

WITH Dr. Tim Ball, Historical Climatologist



DR. TIM BALL has an extensive scientific background in climatology, especially the reconstruction of past climates and the impact of climate change on human history. He is Chair of the National Resources Stewardship Project, a non-profit project that promotes responsible environmental stewardship. He is also a regular contributing writer for *Country Guide* magazine and a researcher/author of numerous papers on climate, long-range weather patterns, the impacts of climate change on sustainable agriculture, ecosystems, historical climatology, air quality, untapped energy resources, silting and flooding. He had a long academic career at the University of Winnipeg until he moved to Victoria in 1996. He has a BA from the University of Winnipeg, an MA from the University of Manitoba and a PH.D (Doctor of Science) from the University of London, England. He was interviewed after his speech to a sold-out Frontier luncheon, January 26, 2007.

Frontier Centre: We're sitting down again almost three years after our last interview. Have the prospects for a fact-based discussion of climate change improved or worsened?

Tim Ball: There was a brief glimmer of hope the Conservatives would invite a wider dialogue. That has not happened to date. Indeed, a Commons committee debating Bill 268, designed to force Canada to implement Kyoto, invited only people who accept that warming and or climate change is due to humans. By passing this Bill we force ourselves to implement; without it there is no outside mechanism to force us to act. No, prospects have not improved.

FC: Are you now more optimistic or more pessimistic about a productive conclusion to the debate?

TB: In the short term, pessimistic, because of the effective blitz and the bias of the media. In the long term, more optimistic because, as they become more shrill and silly in their positions, that will start people asking questions. Once someone in the media realizes the bigger story is the deception, it will be a stampede.

FC: Although you put a merry face on it, you face a lot of guff in your dealings with the mainstream media. Are they more balanced or less on this issue than in 2004?

TB: Less balanced, for three main reasons. One, they let their own biases influence them and, two, they don't understand the science. Students who have had the total experience of being indoctrinated in the classroom are now working in the mainstream media.

FC: All this momentum is rolling in defence of so-called "science," but can we have you list the respects in which the conventional scientific community has missed the boat on climate change? Start with the relationship between higher temperatures and levels of atmospheric carbon. What does the record show?

TB: As Richard Lindzen said, the consensus was reached before the research had even begun. The evidence that has emerged since the theory was almost instantly accepted as fact includes the following:

1. The CO² record does not match the temperature record at any point in the earth's history. Indeed, the ice-core record clearly shows that temperatures changed before CO² levels did, not the reverse, as hypothesized.
2. CO² is less than 4% of the total greenhouse gases while water vapour is 95% by volume.
3. Climate changes significantly all the time in very short periods. It was warmer in the 1930s than today, and it was warmer 1000 years ago than today.
4. The sun causes climate change in three ways, orbital and tilt changes, electromagnetic (heat and light) and corpuscular (solar wind). Only one of these is usually considered as pertinent, yet even the IPCC now concedes it explains over 50% of the temperature change in the modern record.

FC: You show that climate change is a function of cosmic, not human forces. What does your analysis of sunspot cycles tell you about our prospects for long-term global warming?

TB: Basically, when sunspots are active, the earth is warmer and, when they are less active, it is colder. We are currently entering cycle 24 and Russian and Chinese scientists are predicting cycle 25 will have much diminished activity and thereby will be colder. NASA has also said there will be fewer sunspots for cycle 25 (circa 2030), but they have not said it will cause colder conditions because they ignore the relationship in all their other predictions.

FC: Alarmists point to the rapidity of climate change as evidence of some sort that humans cause it. But you've shown that swift changes in weather patterns are normal. Could you describe the proof?

TB: The underlying philosophy of nature and world view of western education is called uniformitarianism. This holds that change is rapid and significant all the time.

You only have to look at any climate record on any time scale to see this. For example, in 1970 the scientific consensus was that we were heading for another Ice Age. On a longer scale, notice that most of the record cold temperatures for Canada were in the late 19th century. Further back, we have the Little Ice Age with a metre of ice on the Thames and other evidence of cold from around the world. Vikings were farming in Greenland in soil that is now permafrost.

FC: What about open ice in the Arctic? Is that a new phenomenon?

TB: No. The Vikings were sailing in Arctic waters that are now permanent pack ice. Every year, the 16 million square kilometres of pack ice melts down to approximately 6 million square kilometres. So about 10 million square kilometres melts every summer. The records are only accurate from 1980 to the present, and they show some variability but little significant change. So far this winter, the ice has developed ahead of schedule and is almost at its maximum extent right now.

FC: Did you notice the suggestion from the Weather Channel's Heidi Cullen that the American Meteorological Society decertify members who disagree with the theory of manmade global warming?

TB: Yes, I did notice and she properly got severely dressed down by meteorologists in the Society. All you have to know is Ms. Cullen has co-authored articles with Michael Mann of "hockey stick" fame.

FC: The data projections in Mann's infamous "hockey stick" graph have been completely debunked, yet you still see it in UN literature. What's that about?

TB: In today's world, if you repeat something often enough, it becomes the truth. As James Callaghan, a former British PM said, "The lie is half way round the world before the truth has got its boots on." I believe the hockey stick is still on Environment Canada's web page, or at least it was until very recently. I would be surprised if there is any reference to it in the upcoming IPCC report.

FC: Can you describe the problem carbon-dumping theorists face if their climate models ignore water vapour?

TB: They essentially ignore water vapour by saying it is constant when we know it isn't. It's just that we don't have adequate measurements. The only way they use water vapour is because there is an upper limit to the amount of temperature increase due to CO² (the "painted window" effect I explained in my talk). They assume it will increase atmospheric water vapour and create a positive feedback. There is no evidence to support this approach.

Indeed, it is much more likely the water vapour will create more cloud, which will block the sun and cause a negative feedback. The blunt fact is that CO² on its own cannot make the predictions of temperature they claim happen, and all the claims are based on such models.

FC: Is the political dialogue in Canada inevitably headed towards some form of carbon-dumping tax?

TB: No, the world carbon trading market is collapsing for a variety of reasons, including various countries who are lying about emissions. I am much more fearful of Draconian carbon taxes which will seriously inhibit business competitiveness. I have pleaded to the PMO for only positive incentives if they must have any.

FC: You told us, when Stéphane Dion was federal environment minister, that he had privately assured you he would give critics of climate change extremism a chance to present their views. Do you still believe that?

TB: No. Dion told me he didn't want to be in politics. He has clearly changed his view. and in doing so has become the same conniving animal as usual among today's politicians. The biggest concerns I have are the bureaucrats. When it comes to climate science, uninformed politicians are totally at the mercy of their bureaucrats.

FC: The Conservatives thought they were getting throttled on global warming, so they flipped. Do you think the regulations on lawnmowers and snowmobiles proposed by the Harper government will help save the planet?

TB: This is so silly you don't know whether to laugh or cry. I recall when California banned barbecue fluid because it was causing global warming. They ignored the fact that one military jet probably burned more fuel in one flight than all the barbecues in California in a year. All this does for me is emphasize the Puritanism that underlies so much environmentalism. A Puritan is defined as a person who believes that somewhere, somehow, somebody is having a good time.

FC: That's another whipping boy of late, atmospheric pollution from jet aircraft. Yet Canada's average air quality is still improving. Is this another fantasy problem?

TB: I am not so sure on this one and I think more research needs to be done. The only research I have seen suggests there is no problem and it does tend to fit the Puritanical approach. However, most commercial jets in winter fly in the stratosphere. Here the air is very thin, so exhausts become a much larger percentage of the total. In the troposphere, I don't see it as a problem. However, forcing them to fly in the troposphere all the time would decrease fuel efficiency.

FC: If orgies of carbon dumping are the cause of every extreme weather event imaginable, was the absence of major hurricanes last year registered as a plus?

TB: No! They came up with the excuse that El Nino suppressed hurricanes. El Nino did start to develop and Hansen at NASA, Gore's advisor, predicted a severe event and severe weather. It has virtually dissipated over the last couple of months and was not likely strong enough to suppress hurricanes. They are wrong with El Nino virtually every time.

FC: A study released shortly before the west coast's recent deluge of storms predicted global warming will turn B.C. into a desert. Should the study's backers demand a refund?

TB: Forecasters have the only job in the world where you can be consistently wrong and still get paid. I am not sure they ever had much credibility. I think they should do multiple choice, deduct wrong from right and pay them accordingly.

The bad west-coast weather was easily predictable, because Alaska had record cold in November. As the cold air pushed south, it increased storm intensity, which is fuelled by temperature contrasts. The storms were then directed along the cold front and channeled right through southern B.C. When they hit Prince Rupert, which is the more normal situation, nobody cares. Ironically, the storms were due to colder temperatures, not warmer ones.

FC: The CBC interviewed one expert from storm-battered Stanley Park who made a lot of sense, but he was drowned out by the howls from everyone else about manmade global warming. Has the din out there reached a fever pitch?

TB: Among the west-coast fanatics, since there are many of them, it is always at a fever pitch. B.C. does you a favour by harbouring them. I flew over the Park twice last Monday and most of the damage is concentrated in one small ocean-facing side. Of course, like all natural disasters it is nature's way of thinning the herd. Unfortunately for hikers and cyclists, nature does the pruning but she doesn't do the cleanup. Or at least she lets it take time, so nutrients are formed and build back into the system.

FC: You've been attacked as being in the pay of "big oil." (The Frontier Centre isn't, by the way, but we will take their money if it's offered.) Is it true?

TB: I'm charged with that all the time. I just finished a CBC radio program out of Saskatchewan, and that was the opening theme of the interviewer. Later an e-mail writer said I was paid by "big oil" and he had proof from friends at Environment Canada.

The only possible oil connection is when eight of us went to Ottawa to challenge then environment minister David Anderson's comment that he had consulted all the climate experts. An organization called Friends of Science paid my expenses. That organization apparently has received a small amount of money from an oil company.

But the money was funnelled through the University of Calgary and I had no knowledge of it. I understand that no energy company is currently funding primary climate research. Compare this with the billions of dollars—six billion since 1997, according to the recent Auditor General's report—spent by Environment Canada, all of it directed in support of their policy that the science is over, that human loading of atmospheric CO² is causing a problem.

FC: The "Earth Charter Initiative" started by Maurice Strong and other like-minded people is basically saying that Western societies have to cut back their consumption of goods and lead simpler lives closer to home. Is that what our future will be?

TB: No. As Strong and others present it, it is naïve. It is an extension of the Club of Rome and Limits to Growth mentality that proved completely false. What will happen, if people like Strong and the rest will allow it to happen, is that business, industry and society will use innovation and invention to solve the problems. Contrary to what people are led to believe, society in China and other developing nations with their legions of poor are benefiting from multinationals and development.



The Frontier Centre for Public Policy is an independent public policy think tank whose mission is to explore options for the future by undertaking research and education that supports economic growth and opportunity. You can contact the Centre at: Suite 25 – Lombard Concourse, One Lombard Place • Winnipeg, Manitoba CANADA R3B 0X3 • Tel: (204) 957-1567 Fax: (204) 957-1570 • E-mail: newideas@fcpp.org • www.fcpp.org