

Fighting off the chill (no pun intended) against skeptical climate science

[National Post](#) - Tuesday January 16th, 2018

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Baby, it was cold outside. I've felt grateful the past few weeks that I live in a draft-free house with a reliable furnace. Another reason for gratitude: the recent record-breaking low temperatures served to embarrass the global-warming Chicken Littles.

Climate skeptics never claim that record-breaking cold is a sign of global cooling. It's time for climate alarmists to stop insisting that record-breaking heat waves and hurricanes, not to mention skinny polar bears, are signs of global warming. I don't deny the planet is warming, but at the moment, that doesn't seem like a fate worse than death. And in saying that, the actual stats are on my side.

In his 2007 book, *Cool It: The Skeptical Environmentalist's Guide to Global Warming*, subsequently made into an eponymous film, Bjorn Lomborg, founder of the Copenhagen Consensus, points out that globally, extreme cold kills far more people than extreme heat. In cool Helsinki, for example, some 298 people a year die from excessive heat, but 1,655 people die from extreme cold. In much warmer Athens, 1,376 people die from extreme heat, while the death toll from excess cold is 7,852.

I've long noticed that the media are all over the big picture in heat waves, and eager to provide death statistics, but in cold snaps, the media prefer to home in on specific shiver-inducing stories and photos: abandoned cars, highway accidents, individual exposure tragedies and families coping without electricity. After the catastrophic European heat wave of August, 2003, we were informed that 15,000 people in France, and 35,000 Europe-wide, had died of heat-related causes. We are rarely provided with cold-related stats. Yet, according to Lomborg, "about 1.5 million Europeans die annually from excess cold," more than seven times the number of heat-related deaths.

Lomborg's think-tank estimates that in Britain, a 3.6 degree Fahrenheit increase in temperature will result in 2,000 more heat-related deaths, but 20,000 fewer cold-related deaths. He cites a research paper that investigated all the studies on this issue, applying them to a representative sampling of developed and developing regions, and concluding, "global warming may cause a decrease in mortality rates, especially of cardiovascular disease."

That's not what warming alarmists want to hear. Their scenario is uniformly Armageddon-like, and they resent the intrusion of factors that mitigate alarmism, however well documented. Here are the kind of findings they take satisfaction in, drawn from a report to the State Department from the American consul in Bergen, Norway: "The Arctic seems to be warming up ... radical change in climatic conditions ... hitherto unheard of high temperatures ... so little ice has never before been noted ... where formerly great masses of ice were found, there are now often moraines, accumulations of earth and stones ... (glaciers) have entirely disappeared. Few seals in Spitzbergen waters. ..." Alarming! The only problem is that this report was filed in October 1922. Oh.

Yes, the Earth is warming. How much and how fast is so far all hypothesis. Very little in the field of climate change is settled science. It is therefore imperative that scientists be free to debate each other's theories and critique each other's findings. They should not fear expensive and debilitating, but frivolous lawfare, like that of "hide-the-decline" scientist Michael Mann's drawn-out defamation suit against critic Mark Steyn, or worse, by politicians abusing their power.

But that is exactly what is happening. In a March 2016 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, two constitutional litigators, David B. Rivkin and Andrew M. Grossman, chronicled a series of discourse-chilling, unconstitutional measures taken by Democratic Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, who in spring of 2015 called on the Justice Department to bring charges against people and organizations who spread heterodox views on global warming.

Whitehouse, a former prosecutor, identified the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO), normally applied to Mafia cases, as the basis for such harassment. The following September, Rivkin and Grossman wrote, a group of 20 scientists sent a letter, facilitated by Whitehouse, to president Barack Obama in support of a RICO investigation against climate dissenters. Rivkin and Grossman characterize Whitehouse as the “Grand Inquisitor” of a climate inquisition similar to the ordeal Galileo underwent in 1633 for spreading his then heresy of the Earth orbiting the Sun.

Those litigators were so disgusted by the First Amendment abuses they have witnessed on the climate file, they were moved to establish the Free Speech in Science Project, whose purpose is “to defend (with funds and legal defence) the kind of open inquiry and debate that are central to scientific advancement and understanding.” This is shaming proof of existential corruption in the scientific community.

The battle against compelled speech and for the protection of free academic inquiry is the defining conflict of our era. Walls and furnaces defend our bodies from winter’s chill. But ideological chill always finds the crack in our collective psyche’s foundation.