

This Guest Column appeared in the Arizona Daily Star, Tucson, on July 23, 2005.

THE U.S. NEEDS THE BEST SCIENCE, NOT POLITICAL INTIMIDATION OF SCIENTISTS.

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On June 23, 2005 Congressman Joe Barton (R-TX), chairman of the House Energy & Commerce Committee, sent letters to three scientists -- Dr. Michael Mann, University of Virginia, Dr. Raymond Bradley, University of Massachusetts, and Dr. Malcolm Hughes, University of Arizona -- requesting all data, documentation of methods, and computer code pertaining to all of their past research, and records of all grants and contracts received throughout their entire careers. This inquiry is an attempt to harass and intimidate researchers who are engaged in global climate change research, and to promote a negative public perception of the validity of research findings on global warming. Mann, Bradley and Hughes (MBH) are a target of this inquiry because a graph from their research showing rapid warming of the northern hemisphere during the last century --- the so-called "Hockey Stick" -- has become a symbol of global warming.

We are scientists knowledgeable about global climate change research, and we have confidence in and a deep respect for Dr. Hughes and his work. As fellow faculty members and colleagues of Dr. Hughes we object to the nature of Rep. Barton's request, and we strongly support Dr. Hughes and his fellow scientists in their response to this inquiry.

We agree with the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, and the European Geosciences Union, among others, that Rep. Barton's inquiry of Dr. Hughes and his colleagues is inappropriate and unlikely to advance understanding of the important topic of climate change.

As MBH point out in their response, the relevant data sets, methods, and software necessary to evaluate and replicate their original research results are already accessible to anyone. The National Science Foundation has declared that MBH have fully complied with all their standards for disclosure. Indeed, independent research teams have replicated the relevant MBH research using the same and different data sets and methods, and they have generally confirmed MBH's findings. Furthermore, the conclusion that the earth is warming, and that this warming is largely due to human causes, does not depend upon the MBH findings. Even President Bush has acknowledged the scientific consensus that global warming is occurring and human-generated greenhouse gasses are involved. Hence, attempts to discredit the scientist's work in the political arena are misguided. Rep. Barton's request for extensive information on all of the research that these productive scientists have conducted throughout their long careers is especially inappropriate because much of it is unrelated to the topic of global warming.

Our concern extends beyond this particular case to the precedent that might be established by this inquiry. This type of investigation by Congress is likely to have a chilling effect on scientists who are conducting research on topics that are potentially controversial or contrary to political positions of those in power. Hearings with witnesses and commissioned reviews by reputable scientific organizations (e.g., the National Academy of Sciences) are much more appropriate Congressional mechanisms for discovering and evaluating policy-relevant science.

University of Arizona faculty who share the views expressed in this column are listed below. Note that not all scientists and engineers listed here claim expertise in climate change research.

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