

# The Hockey Stick and the Climate Wars review

by Toby Carlson

An extremely well documented and riveting account of the climate wars during the past 15 years is described in the new book by the well-known climate scientist and professor of meteorology at Penn State, Michael Mann.

The Hockey Stick and the Climate Wars (Columbia books, 2012) is an account of the mounting crescendo of criticism, vituperation and abuse that he and his fellow climate scientists received at the hands of Congress, the media and the fossil fuel industry in response to published articles showing that a dramatic rise in global temperature that occurred during the latter half of the 20th and early 21st century was caused by human activ-

ity.

The story begins in the mid 1990s at Yale, where Mann, a new graduate student and recent physics major at the University of California, Berkeley, was searching for a meaningful research topic for his doctorate, finally finding his niche with Professor Barry Saltzman in the department of Geology and Geophysics.

Ironically, the subject of Mann's PhD thesis was not global warming but the natural variability of the Earth's climate during the past century or two. Because the short length of the temperature record, Mann's post doctoral work extended the record back to the year 1400 using proxy data, such as tree rings.

It wasn't until 1998 and 1999 that Mann published his seminal papers on

climate change which would precipitate him into the center of a looming controversy. In those papers, Mann introduced the 'hockey stick', so called because the temperature record over the previous six centuries showed a pattern evocative of a hockey stick, its handle representing a lengthy period of slowly changing temperature and a sharply upturned blade representing the dramatic rise in global temperature after 1960.

The next several chapters describes the escalating campaign to discredit Professor Mann and a number of colleagues, mostly by some Republican members of Congress, and the fossil fuel industry, largely subsidized by the Koch brothers, the Scaife Foundations and the Exxon corporation. These groups had subsidized

media allies, bogus 'experts' and a few legitimate scientists. Initially, the attacks were made primarily over scientific issues. But as these arguments were repeatedly countered, albeit somewhat slowly, by climate scientists using hard scientific facts, the onslaught become increasingly vituperative, personal and intimidating, and included threats of violence.

All this came to a head in 2009 when hacked e-mails by unknown felons, exposed e-mails written by a climate scientist at the University of East Anglia, Phil Jones, then director of the university's Climate Research Unit (CRU), to his colleagues, including Professor Mann.

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June 2012

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Immediately, climate adversaries cherry picked out of context various words and phrases seeming to suggest that some sort of hoax was being perpetrated by climate scientists at the expense of the public. Exposure of these e-mails to public scrutiny set off a fire storm in the media, leading to the term Cimategate, which put the entire field of climate research on the defensive. Although abuse by the media, Congress and the public was brutal, Professor Mann recounts all this with passionate objectivity, citing a barrage of articles in the media including hundreds of hostile and threatening e-mails,

Eventually, however, scientists in other disciplines came to the aid of Mann and his colleagues, realizing that they were witnessing an attack against American science and generally against free inquiry: the American Association of

University Professors, the National Science Foundation, the National Academy of Sciences, Nobel laureates, the UK House of Parliament, and even some conservative organizations. In response, opinion in the media gradually shifted in favor of the climate scientists. As the tide turned, Penn State, which had requested a review Mann's own correspondence, formally acquitted him of any wrong doing as had the University of East Anglia in the case of Professor Jones.

Hockey Stick is very readable, well-researched book, written in an informal style as it describes the personally bruising events, the battles lost and won, with clarity and reasonably good humor. Nearly half the book consists of references and extensive commentary on the text. I highly recommend reading it to anyone interested in the subject of climate and contemporary American politics.