

July 9, 2011

Dear Editor,

One wonders whether Richard Rochon (letters, 7/9/2001) is being disingenuous or merely ignorant with claims that scientists predicted an imminent ice age in the 1970s. But confirmation bias is usually the case in such instances as when a friend of mine claimed that 1934 was the hottest year on record. He was right too, but only for the contiguous 48 states (and only until the last decade). Some Americans forget that the US is only 2% of the earth's surface.

As for Rochon, if he checked his facts more carefully he would have found that yes, a few scientists at that time had noted (with much over reporting in the popular press) that on geological time scales, the earth is likely to enter another ice age due to orbital insolation effects, but not for thousands of years. And that even in the 1970s the scientific consensus, as summarized by the National Research Council (1977) and the JASON committee report (1979), found that "carbon dioxide released during the burning of fossil fuels, can have consequences for climate that pose a considerable threat to future society".

Now Rochon can claim to know this is a natural cycle, but then he should explain why these reports not only predicted "at current fossil fuel use rates, atmospheric CO₂ likely to double by 2035..." and this would "perturb... climate by altering the radiative properties of the atmosphere", and also accurately predicted the now observed 4 to 5 times greater warming at the poles.

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