

Gorey Truths: 25 Inconvenient Truths for Al Gore

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Murray Op-Ed in National Review Online

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With [An Inconvenient Truth](#)¹, the companion book to former Vice President Al Gore's global-warming movie, currently number nine in Amazon sales rank, this is a good time to point out that the book, which is a largely pictorial representation of the movie's graphical presentation, exaggerates the evidence surrounding global warming. Ironically, the former Vice President leaves out many truths that are inconvenient for his argument. Here are just 25 of them.

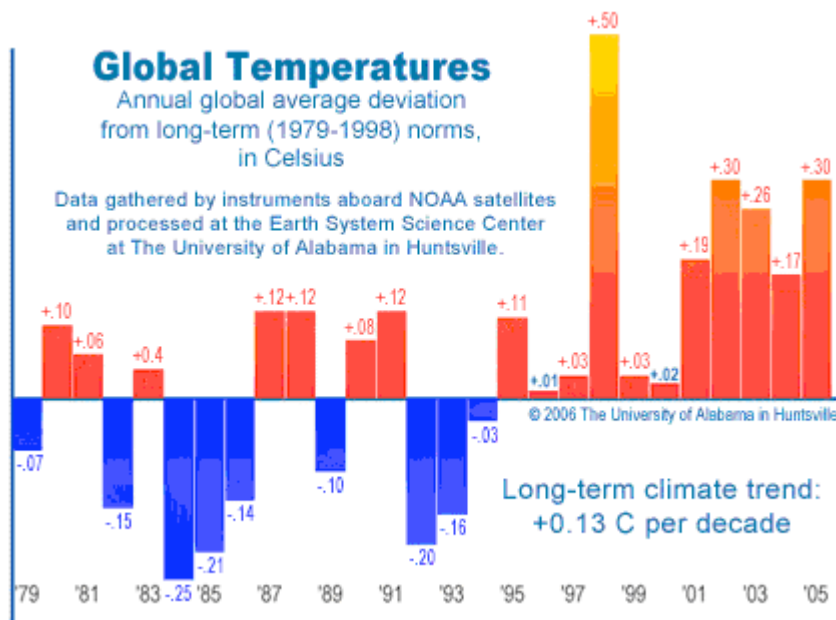
1. Carbon Dioxide's Effect on Temperature. The relationship between global temperature and carbon dioxide (CO₂), on which the entire scare is founded, is not linear. Every molecule of CO₂ added to the atmosphere contributes less to warming than the previous one. The book's graph on p. 66-67 is seriously misleading. Moreover, even the historical levels of CO₂ shown on the graph are disputed. Evidence from plant fossil-remains suggest that there was as much CO₂ in the atmosphere about 11,000 years ago as there is today.

2. Kilimanjaro. The snows of Kilimanjaro are melting not because of global warming but because of a local climate shift that began 100 years ago. The authors of a [report](#)² in the *International Journal of Climatology* "develop a new concept for investigating the retreat of Kilimanjaro's glaciers, based on the physical understanding of glacier-climate interactions." They note that, "The concept considers the peculiarities of the mountain and implies that climatological processes other than air temperature control the ice recession in a direct manner. A drastic drop in atmospheric moisture at the end of the 19th century and the ensuing drier climatic conditions are likely forcing glacier retreat on Kilimanjaro."

3. Glaciers. Glaciers around the world have been receding at around the same pace for over 100 years. [Research](#)³ published by the National Academy of Sciences last week indicates that the Peruvian glacier on p. 53-53 probably disappeared a few thousand years ago.

4. The Medieval Warm Period. Al Gore says that the "hockey stick" graph that shows temperatures remarkably steady for the last 1,000 years has been validated, and ridicules the concept of a "medieval warm period." That's not the case. Last year, [a team of leading paleoclimatologists](#)⁴ said, "When matching existing temperature reconstructions...the timeseries display a reasonably coherent picture of major climatic episodes: 'Medieval Warm Period,' 'Little Ice Age' and 'Recent Warming.'" They go on to conclude, "So what would it mean, if the reconstructions indicate a larger...or smaller...temperature amplitude? We suggest that the former situation, i.e. enhanced variability during pre-industrial times, would result in a redistribution of weight towards the role of natural factors in forcing temperature changes, thereby relatively devaluing the impact of anthropogenic emissions and affecting future temperature predictions."

5. The Hottest Year. Satellite temperature measurements say that 2005 wasn't the hottest year on record — 1998 was — and that temperatures have been stable since 2001 (p.73). Here's the satellite graph:



6. Heat Waves. The summer heat wave that struck Europe in 2003 was caused by an atmospheric pressure anomaly; it had nothing to do with global warming. As the United Nations Environment Program reported in September 2003, "This extreme weather [sic] was caused by an anti-cyclone firmly anchored over the western European land mass holding back the rain-bearing depressions that usually enter the continent from the Atlantic ocean. This situation was exceptional in the extended length of time (over 20 days) during which it conveyed very hot dry air up from south of the Mediterranean."

7. Record Temperatures. Record temperatures — hot and cold — are set every day around the world; that's the nature of records. Statistically, any given place will see four record high temperatures set every year. There is evidence that daytime high temperatures are staying about the same as for the last few decades, but nighttime lows are gradually rising. Global warming might be more properly called, "Global less cooling." (On this, see Patrick J. Michaels book, *Meltdown: The Predictable Distortion of Global Warming by Scientists, Politicians, and the Media.*)

8. Hurricanes. There is no overall global trend of hurricane-force storms getting stronger that has anything to do with temperature. A [recent study](#)⁵ in *Geophysical Research Letters* found: "The data indicate a large increasing trend in tropical cyclone intensity and longevity for the North Atlantic basin and a considerable decreasing trend for the Northeast Pacific. All other basins showed small trends, and there has been no significant change in global net tropical cyclone activity. There has been a small increase in global Category 4–5 hurricanes from the period 1986–1995 to the period 1996–2005. Most of this increase is likely due to improved observational technology. These findings indicate that other important factors govern intensity and frequency of tropical cyclones besides SSTs [sea surface

temperatures].”

9. Tornadoes. Records for numbers of tornadoes are set because we can now record more of the smaller tornadoes (see, for instance, the Tornado FAQ at [Weather Underground](#)).

10. European Flooding. European flooding is not new (p. 107). Similar flooding happened in 2003. Research from Michael Mudelsee and colleagues from the University of Leipzig published in *Nature* (Sept. 11, 2003) looked at data reaching as far back as 1021 (for the Elbe) and 1269 (for the Oder). They concluded that there is no upward trend in the incidence of extreme flooding in this region of central Europe.

11. Shrinking Lakes. Scientists investigating the disappearance of Lake Chad (p.116) found that most of it was due to human overuse of water. “The lake’s decline probably has nothing to do with global warming, report the two scientists, who based their findings on computer models and satellite imagery made available by NASA. They attribute the situation instead to human actions related to climate variation, compounded by the ever increasing demands of an expanding population” (“[Shrinking African Lake Offers Lesson on Finite Resources](#)”, *National Geographic*, April 26, 2001). Lake Chad is also a very shallow lake that has shrunk considerably throughout human history.

12. Polar Bears. Polar bears are not becoming endangered. A leading Canadian polar bear biologist [wrote recently](#)⁸, “Climate change is having an effect on the west Hudson population of polar bears, but really, there is no need to panic. Of the 13 populations of polar bears in Canada, 11 are stable or increasing in number. They are not going extinct, or even appear (sic) to be affected at present.”

13. The Gulf Stream. The Gulf Stream, the ocean conveyor belt, is not at risk of shutting off in the North Atlantic (p. 150). Carl Wunsch of MIT wrote to the journal *Nature* in 2004 to say, “The only way to produce an ocean circulation without a Gulf Stream is either to turn off the wind system, or to stop the Earth’s rotation, or both”

14. Invasive Species. Gore’s worries about the effect of warming on species ignore evolution. With the new earlier caterpillar season in the Netherlands, an evolutionary advantage is given to birds that can hatch their eggs earlier than the rest. That’s how nature works. Also, “invasive species” naturally extend their range when climate changes. As for the pine beetle given as an example of invasive species, Rob Scagel, a forest microclimate specialist in British Columbia, [said](#)⁹, “The MPB (mountain pine beetle) is a species native to this part of North America and is always present. The MPB epidemic started as comparatively small outbreaks and through forest management inaction got completely out of hand.”

15. Species Loss. When it comes to species loss, the figures given on p. 163 are based on extreme guesswork, as the late Julian Simon [pointed out](#)¹⁰. We have documentary evidence of only just over 1,000 extinctions since 1600 (see, for instance, Bjørn Lomborg’s [The Skeptical Environmentalist](#)¹¹, p. 250).

16. Coral Reefs. Coral reefs have been around for over 500 million years. This means that they have survived through long periods with much higher temperatures and atmospheric CO₂ concentrations than today.

17. Malaria and other Infectious Diseases. Leading disease scientists contend

that climate change plays only a minor role in the spread of emerging infectious diseases. In "Global Warming and Malaria: A Call for Accuracy" (*The Lancet*, June 2004), nine leading malariologists criticized models linking global warming to increased malaria spread as "misleading" and "display[ing] a lack of knowledge" of the subject.

18. Antarctic Ice. There is controversy over whether the Antarctic ice sheet is thinning or thickening. Recent scientific studies have shown a thickening in the interior at the same time as increased melting along the coastlines. Temperatures in the interior are generally decreasing. The Antarctic Peninsula, where the Larsen-B ice shelf broke up (p. 181) is not representative of what is happening in the rest of Antarctica. Dr. Wibjörn Karlén, Professor Emeritus of Physical Geography and Quaternary Geology at Stockholm University, [acknowledges](#)¹², "Some small areas in the Antarctic Peninsula have broken up recently, just like it has done back in time. The temperature in this part of Antarctica has increased recently, probably because of a small change in the position of the low pressure systems." According to a forthcoming report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, climate models based on anthropogenic forcing cannot explain the anomalous warming of the Antarctic Peninsula; thus, something natural is at work.

19. Greenland Climate. Greenland was warmer in the 1920s and 1930s than it is now. A recent study by Dr. Peter Chylek of the University of California, Riverside, addressed the question of whether man is directly responsible for recent warming: "An important question is to what extent can the current (1995-2005) temperature increase in Greenland coastal regions be interpreted as evidence of man-induced global warming? Although there has been a considerable temperature increase during the last decade (1995 to 2005) a similar increase and at a faster rate occurred during the early part of the 20th century (1920 to 1930) when carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases could not be a cause. The Greenland warming of 1920 to 1930 demonstrates that a high concentration of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases is not a necessary condition for period of warming to arise. The observed 1995-2005 temperature increase seems to be within a natural variability of Greenland climate." (Petr Chylek et al., *Geophysical Research Letters*, 13 June 2006.)

20. Sea Level Rise. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change does not forecast sea-level rises of "18 to 20 feet." Rather, it says, "We project a sea level rise of 0.09 to 0.88 m for 1990 to 2100, with a central value of 0.48 m. The central value gives an average rate of 2.2 to 4.4 times the rate over the 20th century...It is now widely agreed that major loss of grounded ice and accelerated sea level rise are very unlikely during the 21st century." Al Gore's suggestions of much more are therefore extremely alarmist.

21. Population. Al Gore worries about population growth; Gore does not suggest a solution. Fertility in the developed world is stable or decreasing. The plain fact is that we are not going to reduce population back down to 2 billion or fewer in the foreseeable future. In the meantime, the population in the developing world requires a significant increase in its standard of living to reduce the threats of premature and infant mortality, disease, and hunger. In [The Undercover Economist](#)¹³, Tim Harford writes, "If we are honest, then, the argument that trade leads to economic growth, which leads to climate change, leads us then to a stark conclusion: we should cut our trade links to make sure that the Chinese, Indians and Africans stay poor. The question is whether any environmental catastrophe, even severe climate change,

could possibly inflict the same terrible human cost as keeping three or four billion people in poverty. To ask that question is to answer it.”

22. Energy Generation. A specific example of this is Gore’s acknowledgement that 30 percent of global CO₂ emissions come from wood fires used for cooking (p. 227). If we introduced affordable, coal-fired power generation into South Asia and Africa we could reduce this considerably and save over 1.6 million lives a year. This is the sort of solution that Gore does not even consider.

23. Carbon-Emissions Trading. The European Carbon Exchange Market, touted as “effective” on p. 252, has [crashed](#)¹⁴.

24. The “Scientific Consensus.” On the supposed “scientific consensus”: Dr. Naomi Oreskes, of the University of California, San Diego, (p. 262) did not examine a “large random sample” of scientific articles. She got her search terms wrong and thought she was looking at all the articles when in fact she was looking at only 928 out of about 12,000 articles on “climate change.” Dr. Benny Peiser, of Liverpool John Moores University in England, was unable to replicate her study. He [says](#)¹⁵, “As I have [stressed repeatedly](#)¹⁶, the whole data set includes only 13 abstracts (~1%) that *explicitly* endorse what Oreskes has called the ‘consensus view.’ In fact, the vast majority of abstracts does (sic) not mention anthropogenic climate change. Moreover — and despite attempts to deny this fact — a handful of abstracts actually questions the view that human activities are the main driving force of ‘the observed warming over the last 50 years.’” In addition, a recent survey of scientists following the same methodology as one published in 1996 found that about 30 percent of scientists disagreed to some extent or another with the contention that “climate change is mostly the result of anthropogenic causes.” Less than 10 percent “strongly agreed” with the statement. Details of both the survey and the failed attempt to replicate the Oreskes study can be found [here](#)¹⁷.

25. Economic Costs. Even if the study Gore cites is right (p. 280-281), the United States will still emit massive amounts of CO₂ after all the measures it outlines have been realized. Getting emissions down to the paltry levels needed to stabilize CO₂ in the atmosphere would require, in Gore’s own words, “a wrenching transformation” of our way of life. This cannot be done easily or without significant cost. The Kyoto Protocol, which Gore enthusiastically supports, would avert less than a tenth of a degree of warming in the next fifty years and would cost up to \$400 billion a year to the U.S. All of the current proposals in Congress would cost the economy significant amounts, making us all poorer, with all that that entails for human health and welfare, while doing nothing to stop global warming.

Finally, Gore quotes Winston Churchill (p. 100) — but he should read what Churchill said when he was asked what qualities a politician requires: “The ability to foretell what is going to happen tomorrow, next week, next month and next year. And to have the ability afterwards to explain why it didn't happen.”

¹ <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1594865671/ref=nosim/002-6776951-7377610?n=283155>

² <http://www.geo.umass.edu/faculty/bradley/kaser2004.pdf>

³ <http://www.pnas.org/cgi/content/short/0603118103v1>

⁴ http://www.wsl.ch/staff/jan.esper/publications/QSR_Esper_2005.pdf

⁵ <http://tropical.atmos.colostate.edu/Includes/Documents/Publications/klotzbach2006.pdf>

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- ⁶ <http://www.wunderground.com/tornadoFAQ.asp>
- ⁷ http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2001/04/0426_lakechadshrinks.html
- ⁸ http://www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article_Type1&c=Article&cid=1146433819696&call_pageid=970599119419
- ⁹ <http://www.canada.com/nationalpost/financialpost/story.html?id=d0235a70-33f1-45b3-803b-829b1b3542ef&&p=4>
- ¹⁰ <http://www.juliansimon.com/writings/Norton/NORTON03.txt>
- ¹¹ <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0521010683/ref=nosim/002-6776951-7377610?n=283155>
- ¹² <http://www.canadafreepress.com/2006/harris061206.htm>
- ¹³ <http://www.nationalreview.com/redirect/amazon.p?j=0195189779>
- ¹⁴ <http://www.cei.org/gencon/019,05328.cfm>
- ¹⁵ <http://www.staff.livjm.ac.uk/spsbpeis/Oreskes-abstracts.htm>
- ¹⁶ <http://www.staff.livjm.ac.uk/spsbpeis/NationalPost.htm>
- ¹⁷ <http://www.staff.livjm.ac.uk/spsbpeis/Scienceletter.htm>