The Mann scandal

Ken Cuccinelli v. 810 academics

*By Paul Driessen* May 29, 2010

“Scientific debates should be played out in the academic arena,” insists University of Virginia environmental sciences professor David Carr. “If Michael Mann’s conclusions are unsupported by his data, his scientific critics will eventually demonstrate this.” (ICECAP NOTE: Already done David)

Carr and 809 other Virginia scientists and academics signed a petition launched by the activist Union of Concerned Scientists, protesting Commonwealth Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli’s investigation of former University of Virginia professor Michael Mann. The American Association of University Professors likewise opposes Cuccinelli, who is seeking documents from UVA, to determine whether there are grounds to prosecute Mann for violating the Fraud Against Taxpayers Act, by presenting false or misleading information in support of applications for state-funded research.

Carr claims Cuccinelli is attempting to “drown out” scientific debate.” Others have accused the AG of conducting a “witch hunt,” engaging in “McCarthyite” tactics, and “restricting academic freedom.”

It’s time to clear a few things up.

Mann is the former UVA professor, whose “hockey stick” temperature chart was used to promote claims that “sudden” and “unprecedented” manmade global warming “threatens” human civilization and Earth itself. The hockey stick was first broken by climatologists Willie Soon and Sallie Baliunas, who demonstrated that a Medieval Warm Period and Little Ice Age were clearly reflected in historic data across the globe, but redacted by Mann. Analysts Steve McIntyre and Ross McKitrick later showed that Mann’s computer program generated hockey-stick patterns regardless of what numbers were fed into it - even random telephone numbers; that explained why the global warming and cooling of the last millennium magically disappeared in Mann’s “temperature reconstruction.”

The Climategate emails revealed another deliberate “trick” that Mann used to generate a late twentieth-century temperature jump: he replaced tree ring data with thermometer measurements at the point in his timeline when the tree data no longer fit his climate disaster thesis. During his UVA tenure, he employed other sly statistical tricks to generate a purported, and truly unprecedented, CO2-driven warming of 2-4.5 degrees F per decade (1-2.5 degrees C). That extrapolates to as much as 45 degrees F per century!
Not surprisingly, he refused to share his data, computer codes and methodologies with skeptical scientists. Perhaps worse, Climategate emails indicate that Mann and others conspired to co-opt and corrupt the very scientific process that Carr asserts will ultimately condemn or vindicate them.

This behavior certainly gives Cuccinelli “probable cause” for launching an investigation. As the AG notes, “The same legal standards for fraud apply to the academic setting that apply elsewhere. The same rule of law, the same objective fact-finding process, will take place.” Some witch hunt.

There is simply no room in science, academia or public policy for manipulation, falsification or fraud. Academic freedom does not confer a right to engage in such practices, and both attorneys general and research institutions have a duty to root them out, especially in the case of climate change research.

Work by Mann and other alarmist scientists is not merely some theoretical exercise that can be permitted to “play itself out” over many years, if and when the “academic arena” gets around to it. These assertions of climate crisis are being used right now by Congress, states, courts and the Environmental Protection Agency to justify draconian restrictions on energy use and greenhouse emissions. They would shackle our freedoms and civil rights and hammer our jobs, economy, health, welfare and living standards.

If the science is wrong - or far worse, if it is manipulated, fabricated, fraudulent and covered up - then grave damage will be done to our nation, liberties and families, before the truth gets its boots on.

As to “scientific debate” over global warming, there has been virtually none in the academic arena. The science is viewed as “settled,” debate has been squelched, and those who seek to initiate debate are attacked, vilified, harassed and shipped off to academic Siberia.

Dr. Patrick Michaels, another former UVA climate researcher, was fired as Virginia State Climatologist by then-Governor Tim Kaine for raising inconvenient questions and facts on climate science. When Greenpeace demanded access to Michaels’ emails, UVA promptly acceded - before contesting AG Cuccinelli’s request for Mann’s.
The 810 protesters and their UCS and AAUP consorts were silent. Their principles and objections do not seem to apply to shrill activist groups infringing on the academic and scientific freedom of “politically incorrect” researchers, even when there is no suggestion of dishonesty. Other “skeptical” climate researchers have met with similar fates. The pungent scent of hypocrisy fills the air.

No surprise there. The massive US government climate change research gravy train alone totaled some $9 billion in grants during 2009, courtesy of hardworking taxpayers. IPCC, EU & Company climate grants - plus billions more for renewable energy research - fatten the larder still further. Now that money, prestige and power are threatened.

Climategate and other revelations about the lack of evidence for the “manmade climate disaster” thesis have sent belief in AlGorean gloom and doom plummeting. Global warming consistently comes in dead last on any list of environmental concerns. Three-fourths of Americans are unwilling to spend more than $100 a year to prevent climate change. China, India and other developing nations properly refuse to sign a carbon-cutting economic suicide pact.

The public is rightly concerned that in-house investigations by Penn State University (Mann’s current institution), East Anglia University (home of Phil Jones and the Climategate emails) and the IPCC have the patina of a Tom Sawyer whitewash. Independent investigations like Cuccinelli’s are absolutely essential, to ferret out fraud and misconduct - which may be rare but must be dealt with when it happens.

Dr. Andrew Wakefield falsified studies to create a connection between autism and trace mercury in vaccines against measles, mumps and rubella. Britain stripped him of his right to practice medicine. But meanwhile, a lingering stench remains over double standards; World Wildlife Fund press releases and rank speculation masquerading as peer-reviewed science; computer models enshrined as “proof” of looming climate disasters; and billions being squandered on research purporting to link global warming to nearly every malady and phenomenon known to man.

We the taxpayers are paying for this work. We the people will pay the price - in soaring energy bills, fewer jobs, lower living standards and lost freedoms - for draconian energy and emission laws enacted in the name of saving the planet.

We have a right to insist that the research be honest and aboveboard. That the work products stay in the public domain, available for scrutiny. That researchers share their data, computer codes and analytical methodologies, and engage in robust debate with skeptics and critics. That those who violate these fundamental precepts forfeit their access to future grants. And that our tax dollars no longer fund bogus acne-and-climate-change studies and alarmist propaganda. (Talk about budget cutting opportunities!)

It’s certainly understandable that scientists, academics, eco-activists and the AAUP and UVA would line up behind Mann and against Cuccinelli. There’s a lot of power, prestige and cash on the line. But it is essential that the attorney general and law-abiding
citizens insist on transparency, integrity, credibility and accountability in the climate change arena.

We should support what Ken Cuccinelli is doing - and demand that Eric Holder and other state AGs take similar action. Read more of this excellent piece by Paul Driessen here.

ICECAP Note: The irony is the same things Carr accuses Cuccinelli of are exactly what Mann, the Universities, the Union of Concerned (Corrupt?) Scientists and the 810 academicians have been practicing for years - “drowning out scientific debate”, conducting a “witch hunt” and purging scientists that might endanger the Universities getting in on the huge grant bonanza, engaging in “McCarthyite” tactics, and “restricting academic freedom.” I could tell you many shocking stories from around the country of how true academic freedom is now being repressed by these same scientists. Cuccinelli should be allowed to proceed and let the chips fall where they may. In discovery, the truth will come out, which is why the academics are so vocal and running scared. Best of luck to Cuccinelli. The good people of Virginia need to know the truth. Let Virginia be to this issue what Arizona has been to the immigration issue. Forcing a light to shine on a too long ignored issue. Doing nothing now is no answer. A corrupt system will never clean its own house.