

Christopher Monckton created considerable controversy last week with his article questioning the science that claims human activity is responsible for climate change. # [Readers' responses to Christopher Monckton's first article \[PDF\]](#)

Now he challenges the economic assumptions of the Stern report.

Wrong problem, wrong solution

The Sunday Telegraph, 12/11/2006

In the climate change debate, one figure is real. The Sunday Telegraph's website registered more than 127,000 hits in response to [last week's article](#) revealing that **the UN had minimised the sun's role in changing past and present climate, persisted in proven errors and used unsound data, questionable graphs and meretricious maths to exaggerate future warming threefold.**

The views of 200 readers who emailed me are in the link above. **About a third are scientists, including well-known climatologists and a physicist who confirmed my calculations.** Some advise governments.

Nearly all condemn the "consensus". Most feel that instead of apologising, the UN has misled them, especially by using the defective "hockey-stick" temperature graph.

Here's how an apology is done. Last week I said that James Hansen had told the United States Congress that sea level would rise several feet by 2000, but it was the US Senate, and by 2100; I added a tautologous "per second" to "watts per square metre"; and I mentioned the perhaps apocryphal Arctic voyage of Chen Ho. Sorry.

Sir Nicholas Stern's report on climate-change economics says the world must spend 1 per cent of GDP from now on to avert disaster. The current draft of the UN's 2007 report says up to 5 per cent. Sir Nick's team tell me: "We are confident that the UN will publish a range for costs next year in which ours will be centrally placed." So some quiet high-level co-ordination is going on. The oddest thing about Stern's curious report was its timing. Publication of the UN's next major science assessment is only months ahead. Why not wait and base the economics on that?

The UN needed Stern more than [Stern] needed

the UN. Its 2001 report had numbers more extreme than anyone else's, so sceptics abounded. This time, an international spinfest is shutting off dissent in advance. First, the damage done by the hockey-stick graph had to be repaired, so a series of papers supporting its conclusions quickly appeared, many written by associates of its authors.

Next, the failure of temperature to rise as the UN projected had to be explained. Hence another flurry of learned papers, this time about the "ocean notion" - the maritime heat-sink into which the missing temperature rise might be vanishing.

Above all, it was vital that this time the UN's report should not be seen to print the biggest exaggerations around.

Enter Stern.

My calculations last week had to be rubbished. Separately, The Sunday Telegraph's letters editor and I received emails saying I'd wrongly assumed the Earth was a "blackbody" with no greenhouse effect at all (I hadn't). The www.realclimate.org website, run by two of the "hockey-stick" graph's authors, said the same in a blog entitled "Cuckoo science".

On Thursday, Margaret Beckett, the Foreign Secretary, compared climate sceptics to advocates of Islamic terror. Neither, she said, should have access to the media.

At whom is this spin aimed? At the Chinese, the Indians and the Brazilians. China has 30,000 coal mines. It is opening a new power station every five days till 2012. The Third World is growing. It won't be told it can't enjoy the growth we've already had. It wouldn't sign Kyoto till it was exempted, so, under President Clinton, the US Senate voted unanimously to reject Kyoto. Whatever the West does to "Save the Planet" is mere gesture unless the developing world agrees to give up its right to grow as we've grown.

Sir Nick says if we spend 1 per cent of GDP now and for ever we can reduce "the chances of temperature rises of 4-5C and above

- at which levels some of the worst impacts occur". The crucial number when evaluating the income stream from forward investments like this is the discount rate: the annual percentage by which any forecast of tomorrow's revenue is cut to allow for the risks [and constraints] inherent in not getting it today. Stern discusses the rate at length, and even has a technical annexe on it, but, astonishingly, not once in 700 pages does he put a figure on it. I gave his team 24 hours' notice of the question: What discount rate or rates, and why? Six hours after my deadline, as the Treasury was closing, they said they might answer "next week". The following morning, with the page held for my copy, I rang and asked again. "There's nobody in who worked on that part of the report," they said. But they admitted they'd used several rates, all of them low because "if you're richer in future you value each unit of output a bit less", and because they hadn't discounted the future just because it was the future as that would be intertemporally inequitable (in English: not fair to the kids). Too low a discount rate makes spending 1 per cent of GDP now look cheaper than waiting.

They are also coy about what value our \$500 billion a year would buy us. They say that if the world stabilises atmospheric CO₂ at about 485 parts per million we'll have spent 1 per cent of GDP to get - er - a 1.1 per cent fall in consumption. If we stabilised at 400ppm, consumption would fall by only 0.6 per cent, but that's a pipedream: we're at 380ppm already, and, on Stern's figures, we'll reach 400 in just eight years.

By 2035, says Sir Nick, temperature will have risen by "over 2C". It sounds alarming. What he means, though, is over 2C since 1750, when we don't know what the temperature was. Stern's 485 parts per million by 2035 is based on the UN's worst case. Even then, the increase compared with today would be just 0.7C. On the UN's lower projection, implying 425ppm by 2035, only 0.3C.

The UK accounts for just 2 per cent of global emissions, and falling. Even if Britain stopped using energy altogether, global temperature by 2035 would be six thousandths of a degree C less than if we carried on as usual. If we shut down once a week on Planet Day, make that less than one thousandth of a degree. **Even if every Western country complied with Kyoto (and most won't), Senator James Inhofe of Oklahoma says temperature a century from now would be a 25th of a degree lower than without Kyoto.**

In that context, the few femtowatts you will save by not leaving your television on standby don't matter. It is not that energy efficiency, renewables and recycling will not make enough difference. They will hardly make any.

We are addressing the wrong problem. In the UK, energy

is about to run out. In 10 years, a third of our power stations will be worn out or against EU pollution laws. By 2035, oil prices could be ten times today's. Our children would be far better off if we sequestered North Sea oil by leaving it in the ground than if we sequestered carbon dioxide at Peterhead. [ENERGY SECURITY]

While the Government quixotically tilts at wind power, the Danes, who did it first, have stopped building bird-slicers. You need a wind farm the size of Greater Manchester to match the output of one nuclear power station, and you get not a watt if the wind isn't blowing. As for hydro, if you want to build a plant with more than a megawatt of output in Scotland, you can't, because for the past year two bureaucracies have been arguing about which of them should grant planning permission.

The UK needs to start building (not designing, or arguing about in ten-year planning enquiries) 12 nuclear power stations this year. Nuclear power does not emit CO2. The French, 80 per cent nuclear, have half the UK's carbon footprint. And what is Stern's policy on nuclear power? "We argue that a portfolio of technologies will be needed."

Sci-fi panics such as climate change are dangerous because they distract politicians from what really needs doing. Y2K bug: correct solution, laugh; actual solution, Y2K Office. Result: nothing, at great cost. Energy shortages and climate change (if you believe that man is responsible): correct solution, go nuclear and reverse 20th-century deforestation. Actual solution: windmills, rampant deforestation, EU paying farmers not to plant trees or anything else. Result, energy crisis, species loss and no fall in CO2.

Shouldn't we take precautions, just in case?

No. The "precautionary principle" kills. Example.

DDT: correct solution, limit it in agriculture but allow indoor spraying against malarial mosquitoes. Actual solution: give the inventor a Nobel Prize, then say the chemical is cancerous (it's safe enough to eat) and ban it, especially for indoor spraying. Result, only this year, after 30 million and more have died from malaria, has the WHO agreed to recommend indoor spraying.

Carbon taxes? Bizarrely, the UK's climate-change levy taxes all forms of electricity generation, even if they don't emit CO₂. David Miliband, the Environment Secretary, told the BBC last week how good it was. The BBC didn't argue.

Emissions trading? The daft EU scheme allows more emissions to be traded than are being emitted, except in the UK, whose business-unaware Government disadvantages us by imposing a lower limit and not even exempting the NHS. Result: poor hospitals have to buy emission rights from rich oil companies. Miliband told the BBC how good it was. The BBC didn't argue.

All such interventions advocated by the climate-change "consensus" will be expensively futile without the consent of the Third World's fast-growing nations. That consent will rightly be withheld until the UN produces soundly based, scientifically honest, fair and realistic projections. Meanwhile,

cut out and keep this article. If Margaret Beckett has her way, you won't ever see one like it again.

© The Daily Telegraph, 2006