
The Alarmist ‘Science’ Behind Global Warming

Lord Nigel Lawson, Britain’s Chancellor of the Exchequer during the Thatcher years and author of Appeal to Reason: A Cool Look at Global Warming, was interviewed by Gregory Murphy on July 10.

EIR: I’d like to start with you describing how hard it was to get your book published.

Lawson: Well, I decided to write this book, and I gave the outline to my agent. And he thought it would be fine. But there was extraordinary resistance to it, so he said, you’d better write it first. This is very odd, because I’ve published books before, and each time, I have just given an outline of the book, and had absolutely no difficulty finding a publisher before the book was written. But, it wasn’t like that this time.

So I wrote it. Even then, he sent it to any number of London publishers, and couldn’t get anybody to take it. It was quite clear that it was so politically incorrect that they wouldn’t take it. Eventually, he found an American publisher—Peter Mayer—who has a small London subsidiary, and that’s how it came to be published. But it was very striking. That is to say, it’s not something that I’ve ever come across before, and I’ve written a number of books.

EIR: Would the subject matter of the book have been part of the problem in finding a publisher?



Courtesy of Nigel Lawson

Lord Nigel Lawson

Lawson: Yes, it was indeed. It was not so much the subject-matter, because there’s a lot of interest in the subject. But it was the fact that I took a view that was not politically correct: There’s a kind of informal censorship—in England, anyway—that it is not considered acceptable to hold a view which is contrary to the new religion of global warming.

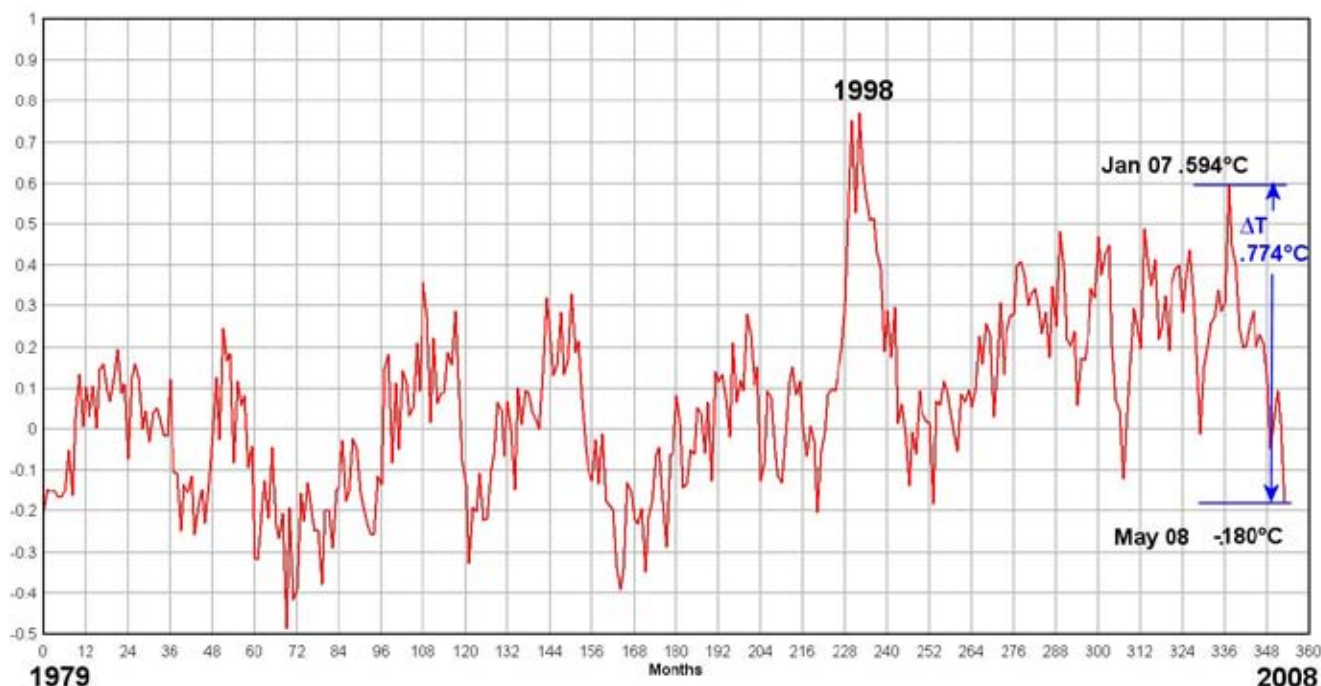
EIR: Your hearings in the House of Lords, in the Committee on Economic Affairs, produced a report, which I found quite helpful in sorting out some of the details on this highly uncertain science of climate. I found it quite balanced in how it was being presented, because you had both Sir John Houghton, first chairman of the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and noted MIT climate researcher Richard Lindzen speak on it. So you could see both sides. Did you gain in your understanding on the climate from that kind of discussion, as a policy-maker?

Lawson: Yes. Before that inquiry, I was extremely skeptical of the economic sense in the policy which was being recommended by the government and by governments in Europe at the time. But I assumed that the science was absolutely clear—cut and dried. It was only in the course of that inquiry that I discovered that there was considerable uncertainty about the science—not uncertainty as to whether there’s such a thing as the “greenhouse effect”; there obviously is such a thing as the greenhouse effect. But how large an effect it is, is extremely uncertain.

It depends—as you well know—on complicated things in the interaction between carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and

FIGURE 1

UAH Monthly Means of Lower Troposphere LT5.2, Global Temperature Anomaly 1979-2008 (Temperature °C)



Anthony Watts/surfacestations.org

The graph shows the University of Alabama at Huntsville (UAH) monthly temperatures for the lower Troposphere, taken by satellite since 1979, proving that Al Gore's "global warming" ended in 1998. From January 2007 until May 2008, the temperature decrease has been .774°C, which is larger than all of Gore's hyped global warming for the entire 20th Century, which was only .6°C.

clouds, among other things. And the science of clouds is extremely uncertain. It's not a criticism of the scientists; it is extremely complex.

And so, I discovered in the course of this inquiry, that it was not merely that the economic prescription was, in my opinion, not cost effective—and even if it was cost-effective, nobody had looked to see whether it was cost-effective at that time. But even the science itself was uncertain.

Global Warming and Iraq's 'WMD'

EIR: After the House of Lords report was released, Prime Minister Gordon Brown had Lord Nicholas Stern produce a report, which you described in the lecture that you gave to the Center on Policy Studies, as, in a very real sense, the story of the Iraq War writ large. Could you elaborate on that?

Lawson: What I had in mind there, was that the Iraq War was based on the alleged threat of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. And that without looking into it sufficiently clearly, the United States and the United Kingdom, and one or two other countries, went to war to get rid of the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, which it subsequently turned out they didn't have in the first place. And they hadn't been properly looked at, properly investigated.

In a similar way, we're now told, [that there is a threat] of

mass destruction of the planet by warming. And then panic measures are introduced, even though the threat is *hugely exaggerated* (see **Figure 1**). Quite a similarity.

EIR: You have referred to the alarmist Stern Report in your book, as another "dodgy dossier." Which I thought was a very good comparison, because that's the sense I got when I read it back in 2006. But I noticed one thing: The prevailing media want to use the word "climate change" in their discussion of this issue. In your book, you stayed with the term "global warming." Is there a reason that you stayed with that?

Lawson: Yes, I do it very deliberately. Because, of course, the climate is always changing all the time, and in different parts of the world, in different ways. And so therefore, there is evidence of some kind of change in the climate.

But that is not what the issue is: The issue is, whether in fact, globally, the Earth is getting warmer. If so, what is this caused by? Is it largely man-made carbon dioxide concentrations, or is it totally different reasons? And which [one] has a huge bearing on what is sensible to do about it; and of course, how big is the threat?

And, if there is no warming, which so far this century—although the century's young—but so far this century, there's been no further warming. If there is no further warming, the



Council of the EU



Lord Nigel Lawson compares the alarmist “Stern Report” on climate change, authored by Nicholas Stern (left), to Tony Blair’s “dodgy dossier,” which “documented” Iraq’s non-existent weapons of mass destruction.

fact that there may be storms somewhere in the world, or unusual weather patterns somewhere, is really nothing new, and may have nothing to do with carbon dioxide concentrations.

The “greenhouse effect” can only cause other changes via warming. And if the warming isn’t happening, then the climatic variation is for different reasons altogether. And even if the warming is happening, there’s a question of how much of it is, as they say, due to the carbon dioxide. So, we need to focus on what the issue is. And the issue is, the issue of warming and why, and how serious is it?

Implausible Assumptions

EIR: Yes, that’s exactly the sense I’ve been trying to convey in the articles I’ve written so far. I noticed that in most of your presentations that I’ve looked at, you have pushed the prescription of adaptability as the proper method to deal with warming (if there is any), as opposed to the IPCC’s carbon-cutting, emission-trading systems—what they call “mitigation.”

The IPCC spends very little time describing that adaptability, and basically they use assumptions that say, this really couldn’t work too well. Could you describe some of the assumptions they use?

Lawson: There are two assumptions in particular that they use, which I think are, to say the least, implausible. The first is that they consider adaptation in terms of the technology we have at the present time. But they’re looking 100 years or more ahead: It is quite clear, that over those next 100 years, technology is going to develop; we don’t know precisely how, but it’s unrealistic to think it’s not going to develop, considering how much development of technology there has been in the past hundred years.

It’s going to develop, and therefore, the ability to adapt is going to increase over time. So, to have your fixed point of the adaptation as we can do it at a moment, is an implausible and

unrealistic assumption to base your views on.

The other assumption which is implausible, is, they do admit—they curiously enough state, in terms of Australia and New Zealand, but I suppose it must mean it applies to other developed countries like the United States, and United Kingdom, Europe generally—they say that, it’s all very well, of course, these highly developed countries, wealthy countries, they can adapt to a considerable extent. But the problem is with the developing world: They’re the people who are going to suffer, because they lack—and I put this word in metaphorical quotation marks, but this is a very important concept in the IPCC’s report, if you read it, as I’m sure you have done—“they lack adaptive capacity.”

Now, I think that is patronizing, and misleading on a number of counts: It’s misleading, because many of them, in fact, do have the adaptive capacity now. It’s misleading because the whole assumption of the IPCC is that developing countries are going to grow very fast, and it’s this growth, which leads to the growth of emissions, which leads to their projective temperature increases—they’re going to grow very fast, and as they grow, their adaptive capacity will increase in many cases.

Finally, it’s misleading and false, because, although of course there will be some countries, no doubt, that will be less successful in becoming more economically developed, there, we can help them. We in the West—it is not a huge cost to devote much of our overseas aid programs, to helping them, if it should be the case. But if it should be the case that they need, for example, better sea defenses, we can help them build the sea defenses! The fact that they don’t have the adaptive capacity to do it on their own, doesn’t mean it won’t happen.

So for all those reasons, I think that [the IPCC’s] estimate of the capacity to meet the problem of warming, should it occur, through adaptation, is totally unrealistic, and unduly pessimistic. The result of which, of course, of this inadequate adaptation which they assume, is that they tend to exaggerate what would be the damages caused by global warming, should it occur.

The Benefits from Warming

EIR: Yes, I’ve noticed the really catastrophic consequences that they associate with food production, human health, and the rise in tropical diseases, like malaria—things like that.

Lawson: Yes, they say that. But if you look at each individual thing, it is incorrect. It is quite clear what game they are play-

ing. And I've no doubt that most of them are well-intentioned. But they think they have got to paint the most alarmist picture possible, in order to stir political leaders into action. I'm sure they genuinely believe that action is desirable. But they are deliberately painting an alarmist picture, in order to persuade politicians to take it seriously.

But this is an alarmist picture; it is not an objective picture. And indeed, even if you read the IPCC's own report, you find they contradict themselves time after time. For example, you mentioned two things, food and health: This is based on an inadequate assessment of the capacity to adapt, and in food it's particularly large, because of the development of bioengineering, and genetically modified crops, which is continuing to advance all the time, that technology.

But they say, an increase in temperature of up to 3° Centigrade, which is more than their median forecast for the next hundred years, would actually improve global food production. Which is not surprising, but it's because the warming is often good, and carbon dioxide has this fertilization effect on plants, and they grow better. So, the alarmism is clearly unwarranted, even from their own findings, which are, as I say, unduly pessimistic, because of their inadequate estimate of what can be done, or what would be done, through adaptation.

The other thing, in health: They say all these things about health, but if you look at the table, where they show—this is buried away—the table shows health effects, and the only health effect which they list as virtually certain—the number of grades is “certain” down to “possible”—is reduction of cold-related deaths. But again, in some areas, you don't find this at all.

And right away, along with the whole picture, they underplay the undoubted benefits that come from warming. I'm not saying there aren't damages, too, from warming, should it occur. But you also have to recognize that there are benefits as well, and see what the net effect is. And they downplay the benefits to the most extraordinary degree.

EIR: Yes, that's the assessment I had from looking at their reports.

Lawson: And on the health thing: They downplayed it a little bit in the latest report, the 2007 report. But the big thing in their 2001 report—they say this, and Gore makes much of this in his book and film, “An Inconvenient Truth”—is the huge increase in malaria.

Malaria has very little to do with temperature. That is well known. Prof. Paul Reiter of the Institut Pasteur in Paris, who gave evidence to our Economics Affairs Committee investigation which you referred to earlier, is probably the world's leading authority on malaria—he's a professor of epidemiology. He was associated with the IPCC originally, and he point-



In his super-hyped docu-fraud, “An Inconvenient Truth,” Al Gore asserts that the worldwide increase in malaria is caused by Global Warming. In fact, Lawson states, “malaria has very little to do with temperature.... After all, malaria was endemic in Europe during the little Ice Age!”

ed out that what they had to say about malaria, was plain wrong! After all, malaria was endemic in Europe during the little Ice Age: It's got virtually nothing to do with temperature! And they refused to change what they had written. And so he was forced to resign from the outfit.

You know, they have a message, and they're not interested in expert, scientific evidence, if it conflicts with the message.

In our domestic affairs, we had a heat wave in Europe [in 2003]; I refer to it in my book. It was a regional heat wave, it wasn't a global heat wave, but there was one in Europe. And there were a number of deaths, particularly in France, for particular reasons of elderly people, as a result of dehydration.

And the Ministry of Health in this country, was sufficiently concerned about it, to have a study about what would be the consequences for health if the predictions of the conventional computer models of temperature increase by 2050 were to occur, what would be the health result by 2050? And they found that there would be, by that time, 2,000 more deaths a year from dehydration; and 20,000 a year *fewer* deaths from hypothermia! But you very seldom hear this pointed out.

And, there was, incidentally, a French academic study done about France, where they'd suffered the most from this heat wave, which came to the same conclusion.

The Globe Cannot Outsource Its Emissions

EIR: Since we've seen the end of the G8 summit in Japan, there's a lot of talk, about cutting emissions. The question I have, is, about the cost to the economy of this. And, if we didn't spend the money on these emission-cutting schemes, is it plausible that we could afford to have health care, fresh water, and real development in the developing countries, which would actually, in turn, cut their emissions?

Lawson: I don't know how much it would cut their emissions, but it would certainly do far more good for the people. It would certainly relieve these problems they do have, of hunger, and drought, and malnutrition, and disease, and premature death. It would certainly help them far, far, more. And it would also actually cost considerably less.

EIR: Yes, that's the sense I had. You've written in your book, and said in your other presentations, that the biggest problem right now in the developing world is massive poverty.

Lawson: That's right.

EIR: And impeding their use of carbon-based fuels to further their development, will actually do more harm to them, than global warming ever could.

Lawson: That's absolutely right. And that is why I think it is most unlikely, that either China or India—I think it sounds like Russia will, too, or one or two other big countries—but it's certainly most unlikely that either China or India will agree to cut back their emissions drastically, which is what they're told they should do, as we are told we should do. And I think it's most unlikely. And even if they were to sign up for it, for a quiet life, I'm quite sure they wouldn't, in fact, implement it.

And if they take that view of signing up and not implementing it, they are doing no worse than those of us who did sign up to ratify the Kyoto agreement, and have done [nothing]—because that was only a 5% reduction of carbon dioxide emissions, but, in fact, it is quite clear that if anything, there is going to be at least a 5% *increase* [in emissions] by the end of the Kyoto period. And, of course, it really wouldn't be much bigger than that.

I think this is something people don't fully realize, and I don't think I spelled it out with sufficient clarity in my book: The reason that the Kyoto signatories have missed the target by a relatively small amount—instead of a 5% reduction, it's something like a 5% increase—is because they have, in a sense, outsourced their emissions. Because so much of manufacturing industry has moved from the developed world to China and India, and parts of the developing world, that the emissions are no longer coming from the developed world, which has made it relatively easy for us to have a lower growth of emissions. But if you are seeking—which they are in the G8 meetings—a global cutback, there's no way the globe can outsource its emissions to Mars or wherever.

Selling Indulgences

EIR: When you think about these emissions-cutting schemes, it brings the medieval indulgences back to mind. It's really: You can sin all you want, but as long as you can pay, you're okay, and somehow that's going to solve the problems: And that was not the case then, nor is it the case now.

Lawson: No, I think that, looking back, the sale of indulgences by the medieval Church, was much less damaging, much less harmful, than what is proposed now.

EIR: Yes, definitely. Considering now, you have a rise of this, what you described as “eco-fundamentalism,” this moving into the Age of Unreason—

Lawson: Yes, which is very worrying.

EIR: Yes, you have [global warming alarmist scientist] James Hansen, the other day, making statements that skeptics and oil executives should be put on trial for crimes against humanity!

Lawson: It is, it is. It's a very alarming trend.