

## Too Hot for PBS?

Christian Science Monitor (Boston, MA), OPINION; Pg. 19

Friday, February 8, 1991

By Richard Minitzer;

*Richard Minitzer is an environmental policy analyst at the Competitive Enterprise Institute in Washington.*

HIGHLIGHT: Global warming documentary emphasized 'wrong' side of issue

THE Public Broadcasting Service recently turned down what the London Financial Times called "quite possibly the best science documentary of the year" on the grounds that it was "too one-sided."

"The Greenhouse Conspiracy," a 55-minute program televised in the United Kingdom last August, won praise from both the public and the press.

It highlights the scientific uncertainties of global warming, relying on the expert testimony of respected scientists from NASA, MIT, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, and the British Antarctic Survey. Each of these scientists expresses varying degrees of doubt about global warming, yet PBS and much of the American press have consistently ignored them.

PBS is not a network, but an association of public television stations that purchases and distributes programs selected by a vote of its national board. The majority at PBS is unwilling to buck the orthodoxy surrounding global warming, although some individual stations have expressed interest in the program.

Why not air both sides? "I'm not sure it's useful to include every single point of view in order to cover every base because you can come up with a program that's virtually impossible for the audience to sort out," senior producer Linda Harrar told Media Watch, a Washington-based watchdog group.

"The Greenhouse Conspiracy" examines the four pillars of global warming: the climate record, which supposedly shows that both temperature and sea levels have risen; the claim that carbon dioxide has been cause of these changes; the climate models, which show that further increases in carbon dioxide will lead to warming between two and five degrees Fahrenheit; and the underlying physics of global warming. Each pillar proves faulty.

What makes the program so effective at demolishing the idea of global warming is not the wide array of scientific evidence it presents, but the remarks of global warming's most prominent spokesmen. TVF's cameras caught leading greenhouse theorist Stephen Schneider, who heads climate research at the National Center for Atmospheric Research, saying: "Looking at every bump and wiggle of the record is a waste of time. You've got to look at averages. So, I don't set very much store by looking at the direct evidence."

Of course, PBS isn't shy about airing provocative programs on global warming as long as they tell

the right story. From "Crisis In The Atmosphere" to the 10-part series "The Race To Save The Planet," PBS has paid for and broadcast a number of programs warning of climate catastrophe. "The Race To Save The Planet" is nothing short of a campaign for an "environmental revolution."

PERHAPS the most egregious PBS effort is "After The Warming." This documentary offers a series of "solutions" which tellingly reveal the Green agenda: a Planetary Management Authority to enforce world environmental regulations and Central American land reform, a high tax on red meat, a doubling of current energy prices "to reflect its true social costs," extensive taxpayer-funded mass transit, and mandatory family planning, to name a few items.

While global warming is grabbing a lot of headlines, its hold on hard evidence is tenuous at best. As "The Greenhouse Conspiracy" makes clear, global warming theorists frequently ignore scientific uncertainty in the historical temperature records and the documented shortcomings of the computer models that predict extreme warming.

"The notion that a warming is catastrophic is drilled into people, to the point where it seems surprising that anyone would question it, and yet underlying it is very little evidence at all. In fact, there is ample evidence to the contrary," said MIT meteorologist Richard Lindzen.

Current temperature records are notoriously unreliable. Weather stations are not evenly spread around the world. Since most weather stations are on dry land, less than 32 percent of the globe gets its temperature recorded.

Global warming theorists also downplay the "urban heat island effect." Cities average between two and five degrees Fahrenheit warmer than rural areas, because concrete and asphalt absorb heat by day and release it at night, which creates urban warming. The urban heat island effect can distort temperature records by as much as three degrees.

Most support for global warming is based on computer-generated climate predictions. But the problem is that the computer model forecasts fail to accurately "predict" today's climate. One model predicts that as much rain falls in the Sahara in summer as in Ireland and Scotland.

"We're not dealing with an exact science here," Tony Slingo, a climate expert at the National Center for Atmospheric Research said in 1989. "Estimates of warming are going to continue to go up and down like yo-yos for the next couple of years."

That two of the coldest winters on record occurred in the past decade has gone virtually unreported as well. In fact, as any weatherman knows, temperatures have declined from 1940 until the 1970s. But let's not confuse PBS with the facts - they have documentaries to make.

---

***Copyright 1991 The Christian Science Publishing Society***