



Climate Change: A “Pseudoscientific Swindle”

Until his resignation on October 6, Harold Lewis, a man who has been described as “one of America’s most distinguished physicists,” was a member of the American Physical Society (APS) for 67 years. What could lead Lewis, an emeritus professor of Physics of the University of California, Santa Barbara, to tender his resignation after nearly seven decades of membership in the APS?



[In Lewis’ words,](#)

It is of course, the global warming scam, with the (literally) trillions of dollars driving it, that has corrupted so many scientists, and has carried APS before it like a rogue wave. It is the greatest and most successful pseudoscientific fraud I have seen in my long life as a physicist.

In Lewis’ estimation, the vast amount of money connected with the “pseudoscientific fraud” of anthropogenic climate change has corrupted the scientific endeavor; in his opinion, “science” has been corrupted by a lust for wealth. Lewis’ decades of involvement in the scientific community lend tremendous credibility to his charges against the APS, and the paucity of proof for the controversial theory that human activity is destroying the environment. As Lewis declares in his resignation letter:

Anyone who has the faintest doubt that this is so should force himself to read the ClimateGate documents, which lay it bare. (Montford’s book organizes the facts very well.) I don’t believe that any real physicist, nay scientist, can read that stuff without revulsion. I would almost make that revulsion a definition of the word scientist.

So what has the APS, as an organization, done in the face of this challenge? It has accepted the corruption as the norm, and gone along with it.

Lewis offers numerous reasons for his assessment of the APS. Among his enumerated accusations regarding the “unscientific” actions of the society:

1. About a year ago a few of us sent an e-mail on the subject to a fraction of the membership. APS ignored the issues, but the then President immediately launched a hostile investigation of where we got the e-mail addresses. In its better days, APS used to encourage discussion of important issues, and indeed the Constitution cites that as its principal purpose. No more. Everything that has been done in the last year has been designed to silence debate
2. The appallingly tendentious APS statement on Climate Change was apparently written in a hurry by a few people over lunch, and is certainly not representative of the talents of APS members as I have long known them. So a few of us petitioned the Council to reconsider it. One of



the outstanding marks of (in)distinction in the Statement was the poison word incontrovertible, which describes few items in physics, certainly not this one. In response APS appointed a secret committee that never met, never troubled to speak to any skeptics, yet endorsed the Statement in its entirety. (They did admit that the tone was a bit strong, but amazingly kept the poison word incontrovertible to describe the evidence, a position supported by no one.) In the end, the Council kept the original statement, word for word, but approved a far longer "explanatory" screed, admitting that there were uncertainties, but brushing them aside to give blanket approval to the original. The original Statement, which still stands as the APS position, also contains what I consider pompous and asinine advice to all world governments, as if the APS were master of the universe. It is not, and I am embarrassed that our leaders seem to think it is. This is not fun and games, these are serious matters involving vast fractions of our national substance, and the reputation of the Society as a scientific society is at stake.

3. In the interim the ClimateGate scandal broke into the news, and the machinations of the principal alarmists were revealed to the world. It was a fraud on a scale I have never seen, and I lack the words to describe its enormity. Effect on the APS position: none. None at all. This is not science; other forces are at work.

Lewis' point regarding the "poison word incontrovertible" is particularly noteworthy; when such an adamant position is taken, one may expect professionals working in the field to perceive that the time for discussion and debate has been terminated. A scientist who perceives such views to still be debatable, might worry that verbalizing such dissent will have a deleterious effect on his career.

The Climategate scandal, numerous related scandals, and the debacle of last year's Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen seem to have left climate-change militants on the defensive. The angry denunciations of those who doubt the reality of manmade climate change usually are a combination of appeals to authority ('thus saith Science') and *ad hominem* attacks on critics.

Lewis will be a little harder to dismiss, and thus seemingly *ad hominem* assaults centered on his "anger" have begun.

Lewis' accusations gain greater weight from the simple fact that he has not always been a "sceptic" of the theory; as Andrew Revkin of the *New York Times* wrote on October 15,

Almost 20 years ago, Harold Lewis, a respected physicist who had advised the government and the Pentagon on matters ranging from nuclear winter to missile defense, included his assessment of climate change from the buildup of human-generated greenhouse gases in a book on technological risk:

All models agree that the net effect will be a general and global warming of the earth; they only disagree about how much. None suggest that it will be a minor effect, to be ignored while we go about our business.

For some readers, Revkin's article appears to have the clear intention of debunking Lewis' criticisms of manmade climate change; in fact, Revkin offers the following assessment by David Ropeik:

I just read Dr. Lewis' angry letter of resignation from the APS. It puts him at an extreme on the spectrum of debate over climate change in both tone and substance. So I guess the old reporter instincts in me would be cautious about anything he'd have to say, as would be the case with any extreme advocate on any side of any issue.

And Revkin throws himself behind this assessment with a blanket endorsement of such a dismissal of



Written by [James Heiser](#) on October 18, 2010

Lewis: "I share Ropeik's view."

But it is difficult to present Lewis as an "extremist" and talk about his past support for the theory of manmade climate change at the same time. A dispassionate consideration of his letter of resignation may lead a reader to see Lewis as a scientist who has come to oppose a theory he once supported because he found that the science did not support the theory. Furthermore, any "anger" present in Lewis' letter of resignation may actually sounds more like the indignation of a man who believes he has been misled in the past, and has the attendant zeal of someone who earnestly desires to uphold his lifelong commitment to the advance of honest science. In keeping with that commitment to science, Lewis has joined the Academic Advisory Committee of the [Global Warming Policy Foundation](#), which is "composed of researchers, scientists, economists and science authors who provide the GWPF with timely scientific, economic and policy advice."

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