

When I Covered Climate Change for Reuters I Thought CO2 Was to Blame for Rising Temperatures. I Was Wrong

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The BBC and the mainstream media regularly frighten everyone with the latest climate disaster news with pictures of floods, fires and hurricanes, always followed by scary predictions that things will only get worse unless mankind mends its irresponsible ways.

My alma mater *Reuters*, the global news agency, used to be above all this hysteria and would relentlessly apply its traditional standards of fairness and balance, but even this mainstream outfit seems to have sold out to the hysterics and axe grinders.

The trouble is, many if not all of these disaster stories, far from being another step in a worsening scenario, are often nothing of the kind. In a recent book [Unsettled. What Climate Science Tells Us, What It Doesn't, And Why It Matters](#), Steven Koonin uses the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change data to show that if reporters took the trouble to do a minimum amount of checking, most of these incidents would appear to be natural disasters, yes, but not part of some ever worsening syndrome.

Economist [Bjorn Lomborg](#) has been pointing out for years that humans are having an impact on the climate, but technology will be a match for any problems. Current Government plans to combat climate change will squander massive amounts of taxpayers' money and achieve very little in terms of stopping rising global temperature, Lomborg says.

Warmist politicians and lobby groups regularly trash the work of a [significant group of climate experts](#), insulting them with unfounded accusations that they can't be taken seriously because they have barely perceptible links with 'Big Oil' and are 'climate change deniers'. Criticisms are mainly personal and not aimed at their work. Koonin and Lomborg also suffer the unethical 'denier' slur, so let's destroy that canard first.

Every scientist knows the world's climate has been gradually and occasionally irregularly

warming since the last Ice Age over about 10,000 years. Nobody denies the climate is changing. The 'denier' charge is nonsensical. But it performs the useful function of making clear the user knows nothing about climate science. The argument is about the 'why' not the 'if'. Warmists say all the warming is because of man's activity. The rest say some, a little or none.

Education is another area where balance has been replaced by hysteria-inducing propaganda. Children shown demonstrating on the news are often borderline hysterical. No doubt their teachers didn't bother to tell them that man-made global warming is a theory not a proven fact, and that it's okay to talk about different opinions.

If you wonder why much of the mainstream media seem united in accepting that the world will soon die unless humans don hair shirts, freeze in winter and walk instead of driving, you need to know about websites like Covering Climate Now (CCN).

Reuters and some of the biggest names in the news like *Bloomberg*, *Agence France Presse*, *CBS News*, and *ABC News* have signed up to support CCN, which brags that it is an unbiased seeker after the truth. But this claim won't last long if you peer behind the façade. CCN may claim to be fair and balanced, but it not only won't tolerate criticism, it brandishes the unethical 'denier' weapon with its nasty holocaust denier echoes. This seeks to demonise those who disagree with it by savaging personalities and denying a hearing, rather than using debate to establish its case.

CCN advises journalists to routinely add to stories about bad weather and flooding to suggest climate change is making these events more intense. This is not an established fact, as a simple routine check would show.

I asked CCN about the nature of its dealings with *Reuters* and the likes of *Bloomberg*. Was it to thrash out a general approach to climate change reporting or to be more partisan?

CCN hasn't replied.

I have a particular interest in *Reuters'* attitude because I spent 32 years there as a reporter and editor. The global news agency's traditional insistence on high standards in reporting makes this liaison with CCN seem questionable.

When *Reuters* announced its tie-up with CCN in 2019 it said this, among other things.

The (CCN) coalition, which includes more than 350 organisations [there are many more now] has no agenda beyond embracing science and fair coverage and publishing more climate change content.

That is clearly not true. It has a partisan agenda and encourages reporters to dismiss those with contrary opinions as 'deniers'.

The statement went on to quote *Reuters* Editor-in-Chief Stephen J. Adler:

Reuters is committed to providing the most accurate and insightful coverage of the climate crisis, as it threatens the health, safety and economic well-being of people world-wide. Our hope is that our careful, factual reporting will help nations, businesses and individuals respond to the challenge rapidly and intelligently.

The idea of a 'climate crisis' is not widely accepted, but partisans shout about it. It is a very vague claim and hard to define or prove. By *Reuters* standards shouldn't this include a balancing view? Certainly, many people believe that there is such a crisis, but lots of people don't. The idea climate change threatens the health, safety and economic well-being of people worldwide is an assertion, not a fact.

The involvement of *Reuters* in CCN seems to me to be in direct contradiction to three of its 10 Hallmarks of *Reuters* Journalism – Hold Accuracy Sacrosanct, Seek Fair Comment, Strive For Balance and Freedom From Bias.

I asked *Reuters* for its reaction to criticism of its CCN involvement in a new book *Not Zero* by Ross Clark, published by Forum, and it said this in a statement.

Reuters is deeply committed to covering climate change and its impact on our planet with accuracy, independence and integrity, in keeping with the Thomson Reuters Trust Principles.

When I became *Reuters* global Science and Technology Correspondent in the mid-1990s, the global warming story was [top of my agenda](#). Already by then the BBC was scaring us saying we would all die unless humankind mended its selfish ways. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) was the culprit and had to be tamed, then eliminated. I had no reason to think this wasn't true. I was wrong.

My *Reuters* credentials meant that I had easy access to the world's finest climate scientists. To my amazement, none of these would say categorically that the link between CO₂ and global warming, now known as climate change, was a proven scientific fact. Some said human production of CO₂ was a probable cause, others that it might make some contribution; some said CO₂ had no role at all. Everybody agreed that the climate had warmed over the last 10,000 years as the ice age retreated, but most weren't really sure why. The sun's radiation, which changes over time, was a favoured culprit.

My reporting reflected the wide range of views, with *Reuters* typical "on the one hand this, on the other, that" style. But even then, the mainstream media seem to have run out of the energy required, and often lazily went along with the BBC's faulty, opinionated thesis. It was too much trouble to make the point that the BBC's conclusion was challenged by many impressive scientists.

Fast forward 20 years and firm proof CO₂ was warming the climate still hasn't been established, but politics has taken over. Sure, there are plenty of computer models with their hidden assumptions 'proving' man is guilty as charged, and the assumption that we had the power and knowledge to change the climate became embedded.

The Left had lost all of the economic arguments by the 1990s, and its activists eagerly grabbed the chance to say free markets and small government couldn't save us from climate change; only government intervention could do that. Letting capitalism run free was a certain way to ensure the end of the planet; smart Lefties should take charge and save us from ourselves.

The debate about climate change is far from over. I'm not a scientist so I don't know enough to say it's all man-made or not. But politicians and lobbyists have decided that we are all guilty. They are in the process of dismantling our way of life, ordering us to comply because

it's all for the future and our children. If we are going to give up our civilization, at the very least we ought to have an open debate. Journalists need to stand up and be counted. The trouble is that requires bravery and energy, and an urge to question conventional wisdom.

Reuters should be leading this movement. All it has to do is stand by its 10 Hallmarks. And maybe tell CCN thanks but no thanks; it needs to apply *Reuters* principles to its climate reporting.

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