries - are all testimony to that truth). When climate cools, civilization struggles. Witness the demise of settlers of Greenland (no longer "green"). It is preposterous to claim that greater plant yields, longer growing seasons, and more benign weather will increase human strife. Would ABC prefer lesser plant yields, shorter growing seasons, and more severe cold?

So after only two paragraphs of ABC's story, ABC's position is revealed to be biased propaganda based on conjecture and theory without any substantiation in the long history of both climate and human civilization. Are you beginning to understand why this story rates a journalistic value of zero?

Next paragraph: *"All bunk," Singer told ABC News in his characteristically blunt fashion. "I'm not really looking for popularity, you know." Singer seems to enjoy being provocative.*

If being intelligent, understanding science, and the scientific method amount to being "provocative" then Dr. Singer is truly provocative. Scientific truth is not determined by what is popular (neither is it determined by consensus).

The smear continues: *Singer does not deny the planet is warming, but says man is not the cause, and argues, against overwhelming scientific evidence, that a warmer planet will actually be beneficial for mankind and other species on the planet.*

As has been addressed above, there is no scientific evidence that a warmer climate would be more detrimental to humans than a colder climate. No real journalist would take issue without presenting rational, objective facts in support of the contrary view. There is a mountain of scientific fact on the side of so-called "skeptics." There is nothing but faulty analyses (remember the infamous, now discredited, "Hockey Stick" curve made famous by the IPCC?), inaccurate computer projections (simulations are based on incomplete science, inadequate data, and complete lack of adequate solar/water vapor contributions), and contradicted theory supporting the so-called "consensus" on global warming (atmospheric CO2 and global temperature over the past 100 years are completely *uncorrelated* and certainly not bound by a "cause and effect" relationship).

Moving on: *Polar bears, though, are not likely to benefit. They are starving because the Arctic ice cap is shrinking, which is cutting them off from seal populations, and some scientists have suggested they will be extinct in the wild before the end of this century if the warming trend is not reversed.*

ABC needs to do better research. Hasn't anyone at ABC noticed that the Arctic ice cap freezes every winter? Doesn't ABC know that melting only occurs during the summer season when the sun is out full time? What does that suggest about the role of solar activity in polar warming? Is ABC not aware that this past winter the Arctic sea refroze far beyond what had been lost in recent melting and that scientists now believe that ocean currents, not "global warming" are responsible for periodic warming/melting episodes in the Arctic? Has nobody at ABC bothered to follow the unusually bitter cold in the Arctic this past winter? It is now spring and the sun has risen and there are still polar regions whose temperatures do not exceed -20°F? Is ABC unaware of past natural warming episodes (through which the polar bear have survived quite nicely) that have been far greater than anything Earth is currently experiencing? Is ABC so ignorant about paleoclimatology that it knows nothing about ice eras, ice epochs, and ice age cycles? Are there no scientists at ABC who know that all of human existence is contained within the current ice era that began 60 million years ago - and that humans have never experienced Earth's typical climate? That typical climate being what Earth has experienced more than 83% of the past 2.5 billion years (since complex organisms first appeared) during which there is no polar ice and the only permanent ice exists at the tops of the highest mountains. If the folks at ABC are unaware of these natural climate cycles, then they have no business smearing Dr. Singer who does know.

ABC's smear goes on: *This is not the first time Singer has set himself against mainstream scientific opinion. He has also challenged the dangers of second-hand smoke, toxic waste and nuclear winter.*

Then ABC quotes from Greenpeace: *"He's kind of a career skeptic," said Kert Davies, a global warming specialist at Greenpeace. "He believes that environmental problems are all overblown and he's made a career on being that voice."*

Does ABC really expect to find a voice of reason and scientific knowledge at Greenpeace? The truth behind Dr. Singer's skepticism is that he believes the claims made are way overblown - exaggerated. That doesn't mean he believes there is no place for rational concern for reasonable environmental protection. Their long record of radical, extremist views renders Greenpeace an inappropriate organization to seek objective, rational, proportionate views about environmental protection. It is hardly an organization that should be sought for counsel about the views of Dr. Singer (unless, of course, one is determined to shine the worst possible light on Dr. Singer, i.e., smear him).

ABC continues with: *Davies says skeptics like Singer, many of them funded for years by the oil and coal industry, have been able to delay government action on global warming by a decade or more by convincing the public through a disinformation campaign that there was an ongoing debate among scientists about global warming. "That's how people will remember Fred Singer, as someone who tried to slow down the reaction to global warming," Davies said. "And in the end that is going to cost lost lives, lost species and major economic damage around the world."*

Facts are: (1) There IS an "ongoing debate" as there should be (people like Davies do not want a debate because it would only serve to discredit their position). (2) In any scientific inquiry, debate is at the heart of rigorous pursuit of the truth. (3) Many so-called "skeptics" have no association with the oil or gas industry. Many "scientists" who support the theory of human-caused global warming have benefited from billions of dollars spent on global warming research as a result of the exaggerated claims of the IPCC and Al Gore. But truth doesn't rest on where the funding comes from ... it is in the results of how that funding is used. Much of the scientific research conducted during 2006 and 2007 (all of which were specifically excluded from the most recent IPCC reports) discredits the greenhouse warming scenario posited by the IPCC, Al Gore, and Greenpeace. The "disinformation campaign" is headed by Greenpeace and ABC, who want no debate on the topic.

In his book, *Global Warming, Myth or Reality/The Erring Ways of Climatology* (2005), Dr. Marcel Leroux, renowned French climatologist, studied the roles of various climate change forces and concluded that the greenhouse effect (while a heat retention agent), is well down the list of significant influences on climate change (no surprise, solar activity leads the list). Dr. Leroux is not a stooge of the oil and gas industry, either.

Davies is right about one thing. Dr. Singer may well be remembered for his contribution to scientific sanity by his efforts to slow down the rush to take costly actions that will have absolutely no benefits whatsoever to Earth's environment. Foolhardy pursuit of carbon dioxide emission reductions will be costly and provide no measurable benefit to human endeavor. Much like the recent ban on incandescent lightbulbs (beginning in 2012), either no cost-benefit analysis of global warming legislation is performed, or that which is generated has a fraudulent cost basis (i.e., it includes the "cost" of conjectured dire consequences if no action is taken - which is nonsense). These facts don't seem to bother either Davies (whose organization profits from the proliferation of disinformation about global warming) or ABC. To paraphrase: *and in the end, the actions of Greenpeace and ABC will cost jobs, quality of life, standard of living, and major economic catastrophe around the world for absolutely no benefit whatsoever.*

The smear goes on: *Singer responds by asking, "Suppose the other side is wrong.... They're forcing us to make tremendous economic sacrifices that will force people into poverty in the world, make life miserable for our children and grandchildren." But scientists say there is no "other side." The debate about global warming is over, they say.*

What "scientists" are saying there is no "other side"? ABC's failure to name any suggests they've made this up. No scientist ... I repeat ... NO SCIENTIST of good repute will ever state that there is no "other

side" to a scientific question. This is particularly true of issues involving sciences as incompletely understood as climatology, meteorology, and atmospheric sciences.

The smearing concludes with: *ABC News showed Singer's most recent report on global warming to climate scientists from NASA, from Stanford University and from Princeton. They dismissed it as "fabricated nonsense." Singer insists he is not on the payroll of the energy industry, but admits he once accepted an unsolicited check from Exxon for \$10,000.*

Failing to reveal what "scientists" at NASA, Stanford University and Princeton were consulted, and failing to reveal the rationale for ABC's contention that they universally reacted the same, suggests that ABC is being less than forthright in its statement. To put it bluntly, it suggests Dan Harris lied. Of course, consulting NASA about truth in global warming is a bit risky given that for years they falsely claimed the 1990s were the hottest decade with 1998 being the hottest year of the past century, when, in truth, 1934 was the hottest year and the 1930s were the hottest decade of the past 100 years. So much for "unprecedented" warming. NASA quietly revealed in August 2007 that it had erred in its computations and corrections restored the 1930s as being the hottest decade and containing the hottest year. That being the truth, I would then ask ABC's "scientists", if the IPCC/Gore theory that higher atmospheric CO2 produces global warming, how is it that the 1930s were the hottest decade of the past 100 years in a period of continuing increases in atmospheric CO2? They might also want to comment on why global temperatures since 1998 have been either steady or dropping. These are facts readily available to ABC's story authors. They are questions that should have been asked, but were not.

The reference to a single grant of \$10,000 years ago (for what work?) if proving that Dr. Singer was corrupted suggests that government funding of billions of dollars in recent years for global warming research has far more vastly corrupted the results of that research. Neither claim has any veracity, yet ABC uses the old smear tactic of leaving that as the last thought of readers.

ABC's story is a classic case of disinformation, distortion, smearing, and journalistic abuse. It is a shining example of why our Fourth Estate has become the new Fifth Column. It is virtually devoid of any truth. It is presented with a highly biased viewpoint. It is close-minded. It is, quite frankly, mere propaganda. The complete lack of scientific credentials of anyone named in the story (other than Dr. Singer) or any of the story's authors, demonstrates the ABC story is a fraud.

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Biography - Bob Webster

Bob Webster is a descendent of Daniel Webster's brother Ezekiel. Bob has always had a strong interest in history, our Constitution, U.S. politics and law. A political conservative with objectivist and libertarian roots, he has faith in the ultimate triumph of truth and reason over deception and emotion. He is a strong believer in our Constitution as written and views the abandonment of constitutional restraint as a great danger to our Republic. His favorite novel is *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand and believes it should be required reading for every high school student.

A lifelong interest in meteorology and climatology spurred his strong interest in science. Bob earned his degree in Mathematics at Virginia Tech, graduating in 1964.

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