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Climate of Fraud

The University of East Anglia Climatic Research Unit's e-mail account was hacked earlier this month, exposing communications among CRU faculty members and researchers that reveal their willingness to distort climate-change data. Do those e-mails mark a sea-change moment in the global-warming debate? National Review Online asked environmentalism experts to weigh in.

H. Sterling Burnett

Why anyone should be surprised by this, I don't know. Twenty years ago, Steve Schneider of Stanford stated that to be effective advocates on the issue of global warming, scientists would have to "offer up scary scenarios, make simplified dramatic statements, and make little mention of any doubts we might have." His disciples have tried to suppress criticism of the "hockey stick" graph; when that proves impossible and researchers such as Stephen McIntyre and Ross McKittrick expose the graph's deep flaws, they settle for ignoring or downplaying the problem.

And all of this with the cooperation of the mainstream media. Even when errors are found and admitted to, "legitimate journalists" such as those at the New York Times and the Washington Post, rather than asking hard questions of the scientists who have made the errors or conducting

independent investigations, have simply given these scientists a platform to say, "Yeah, we were wrong, but the error was not important." The reporters never question the claim that the errors aren't important.

Whether these e-mails are game-changers depends largely upon two things. First, the willingness of other scientists to stand up and speak out about the way these researchers' deception, professional malfeasance, and attempts to suppress dissent and subvert the peer-review process undermine the credibility of science in general and climate science in particular. Second, the ability of analysts and other concerned parties to force this issue from the blogs into the mainstream media. So far, it's same old, same old: The Times and the Post give climate alarmists a forum in which to downplay the incident, and broadcast media largely ignore it. We need a Van Jones moment, a moment in which people at CNN, CNBC, MSNBC, the Post, the Times, and the AP have to admit that there is a significant story and hard questions should be asked. So far, they've been focusing on whether the e-mails were obtained legally — which shouldn't be an issue, since most of the disclosed material should have been available under FOIA request.

At the very least, the scientists featured prominently in these e-mails should be precluded from participating in further efforts of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, for the sake of the IPCC's integrity, if nothing else.

Their continued involvement with the IPCC can only serve to raise a cloud of suspicion over future IPCC efforts and publications.

— *H. Sterling Burnett is a senior fellow at the National Center for Policy Analysis.*