Up Front IABM
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BROADCAST METEOROLOGY
The Professional Association Representing the World's Broadcast Meteorology Community

CLIMATEGATE - *Is this the start of the end?*

"Why We Disagree About Climate Change,"
By MIKE HULME

I am a climate scientist who worked in the Climatic Research Unit (CRU) at the University of East Anglia in the 1990s. I have been reflecting on the bigger lessons to be learned from the stolen emails, some of which were mine. One thing the episode has made clear is that it has become difficult to disentangle political arguments about climate policies from scientific arguments about the evidence for man-made climate change and the confidence placed in predictions of future change. The quality of both political debate and scientific practice suffers as a consequence.

Surveys of public opinion on both sides of the Atlantic about man-made climate change continue to tell us something politicians know only too well: The citizens they rule over have minds of their own. In the U.K., a recent survey suggested that only 41% believed humans are causing climate change, 32% remained unsure and 15% were convinced we aren't. Similar surveys in the U.S. have shown a recent reduction in the number of people believing in man-made climate change.

One reaction to this "unreasonableness" is to get scientists to speak louder, more often, or more dramatically about climate change. Another reaction from government bodies and interest groups is to use ever-more-emotional campaigning. Thus both the U.K. government's recent "bedtime stories" adverts, and Plane Stupid's Internet campaign showing polar bears falling past twin towers, have attracted widespread criticism for being too provocative and scary. These instinctive reactions fail to place the various aspects of our knowledge about climate change—scientific insights, political values, cultural moods, personal beliefs—in rit relationship with each other. Too often, when we think we are arguing over scientific evidence for climate change, we are in fact disagreeing about our dif-

Continued on page 2

The Truth About the Stolen Climate Scientists' E-mails

This past November, somebody broke into an e-mail server at the United Kingdom's University of East Anglia's Climatic Research Unit (CRU), stole 3000 personal e-mail communications from climate scientists, and then leaked a few of these e-mails to the press. The decided minority who oppose the comprehensive 2007 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report (most of them not scientists) then initiated a massive public relations campaign trumpeting these e-mails as "proof" of a "conspiracy" among climate scientists to hide and manipulate data to support their conclusions. This could not be further from the truth. Here's what you need to know:

1. E-mail allows us scientists to rapidly communicate with each other to informally discuss and debate the latest research. However, the illegally obtained e-mails are only personal communication, and do NOT represent the final, peer-reviewed, debated science that appears in scientific journals (which forms the basis for the IPCC conclusions). For example, let's say you e-mailed a friend that you wanted to buy a new car, but said that you didn't have the money for it. What if somebody then stole that e-mail, and used it to publicize that you were having severe money problems? Would that be fair? Of course not. The e-mail was stolen, taken out of context, and the person who stole it had no factual information about the specifics of your financial situation. This is exactly what happened to the CRU scientists.

2. There is an overwhelming amount of scientific research conducted independently by climate scientists around the world that strongly supports the IPCC conclusions. I was in touch with many of these scientists immediately after the stolen e-mail story broke, and every single one of them confidently said that the stolen e-mails will not in any way alter their research conclusions, which have been independently verified by colleagues at other research institutions and in other nations, and have not been proven wrong in numerous attempts by global warming sceptics. To believe that a single scientist can manipulate the world's entire scientific community on global warming is as ridiculous as believing that humans did not land on the moon.

3. Finally, my television channel's investigative reporters routinely research corruption stories, but they never stoop to illegal activity to get the information they need. Documents are legally requested through the United States Freedom of Information Act, and they consult with our corporate attorney to ensure that any undercover investigating they do is both legal and ethical. The person or people who stole the CRU e-mails are guilty of criminal activity. Would you trust any television channel's investigations if this is how they acquired their information? Then why would you trust the opinions of non-scientists who illegally obtained personal e-mails with scientific discussions, and then published those e-mails without the proper context?

Yes, the stolen e-mails created a public relations disaster that will only serve to confuse the public. However, we scientists are not concerned about climate change science itself, which is rock-solid and has withstood scientific scrutiny for many years now. It is our job to report fairly and honestly on this issue, and to inform the public with the true and proper perspective about this story.

Paul Gross