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Thursday, 24 November 2005

Mr Elliot Morley MP
Minister for Environment and Agri-Environment
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR

Dear Mr Morley,

Surface Temperature Reconstructions

I first approached you by email on 31st October 2003 when McIntyre and McKittrick published their first paper disputing the validity of the paper, MBH98, of Prof. Mann et al., from which one graph has become, in effect, the IPCC logo. I asked the question "Can it really be the case that we ratified the Kyoto treaty without checking the sums upon which the key scientific findings were based?". Despite considerable correspondence with members of your department I received no answer to what I thought was a perfectly reasonable question and would like to ask again for an answer. Members of your department repeatedly stressed peer review as sufficient validation together with reference to a "spaghetti diagram".

Now some two years on McIntyre and McKittrick have published in the reputable peer reviewed journal of the AGU and others such as von Storch, who is a SO&P project member, have published peer reviewed criticism of Prof. Mann's method. Members of the public are repeatedly being told that the science of global warming is settled but this misses the point that much of the debate is centred on statistics and due diligence rather than basic science.

You have available to you some of the best statisticians in the world. Prof. Ian Jolliffe, for instance, whose personal notes are at <http://www.met.rdg.ac.uk/~swx03itj/>, is accepted as a world expert on Principle Components Analysis (PCA) techniques. He has been cited by Prof. Mann as justification for the non standard and (and undisclosed) PCA that is one of the main areas of debate. I believe that nether Prof. Jolliffe or any other accepted statistician ever considered Prof. Mann's use of non centred PCA justifiable. In the light of the dispute in this area (it is referred to in the recent House of Lords report) has your department sought the advice of your experts on PCA?

The complaints of many of the so called sceptics or contrarians is not so much on scientific detail but on the almost complete lack of disclosure. Had Prof. Mann disclosed all that was necessary to replicate his results the arguments over the surface record would have been over in weeks. When the US House committee finally obliged Prof. Mann to reveal all it became clear that he had been refusing to do so because it proved that what McIntyre and McKittrick had said was right all along.

The "spaghetti diagram" which with peer review your staff thought sufficient has likewise become thoroughly discredited. This is the graph showing other reconstructions that are said to corroborate Prof. Mann's work. In fact taking the error bands into account they suggest we have little idea of past temperature trends. Tedious detective work by Steve McIntyre has revealed that these studies far from being independent share much of the basic data which in many cases is not available for inspection. The studies share some authors in

common. In some cases it is now shown that undisclosed non peer reviewed pre-processing of raw data has taken place for which the authors have no detailed knowledge.

I am sure you will be aware that an important adjustment has just been made to the temperature record derived from satellites as a result of independent replication made possible by the full availability of all data and code. The originator of the satellite record has publicly thanked the researchers that discovered the error. Contrast this with what our own Prof. Phil Jones told Warwick Hughes when he asked for access to the unadjusted raw data from which CRU derive its surface temperature record. "Even if WMO agrees, I will still not pass on the data. We have 25 or so years invested in the work. Why should I make the data available to you, when your aim is to try and find something wrong with it." (source <http://www.ukweatherworld.co.uk/forum/forums/thread-view.asp?tid=24950&posts=18>).

Warwick Hughes is not alone in being unable to access this important scientific data. Verification of the adjustments made by Prof. Jones to the raw station data is an entirely proper pursuit in a democratic society. The data is archived under password control in the SO&P database and would involve little expense to make available. It was collected entirely at the expense of UK and US taxpayers and ought to be freely available. Will you make this data available to Steve McIntyre who I now believe is accepted as a serious and respected researcher into data analysis?

If the scale of AGW (this is the only real area of debate) is as serious as you appear to think it must be in your interests to see doubts whether legitimate or not dispelled. In an increasingly free, informed and connected world secrecy and obfuscation is seen as likely to be concealing bias as a minimum and outright dishonesty in some cases. Climate Change policy is uniquely expensive and is the only major area of public expense where the access to underlying data is denied to any one that seeks to dispute official conclusions.

Yours sincerely,

David Holland