

Curt Stager, Global Warming, and Political Science

I was rather surprised to see the *Adirondack Almanac* [piece](#) by [Curt Stager](#), for several reasons. For example: **a)** I have had multiple polite exchanges with Curt in the past, and he never said any of these things directly to me, **b)** his commentary included multiple misdirections, *and* **c)** that he would so openly disavow traditional Science.

I find item “c” the most surprising and disconcerting. Carefully consider this superior [quote](#) from Curt eight years ago (I bolded the most important parts):

“Scientists are human beings who reflect a diversity of opinions and attitudes. Of course most of us are fed up with this ridiculous situation, so it's not surprising that you hear from so many who express those concerns. I'm fed up, too, but I'm also not alone in my preferences for refraining from “aggressive activist stances.” I do so because I value Science itself more than any individual topic that it addresses.

“I consider Science to be one of the most valuable inventions of human civilization, and I recognize how precious and vulnerable to corruption it is as one who believes in objective reality, the fallibility of human perception, and the need for objective methods of seeking truth. I also recognize that public trust in Science itself depends heavily upon trust in the objectivity of those who pursue it. We must walk a fine line between defending truth and trying to force it on other people, and I personally choose to take a cautious approach in walking that line.”

This is a well-phrased, important statement – and I would agree with every bolded word. However, since that time Curt has apparently been radicalized. As his *Adirondack Almanac* [piece](#) indicates he appears to have abandoned his earlier commitment to his profession, and has proudly become a card-carrying political science activist.

To properly respond to all the monkeyshines in his *Adirondack Almanac* [piece](#) would take longer than the space allowed here, so I'll just address some of them. Hopefully discerning readers can then extrapolate the rest on their own...

Let's start with a simple definition. What we are discussing is called “Anthropogenic Global Warming” (AGW). Basically that is the belief that global warming is caused almost exclusively by man-made influences (e.g. burning fossil fuels).

The gist of the problem here is that Curt has chosen to impale himself on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand he wants us to believe that his opinions about AGW are based on real science – but on the other hand he doesn't want to be burdened by the constraints of following the protocols of real science! Put another way, his comments show a clear distinction between *genuine science* and *political science*. Consider some examples:

#1 – If two scientists have a disagreement, each one politely puts forth the best empirical (i.e. real-world) evidence that they believe supports their case. At no time does one disparage the other’s motivations, past associations, beliefs, mother-in-law, etc. – as those are irrelevant to the discussion at hand. If Curt was so confident in the scientific proof of his claims, why would he waste a single word of his space-limited op-ed to deprecate me? That is a *political* tactic, outside the realm of science.

#2 – Curt then inaccurately asserts that the only people competent enough to assess the validity of the AGW matter, are “truly qualified climate scientists.” Whether the AGW hypothesis is true or not rests on the **scientific validity** of its proponents’ claims. Any competent Scientist can see whether other scientists (in their field or otherwise), have followed scientific protocol... Interesting Curt undermines his own assertion (that AGW is the exclusive realm of climate scientists) by citing “physics” (i.e. my field) as the basis for some of his AGW claims.

#3 – Curt mischaracterizes a Scientific *hypothesis* by disparagingly calling it “mere guesswork.” Here’s a reasonable [definition](#):

“The formulation and testing of a hypothesis is part of the [scientific method](#) – the approach scientists use when attempting to understand and test ideas about natural phenomena. The generation of a hypothesis is a creative process, based on existing scientific knowledge, intuition, or experience. The two primary features of a scientific [hypothesis](#) are falsifiability and testability.”

OK, now we understand that, here is the really important part: *what does it take for a scientific hypothesis to become a scientific theory, the next step up the ladder?*

“Theories, are broad explanations for a wide range of phenomena. They are concise, coherent, systematic, predictive, and broadly applicable.” One scientific theory (cited as an example by this source, [UC Berkeley](#)), “has proven itself in thousands of experiments and observational studies.”

However, in this case, the Global Warming promoters have simply decreed that their AGW *hypothesis* has been elevated to the level of a scientific *theory* – but without adhering to the necessary scientific protocol. Such proclamations are the tactics of political scientists.

#4 – Curt knows this very well, but is averse to admitting that the AGW matter is a hypothesis – *as he does not want to comply with most of the traditional burdensome scientific methodology*. Why not? For several reasons, like: **a)** it’s too time-consuming, **b)** AGW is too complicated to be analyzed by traditional Science, **c)** AGW is not falsifiable (see above), *and* **d)** the traditional science methodology casts significant doubt on the AGW hypothesis. In other words Curt is saying let’s skip over all this annoying Science stuff, and cut to the chase. Again, that is the perspective of a political science person: *let’s get on to changing policies!*

#5 – The AGW hypothesis is almost entirely based on computer models. But computer models are not something magic: they are the results of data and assumptions submitted by *people*. But if AGW is too complicated to be analyzed by traditional Science, how is it that certain individuals are able to accurately decipher what data is pertinent and exactly how it all inter-relates? Rephrased: if accurately assessing the validity and results of AGW is too complicated for traditional science, then it is also too complicated for computer models. BTW, Scientists focus on empirical data. Political scientists prefer computer models as its child's play to manipulate them (without citizens being aware), so that *any* desired outcome can be generated...

#6 – It's unfortunate that Curt did not publicly acknowledge that we have HUGE gaps of knowledge in our understanding of climate. For example, the AGW matter appears to rests on a very basic equation: *the global CO2 balance*. On one side are "CO2 Sources" which are either natural or man-made. On the other side are "CO2 Sinks" which are mostly natural. When the Sources exceed the Sinks, we have a resultant net CO2 increase. One of several problems is that as much as 30% of the Sinks side of the equation is not well understood. How accurate can computer models be when there is such a substantial unknown involved? Traditional Scientists are very clear about exactly what we know and don't know. Political scientists glaze over the unknowns.

#7 – There are multiple references to "peer-review" in Curt's commentary. Two comments about those. First, it's puzzling that Curt fails to inform readers that there are some 2000 peer-reviewed papers that *contest* his AGW position (e.g. see [here](#)). A scientist objectively presents both sides of any dispute. (Note Curt's quote about that at the beginning!) A political scientist solely promotes his own agenda, pretending that there is no other reasonable conclusion than theirs.

#8 – Second, the intention of these "peer-review" insertions is to convince the casual reader that Science has put its imprimatur on Curt's AGW hypothesis. That is simply not so. What laypeople need to know is that the peer-review process has NOTHING to do with ascertaining the validity of any study's conclusions. For example, in the peer-review process, NO ONE repeats any experiment done in a study, to verify the results.

To get a good picture of what peer-review is all about, carefully read the [statement](#) made by one of the key players in the process, the editor of the world-renown medical journal, the *Lancet*:

"The mistake, of course, is to have thought that peer review was any more than a crude means of discovering the acceptability – *not the validity* – of a new finding.

"Editors and scientists alike insist on the pivotal importance of peer review. We portray peer review to the public as a quasi-sacred process that helps to make science our most objective truth teller.

“But we know that the system of peer review is biased, unjust, unaccountable, incomplete, easily fixed, often insulting, usually ignorant, occasionally foolish, and frequently wrong.”

In other words, references to peer-review to support one’s claims are based on the premise that the reader is not educated about [peer-review realities](#). This is a strategy used by political scientists: *to take advantage of what citizens **don’t** understand, to promote their own objectives.*

#9 – Along the same line are Curt’s references to “consensus.” Oh dear! If Curt has irrefutable science to support his AGW hypothesis, why would he waste time by talking about such unscientific matters as consensus? Look closely at the [Scientific Method](#). Is there anything there about consensus? NO!

What is also indisputable is that there have been numerous cases in the past where the consensus of what scientists believed, **was subsequently proven to be wrong**. Genuine scientists are well aware of that reality, so they would never – ever – try to justify their hypothesis by referencing other scientists’ beliefs. On the other hand political science is all about getting a consensus.

#10 – Despite his 1300± word commentary, Curt didn’t actually address the primary points I made in my *Adirondack Explorer* [article](#). Instead he waxed eloquently on AGW – which was **not** the topic I was asked to write about. Renewable energy in the Adirondack Park was my assignment. He didn’t say anything about that! Have you ever noticed that when a politician is asked a question they don’t like, that they smoothly change the topic? That’s another stark difference between real science and political science.

#11 – Curt’s remarks about skepticism are also interesting. He understands that skepticism is the hallmark of a genuine scientist – so makes sure to point out that he once was an AGW skeptic. Although I couldn’t find any AGW skeptical papers he wrote during that time, I’m willing to take his word for it. However, now that *he* has been satisfied, why isn’t everyone else? Indeed.

If he had put forth a learned position: **1)** that followed the conventions of traditional science, **2)** that honestly acknowledged how much we don’t know about AGW, **3)** without *ad hominem*s, **4)** without references to such unscientific matters such as consensus, *and* **5)** without making false implications about the veracity of peer-review – then we could see that he was making a strong case based on real science. Instead we got a political science response, which does not inspire confidence.

#12—It's quite clear from all this that the AGW issue is **not** really about CO2. Instead this is just a convenient vehicle for those who want to radically alter our American way of life — to literally convert us to an agrarian, Marxist society. Don't take my word for it, but just closely examine the elements (and consequences) of the [Green New Deal](#), which is just a trial balloon for what's really the agenda being promoted here.

The bottom line is that Curt and other similar thinking parties, want us to fork over \$100± Trillion dollars: **a)** to accept their AGW hypothesis that has not bothered to follow traditional Science protocols, *and* **b)** to implement “solutions” (like industrial wind energy) that are scientifically unproven. *What could go wrong?*

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