

A fanatic with an ABC microphone

by Walter Starck

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On November 24, 2012, the ABC Radio National program, The Science Show, broadcast a revealing segment entitled [Attitudes to climate change](#). The ABC's well known and long-time science presenter, Robyn Williams, started the piece with the extraordinary statement:

“Now, what if I told you that paedophilia is good for children, or that asbestos is an excellent inhalant for those with asthma, or that smoking crack is a normal part, and a healthy one, of teenage life, to be encouraged?”

The program then went on for 16 minutes of virulent denigration of the moral and intellectual character of any who question the imminent reality of catastrophic anthropogenic global warming (CAGW).

Such gratuitous criticism often has an ironic aspect in that it tends to reveal more about its source than it does of its subject. In this instance several things stand out. The first is the overtone of righteousness by the presenter in his disparagement of climate sceptics. At times he virtually trembles with moral virtue. His lead-off with the implied suggestion of CAGW as the moral equivalent of paedophilia poses some disturbing questions. Does he really believe this and, if so, what is his reasoning?

Even more uncomfortable is the question of why the choice of this especially extreme and distasteful simile? One might be forgiven for wondering what might be behind this particular choice of simile. Following just after the recent BBC scandal it seems an especially poor sense of timing, if nothing else.

As for the possible threats or benefits of AGW, the threats are all hypotheticals which are highly uncertain in magnitude, timing and effect. Several benefits seem strongly probable. One is the increased primary productivity and greening of arid regions through the increased efficiency of water usage in plants from increasing CO₂. There is also nothing to indicate that pre-industrial CO₂ levels were optimal -- and good evidence that, throughout most of the history of life on Earth, CO₂ was higher than current levels, yet life flourished.

Further, there is nothing to indicate that the current temperature regime is the optimal one and good reason to expect that a mild warming would in fact be more beneficial than harmful. Another likely benefit comes from the fact that warming must result in increased evaporation, and evaporation must be equalled by precipitation as a global balance. More rainfall and more arable land is probably better than more droughts and more desert.

Another key point of the program was a claimed consensus of 97% of climate experts agreeing on CAGW. In addition to being provably untrue, this claim, even if true, is decidedly unscientific, as the ultimate authority in science is empirical evidence not expert opinion. In view of the many critical uncertainties involved in climate science, no one with any genuine expertise in the matter could truthfully say with any confidence what the actual warming has been over the past century, or how much of it might be attributable to AGW, or what the actual climate sensitivity to increasing CO₂ really is. Anyone who asserts great certainty in specific estimates about such things must be either not very well informed or seriously confused about what constitutes scientific truth.

All that is required to be a "climate scientist" is to publish on something and claim it is caused by, or is threatened by, AGW. In this manner the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies in Townsville has become the world's second most-cited climate research institution, despite doing no actual research on climate. One may be a biologist or even a geographer, and having thus professed to acceptance of the one true faith, one is instantly deemed to be an authority endowed with knowledge, expertise and understanding of climate beyond the ken of mere physicists, meteorologists, paleoclimatologists and other such unenlightened sceptics.

For otherwise unknown third-rate academics CAGW has much to offer. It has provided fame and fortune plus a delicious sense of self-importance and moral righteousness. For journalists, activists and politicians the free hit of importance and righteousness is also mightily tempting. Despite no warming for 16 years, having every prediction yet tested fail, and with repeated exposures of major scientific malfeasance among its leaders and volumes of other conflicting evidence continuing to mount, the cult of CAGW still manages to retain a remarkable degree of faith among its adherents.

To see past all of the pissing contests, personal denigration and shonky science doesn't require a super computer and a PhD. Just consider the basic mechanics. Increasing CO₂ in the atmosphere does not increase the amount of IR radiation from the surface, nor does it increase the total amount of IR absorbed by the atmosphere since this was already virtually all absorbed within about a dozen metres of the surface even at preindustrial levels of CO₂. What more CO₂ does do is absorb the back radiated IR even closer to the surface. However, the thin layer near the surface which is being warmed is constantly being mixed into a vastly greater volume of the atmosphere by convection and wind turbulence. Wind and convection also carry large amounts of thermal energy away from the surface by evaporation and release it through condensation at high altitudes, where it can radiate away into space. Since increased CO₂ does not increase the total amount of energy being absorbed and cannot "trap" it in a physically confined space as does an actual greenhouse, the "greenhouse effect" of more CO₂ is highly ineffectual.

The AGW "greenhouse" has no walls or roof. It is something only an academic would construct, much less move into and abuse anyone who points out that the structure has some critical gaps in it. Then, to add righteousness to stupidity, they want to make everyone else start living according to their plan.

That the science presenter of the national broadcaster should so grossly misrepresent science and blatantly disregard its basic principles and ethics is inexcusable. That he should continue to use the national broadcaster to propagate the most extreme and doubtful prophecies of climate extremists as unquestionable scientific certainty is a travesty. That he should also

fouly denigrate highly qualified and well-founded dissenting opinion by equating it with the vilest of perversions is almost beyond belief.

Robyn Williams is making Australian climate science into a global farce. His continued employment as a presenter of Australian science is a national disgrace.