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## Dr judith curry credibility

Only three things in life are certain: Death, taxes, and the grim consequences humanity faces if we take no serious action to restrict greenhouse gas emissions. Now that I think of it, though, lots people on this planet don't pay taxes. I guess only two things are certain after all. Then again, who wasn't certain the anti-science crowd in Congress would get around to inviting Judith Curry as a witness for the prosecution of their case against climate science? I suspect they'll be disappointed. More on that at the end. My one-time lecture-circuit companion, Dr. Judith Curry, Chair of the School of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at Georgia Tech, has now taken the crown as the most debunked person on the science blogosphere, which is quite a feat considering the competition. But she invites debunking by her tendency to make scientific-sounding pronouncements without having actually read the relevant literature, and then backing down the minute she is challenged by someone who has or who has actually contributed to that literature. And then there's her tendency to libel people, such as this whopper in an interview by Eric Berger of the Houston Chronicle: EB: Yes, you've certainly been raked over pretty good by certain sites like Real Climate and Climate Progress. JC: Oh yes. Those guys are directly involved in Climategate so that's not a huge surprise. Not. I pointed out to Berger that just because he's publishing an interview doesn't mean he is free to print comments that he knows to be false and libelous. Gavin Schmidt also wrote him. But all we got in response was a lame note tacked on to Curry's attempted smear: (note: Joe Romm, of Climate Progress, was not directly involved in Climategate as his private e-mails were not published. Gavin Schmidt, of RealClimate, points out that he was the victim of a crime and not guilty of anything.) As an aside, I must say that I think this is not a good sign for journalism, that an obviously false statement is left on a credible newspaper's website after it was clearly pointed out to be false. To set the record straight—notwithstanding Curry's effort to smear me (and Schmidt) and doubly notwithstanding the fact that the people who actually were directly involved in Climategate have all been vindicated by multiple independent investigations—I was not directly involved in Climategate. And notwithstanding the implication of Berger's note, I was not indirectly involved—unless writing about it constitutes involvement, in which case both Berger and Curry were involved in Climategate. Let's call it non-guilt by non-association with people who weren't guilty of anything. I also don't see how Schmidt was directly involved other than as a crime victim. He was the person who "raked" her over—or more accurately, let her rake herself over (see Hockey Stick fight at the RC Corral, Schmidt to Curry: "In future I will simply assume you are a conduit for untrue statements rather than their originator"). As one of my readers put it, she routinely commits "credibility seppuku," as, for instance, in this comment on CP. So it's not a huge surprise that Curry is so widely debunked. She invites it. She recently expressed this disappointment about her Sourcewatch profile: Funny, except that when the entire science blogosphere debunks you, it really isn't a badge of honor. Georgian proverb: When three people say you are drunk, go to sleep. Annan makes the same point in his post "(S)He who refuses to do arithmetic is doomed to talk nonsense", quoting one of her comments: "The fact that the climate blogging community doesn't get what I'm talking about makes me pretty worried about the intellectual foundations underpinning the whole argument." He replies, "Well yes, Judith, when you find that everyone else is out of step, it is probably appropriate to worry about the intellectual foundations underpinning your whole argument. But somehow I don't think you meant that." To help promote the democratization of the blogosphere, let me excerpt Annan, who runs through some of the main debunkings: She's really building up quite a history of throwing up vague or demonstrably wrong claims, then running away when shown to be wrong. Here on the no-feedback climate sensitivity, for example. Cryosaurus took her to task here on aerosols and D&A (based partly on comments from Gavin) and found her response lacking. Here is Eric Steig refuting her absurd claim about the IPCC that "they will tolerate no dissent, and seek to trample and discredit anyone who challenges the IPCC." Her eventual response (which had to be dragged out of her through repeated challenges that she kept on ducking) was merely to dismiss it as an "anecdote", even though one single case serves to refute her claim. Well, I don't think I got quite such a rapturous response as Eric did, with my attempts to improve the AR4 drafts, but I certainly didn't get trampled and discredited either—merely made to feel mildly unwelcome, which I find tends to happen when I criticise people outside the IPCC too. But they did change the report in various ways. While I'm not an unalloyed fan of the IPCC process, my experience is not what she describes it as. So make that two anecdotes. Maybe I'm an "insider" too, in her book. If she ever deigns to address the substantive point on probability, maybe she can let me know, but I'm not holding my breath. Her main tactic seems to be throwing up layers upon layers of an increasing shaky edifice as quickly as possible hoping that no-one will notice that the foundations are collapsing as quickly as people can read. Connolley has a variety of posts at Stoat, including 3 on "Currygate" and "Curry jumps the shark" and an evisceration of a recent paper on Antarctic sea ice (here), which notes: The main problem with the paper is the uncritical use of invalid data. Ouch. Curry offers a typical series of non-substantive replies that Connolley swats (here) like flies that are stuck to flypaper. Indeed, it appears that Curry's paper has issues as to its originality, leaving our bunny friend hopping mad here. See also here. And that brings to mind another saying, often attributed to Samuel Johnson, "Your manuscript is both good and original. But the part that is good is not original, and the part that is original is not good." UPDATE: Another post worth reading is Bart Verheggen's, "Judith Curry goes from building bridges to burning them." Excuse me? Is this a respected scientist talking? Someone who is trying to build bridges between scientists and their critics? By calling respected scientists "high priests of the IPCC"? ... Her unfounded allegations are insulting for the whole profession. It increases the polarisation and doesn't add to the building of bridges (perhaps a one-way bridge). And I'm saying this as someone who, on the "pro-AGW" bloggers side, was probably one of the most receptive to her ideas. I am sincere and anti-dogmatic and I take great issue with her painting a whole scientific field, at the edge of which I work myself, as quasi religious dogma. That realization struck me when I read the final lines of "Handling the Heat," her profile in Georgia Tech's Alumni magazine (the source of the top photo): The climate's natural variability is unpredictable. Greenhouse gas emissions could offset a natural cooling trend or amplify a heating trend. "It could even mean the plausible worst-case scenario is worse than anything we've imagined," Curry says. "It's a very complex scientific problem. There's a lot of uncertainty," she says. "It's not that we're incompetent, there's just a lot of inherent variability. A lot of that is unknowable." The question then naturally arises. What is Judith Curry sure about? She pauses before giving an answer in three parts. "Climate always changes," she says. "Carbon dioxide, all other things being equal, will contribute to a warmer planet." And lastly, "Whether in the coming century greenhouse gas will dominate natural variability remains to be seen." Asked what she is certain of, her most definitive answer is uncertainty itself. I suppose that if you smoked two packs of cigarettes a day, had a nagging cough, went to see your doctor and she determined you had early stage lung cancer, she could truthfully say death is certain and she had no idea whether you will die of natural causes before the lung cancer got you—and send you on your way without recommending a treatment. I suppose if you weighed 300 pounds, over-ate regularly and didn't exercise and your doctor determined you had early-stage diabetes, she could again say the same thing and send you on your way. After her patients started dying from treatable illnesses, she'd lose her license, of course. She'd no longer be a doctor. Science doesn't have a licensing board, but Curry has saved us the trouble. First off, while Curry might want to ignore ocean acidification, the fact is we are, with certainty, already dominating natural variability in this devastating consequence of greenhouse gas emissions: Nature Geoscience: Oceans are acidifying 10 times faster today than 55 million years ago when a mass extinction of marine species occurred Geological Society: Acidifying oceans spell marine biological meltdown "by end of century" Carbon dioxide, all other things being equal or unequal, is poisoning our oceans. The warming just compounds the devastation see 2009 Nature Geoscience study concludes ocean dead zones "devoid of fish and seafood" are poised to expand and "remain for thousands of years." It is true that "Climate always changes," but the climate science deniers (of whom Curry is not directly a part) use that phrase in order to leave people with the impression that it is changing randomly. Scientists like Mark Serreze, director of the National Snow and Ice Data Center at the University of Colorado at Boulder, make the point "Climate doesn't change all by itself for no good reason. Something has to force it." Now we are forcing atmospheric CO2 concentrations to rise sharply, at a rate that is unprecedented in the past million years (see "Humans boosting CO2 14,000 times faster than nature, overwhelming slow negative feedbacks"). There really is little doubt that human-caused greenhouse gases are already dominating natural variability (see Two more independent studies back the Hockey Stick: Recent global warming is unprecedented in magnitude and speed and cause and Human-caused Arctic warming overtakes 2,000 years of natural cooling, "seminal" study finds). The rate of human-driven warming in the last century has exceeded the rate of the underlying natural trend by more than a factor of 10, possibly much more. And warming this century on our current path of unrestricted greenhouse gas emissions is projected to cause a rate of warming that is another factor of 5 or more greater than that of the last century. We are punching the climate beast "" and she ain't happy about it! As WAG notes, within a few decades, nobody is going to be talking about right angles (or hockey sticks, they will be talking about right angles (or hockey skates): Is it conceivable that in contradiction to virtually all scientific evidence the fast-feedbacks' climate sensitivity to a CO2 doubling is low, say, 1.5°C AND that the myriad amplifying feedbacks we are seeing today will be partly offset by as-yet unmeasured negative feedbacks for which there is painfully little evidence in the paleoclimate record? Sure, it's conceivable. But you would still need a very, very low emissions path—far beneath business as usual—for there to be any realistic chance that greenhouse-gas-driven warming from 1900 to 2100 would be only, say, 2°C. Now even 2°C warming in two centuries would dominate 'natural' warming. Here's a certainty: If we listen to Curry 2.0 and the tribe she won't criticize (aka the disinformers), then we are certain to blow past a doubling (550 ppm). We'll be headed toward a tripling if not a quadrupling (see U.S. media largely ignores latest warning from climate scientists: "Recent observations confirm "l the worst-case IPCC scenario trajectories (or even worse) are being realised" "" 1000 ppm). If Curry wants to cling to a microscopic amount of uncertainty that such CO2 levels would not lead to impacts that come at a scale and pace far beyond that of "natural variability" then indeed she has abandoned science. In reality, as Curry knows, there is far, far greater chance that the fast feedbacks sensitivity is much higher than 3°C than that is much lower, and that in the unrestricted emissions case, amplifying feedbacks dominate negative feedbacks. MIT spells things out probabilistically in their analysis from last year (see "M.I.T. doubles its 2095 warming projection to 10°F "" with 866 ppm and Arctic warming of 20°F": As Dr. Vicky Pope, Head of Climate Change Advice for the Met Office's Hadley Centre explains on their website (here): Contrast that with a world where no action is taken to curb global warming. Then, temperatures are likely to rise by 5.5 °C and could rise as high as 7 °C above pre-industrial values by the end of the century. The Hadley Center has a huge but useful figure which I will reproduce here: One can say with certainty that if you actually read the recent scientific literature, you simply wouldn't make a statement like "Whether in the coming century greenhouse gas will dominate natural variability remains to be seen." And you certainly wouldn't list it as one of the three things you are sure about. As I wrote in February, I have known Dr. Curry for many years. I have interviewed her a number of times and quoted her work on the hurricane-warming connection at length for my 2006 book, "Hell and High Water: Global Warming "" the Solution and the Politics." Later, I spent a day giving talks with her in various Florida cities. She reviewed large parts of my book and heard my give a couple of talks and I've never once heard her dispute my characterization of the science. Her past public statements and articles on climate change can be found here. Just three years ago she wrote a response to Bjorn Lomborg in the Washington Post that is utterly at odds with the view she is now endeavoring to leave people with: Lomborg gets it right when he calls for an ambitious public investment program in clean-energy technologies. But he mistakenly assumes that existing technologies and strategies can't make a big dent in carbon emissions at an affordable price. Lomborg is correct to be concerned about the possibility of bad policy choices. But I have yet to see any option that is worse than ignoring the risk of global warming and doing nothing. So I confess I no longer have any idea what she believes. If you read some of the science bloggers cited above, it's clear that Curry just doesn't follow the scientific literature closely. She hardly ever cites it. She rarely blogs about it. She doesn't talk about the countless studies that give me and many others the certainty she once had that inaction is the worst option. Curry is focused on trashing the IPCC. But the IPCC is primarily a literature review, indeed primarily literature from before 2006. In a AAAS presentation this year, William R. Freudenburg of UC Santa Barbara discussed his research on "the Asymmetry of Scientific Challenge": New scientific findings are found to be more than twenty times as likely to indicate that global climate disruption is "worse than previously expected," rather than "not as bad as previously expected." I'd challenge her to review many of the most important such studies here: "An illustrated guide to the latest climate science." Uncertainty gets a seat at the "big table" That's the unscientific (a scientific?) headline Curry uses for her post announcing that she has been invited to testify: On Nov 17, the U.S. House of Representative's Committee on Science and Technology Subcommittee on Energy and Environment is holding a hearing on "Rational Discussion of Climate Change: the Science, the Evidence, the Response." I have been invited to present testimony for this hearing. I have been specifically asked by the minority (Republicans) to discuss how we can go about responding to the climate change issue in the face of uncertainty, dissent and disagreement. Subcommittee on Energy and Environment—Hearing 2325 Rayburn House Office Building (WEBCAST) November 17 10:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.A Rational Discussion of Climate Change: the Science, the Evidence, the Response Witnesses: Panel I Dr. Ralph J. Cicerone, President, National Academy of Sciences Dr. Heidi M. Cullen, CEO and Director of Communications, Climate Central Panel II Dr. Richard B. Alley, Evan Pugh Professor, Department of Geosciences and Earth and Environmental Systems Institute, The Pennsylvania State University Dr. Richard A. Feely, Senior Scientist, Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory, NOAA Dr. Benjamin D. Santer, Atmospheric Scientist, Program for Climate Model Diagnosis and Intercomparison, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory Panel III Mr. Jim Lopez, Senior Adviser to the Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Rear Admiral David W. Titley, Senior Adviser to the Deputy Secretary, United States Navy Dr. Judith A. Curry, Chair, School of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, Georgia Institute of Technology I call it unscientific/ascientific because, notwithstanding the hubris, Curry is not the one who brings "uncertainty" into the discussion of climate science. Well, let me rephrase that. Curry is a confusionist who brings uncertainty into any discussion, but it is a canard of Curry-esque proportions to assert that scientists have not clearly explained the nature and extent of these uncertainties. They have bent over backwards to do so. Gavin Schmidt makes that clear in his responses to Curry on RealClimate, which I excerpt in "Hockey Stick fight at the RC Corral." I actually think it was good she was invited to testify by the Republicans—aka the party that has made attacks on climate science and climate scientists a litmus test for higher office (and, appropriately, that she isn't on the panel with the folks who will be discussing what the science actually says). She's no Monckton or Lindzen or even Crichton. I'll make a prediction here. Curry will prove greatly disappointing to the GOP—and even more confusing! #Climate

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