

07/2010

Re: Climate Then and Now

Dear Editor,

Owen Dykema (RG, 7/17/2010) is proof that a "university education" is no obstacle to ignorance. He doesn't mention his area of specialty but among the 32,000 self described scientists in the discredited Oregon Petition, only 1/3 identify as climate, atmospheric or earth scientists (almost half are engineers, doctors and DVMs, along with those who marked "general science" as their specialty), though based on a survey by Scientific American less than half of those contacted with a climate related PhD said they still agreed with the petition.

In fact according to a recent study by Doran and Zimmerman 97% of climate researchers agree that human activity is responsible for the observed temperature rise in the latter half of the 20th century and continuing unabated today. It should be recalled that until a series of La Nina cycles ended last year we were still being treated to a chorus of "no warming in the last decade". Now that temperatures have returned with a vengeance (the last 12 months were the hottest in the history of global instrumental records), the goal posts have moved to "not caused by CO2".

Professional climate scientists know of multiple factors that contributed to temperature variations over the last 500,000 years, and they also know these factors operate on geologic time scales and cannot be invoked to explain recent observations. What is occurring today is that humans are generating emissions with well understood "greenhouse" physical properties, well above levels ever recorded during the last half million years.

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