

20 February 2006

Dear Sirs,

Response to Stern Review Lecture ‘*What is the Economics of Climate Change?*’

Thank you for your email of 31 January. I am not sure why we were invited to comment when your review committee has already made up its mind.

This is a sad day for the developing countries of the world and Africa in particular. As you will see from my detailed submission, I undertook a diligent three-year study of the largest and most comprehensive hydrometeorological database assembled for this purpose anywhere. I demonstrated with a very high degree of assurance that the alarmist claims relating to the effects of global warming have no foundation. I cannot fathom the basis for your rejection of my work and substitution of claims by climatologists for which they have no observational support.

South Africa’s economy rests heavily on the availability of cheap coal to generate electricity, produce synthetic fuels, and for export. Our per capita consumption of coal is one of the highest in the world. This makes us a prime target for the international climate alarmist lobby. Your report will result in tremendous international pressure for us to abandon coal. As an economist you must surely appreciate what this effect will be on our national economy. There is simply no observational evidence to support these drastic measures.

I would be prepared to respond to each and every one of the items in your email but I fear that it would be a waste of time. Instead, I have attached a memorandum that I distributed to my 86 email correspondents this morning. The purpose of my memoranda is to keep them informed of my own work against the international background. Please note the consequences that your authoritative report will have on the prosperity of South Africa and other nations on the African continent. Your Prime Minister has expressed his firm intention to assist Africa to overcome the problems of poverty, malnutrition and disease. This will be a hollow promise if at the same time he supports the position of your review committee, which will have the opposite effect.

If invited, I am prepared to come to the UK and present the case of the developing countries of Africa to a critical audience. Failing that, there is little more that I can do.

My experience

I am a professor emeritus in the Department of Civil and Biosystems Engineering at the University of Pretoria. My career-long interests have been in the fields of floods, droughts, water resource development, natural disasters, and now the study of the possible effects of climate change in these fields.

In 1994 I was appointed by the Secretary General of the United Nations as a member of the UN Scientific and Technical Committee on Natural Disasters for the period 1994 to 2000. The effects of climate change were never an issue.

In 1995 I was appointed by the Namibian Government as scientific adviser and expert witness in an international boundary dispute. I gave evidence before the 16 judges of the International Court of Justice in The Hague in 1999.

In 2004 I was invited by UNESCO to serve on an international committee of experts to advise on the establishment of a water resource research centre in Japan. I took the opportunity to ask the other members for their views on the effects of climate change. Their unanimous response was that the postulated consequences were no more than untested hypotheses.

Last week I was nominated for the annual award of the South African National Science and Technology Forum in the category of individuals who have made outstanding contributions in science, engineering and technology over a period of a decade or more. The results will be published in May.

Yours faithfully

WJR Alexander

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