



CO2 COALITION SCIENCE & POLICY BRIEF

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Global Warming: Facebook Thinks Its Opinion Is Better Than Yours

By Pat Michaels, Ph.D.

It's hardly a secret that big media, especially those that are "social" and informational, are colored left, so it's not a surprise that using an internet search engine for anything both controversial and topical (say, global warming) loads your screen with the latest opinions masquerading as news in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and CNN.

That's fine. After all, what are media without some inherent bias? But what about informed scientific opinions that some platform (say, Facebook) might not like? For some reason—and I sincerely don't know why—Facebook has got a thing about global warming. I have experienced that up close and personal as a long-time professor of climatology, an expert reviewer and contributing author for the UN's climate change agency, a frequent witness at congressional hearings, and a state climatologist who served as president of the American Association of State Climatologists.

If your scientific opinion clashes with Facebook's, they'll bring out a scientific goon squad, a hyperpartisan activist group called Climate Feedback, to "fact-check" your opinion and label it false. Under Facebook procedures known as shadow banning, this label damages

About the Author

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the ability of any Facebook page that posts your opinion to reach its audience.

The confusion of opinion with fact matters a great deal in discussions of climate science and energy economics. Much of what is up for debate in these scientifically and technologically complex fields is indeed expert opinion about the meaning of data and models, rather than provable fact.

Last year Facebook placed Climate Feedback's "false" label on my op-ed on the poor performance of the computer models that predict average global temperature. I had written that op-ed in the *Washington Examiner* with Caleb Rossiter, a statistician who directs a group

where I am a senior fellow, the CO2 Coalition of 55 climate scientists and energy economists and engineers. We then showed in detail in a letter to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg that Climate Feedback's explanation of its label was "unsupported by the data and analysis of UN and U.S. government agencies."

<http://co2coalition.org/2020/06/08/climate-scientists-protest-facebooks-partisan-censorship-on-climate-change-in-open-letter-to-ceo-mark-zuckerberg/>

Facebook, to its credit, removed the "false" label and indeed adopted a new policy of not "fact-checking" opinion pieces.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-to-create-fact-checking-exemptions-for-opinion-and-satire-11569875314>

Yet Facebook is back on my case again, for a *Life, Liberty & Levin* television interview that aired on October 21, 2018. It was a good interview, thanks in no small part to Mr. Levin's style. He is genuinely interested in the in-depth thoughts of his guests. The first segment, about 15 minutes long, has been downloaded nearly 2.9 million times from YouTube.

Facebook does not like it. If someone posts it or sends you a link to it on your feed

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fA5sGtj7QKQ>), you'll get a label before you can view it, stating that what is to follow is "false," along with another link to explain why Facebook thinks so. Click around and you will eventually come to climatefeedback.org, which collects opinions from politically active scientists, mainly university types. I'm sure that these scientists are sincere in opining climate alarm, but I also know from my 30 years as a professor that they are professionally incentivized to keep the climate gravy train feeding their employers.

Climate Feedback was founded and is funded by climate alarmist Eric Michelman. It publishes sloppy propaganda as rebuttals to virtually anything that disputes the narratives of cata-

strophic CO2-driven climate changes and a "renewable" energy future. Recent posts on its website range widely, incorrectly putting labels like "false," "misleading," and "outdated data" on everything from counts of polar bears to Michael Moore's recent film on the true environmental and financial costs of wind and solar projects, whose infrastructure is anything but renewable. Having been denied the ability to label op-eds, Climate Feedback is apparently now focusing its censorship efforts on videos like mine. They've also been going after popular PragerU video lectures by highly-qualified scientists in our CO2 Coalition, such as MIT atmospheric physicist Richard Lindzen and ecologist Patrick Moore, a founding member and former international leader of Greenpeace.

So let's take a look at Climate Feedback's basis for its "false" label about my opinions. Specifically, its two reviewers object that I said that "about half" of the total observed warming since 1900 was related to human emissions of carbon dioxide, and that around the turn of the current century warming "either slows down or ends, depending upon whose data you use," until it ramped back up with the big El Niño of 2015-6.

The First Climate Feedback Opinion

Let's start with the long-term surface temperature history, to address my claim that "about half" of the post-1900 warming is attributable to dreaded human influence, and the rest is natural. Ironically, my opinion is shared by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which usually is cited by alarmists as the gold standard for opinion on global warming. The UN claims only that "it is extremely likely that more than half" of the warming since 1950 is due to human activities. It makes no claim about human influence on the equal warming from earlier in the 20th century.

https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full.pdf

The record that has the least-fudged data comes from the Climate Research Unit [CRU] at the University of East Anglia, so I, like UN, will use that set. (Figure 1, p. 6)

The warming that commenced around 1910 began after a *de minimis* increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide. It's generally believed that the "pre-industrial" concentration of the gas was around 280 parts per million (ppm); currently it is around 410. But when this warming started, it was around 298ppm. If a mere change of 18ppm could touch off nearly a half-degree of warming, it would have to be really hot right now, with the addition of another 112 ppm. Statistically speaking, the rates of warming from 1910-45 and 1976-2000 are the same. Dr. Ros-siter, my co-author on the 2019 op-ed, argues that the UN is silent on the cause of the earlier increase precisely because it is embarrassingly natural.

<http://co2coalition.org/publications/equal-warming-1900-to-1950-versus-1950-to-2018-why-the-un-knows-the-first-half-was-natural/>

In my official public comments submitted on the draft of the most recent (2018) National Assessment of climate change impacts in the U.S., I explained in detail why the net human impact on climate when this first warming started had to be near zero, using more refined estimates of the cooling effects of human emissions of particulates than were previously employed.

<https://www.cato.org/publications/public-comments/comments-fourth-national-climate-assessment>

Why choose those estimates? In my professional opinion they are a better fit to what has been observed than earlier estimates. Esteemed climate and data scientists Judith Curry and Nicholas Lewis agree, and that finding is consistent

with work of the University of Alabama's John Christy and retired NASA researcher Roy Spencer, who was awarded one of the American Meteorological Society's most prestigious awards for his pioneering work monitoring global temperature from satellites.

Incredibly, the two Climate Feedback reviewers offer as their primary proof of a human effect on the early 20th century warming a recent modeling study that they say estimates that half of the early 20th century warming came from "natural variability" in the "Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation and the Pacific Decadal Oscillation," and the other half from "a combination of greenhouse gases, solar output, and a reduction in volcanic activity" – but they don't say how much the effect of the greenhouse gases was!

So, you can see that the only difference between my opinion and Climate Feedback's is that the Facebook squad gives no numerical estimate for the CO2 effect pre-1950, while I also say it was there, but was too small to measure -- because otherwise there would have been a huge increase in temperature from the massive increase in CO2 emission after World War II, which has not occurred. I have my opinion, they have theirs, but neither of us can be sure of the CO2 effect 100 years ago in the complex world of the atmosphere. Yet Facebook labels my opinion "False."

It should also be noted that the vaunted climate models cited by the reviewers are hardly close to being objective. In an April 2020 paper, Max Planck Institute modeler Thorsten Maurtsen was brutally honest. The modeler chooses the answer and then writes the code to get there. Don't believe me? Listen to him, writing in the refereed periodical *Journal of Advances in Modeling Earth Systems* about how he pro-

grammed his model to deliver the desired high Equilibrium Climate Sensitivity of three degrees of global warming from a doubling of carbon dioxide levels, an ECS that is three times greater than what the data to date support: <http://co2coalition.org/publications/on-climate-sensitivity/>

"We have documented how we tuned the MPI-ESM1.2 [Max-Planck Institute Earth System Model 1.2] global climate model to match the instrumental record warming; an endeavor which has clearly been successful. Due to the historical order of events, the choice was to do this practically by targeting an ECS of about 3 K using cloud feedbacks, as opposed to tuning the aerosol forcing."

Translation: We screwed around with the model's clouds to get the alarming global warming answer we wanted. Calling that "science" makes the Soviet Union's agricultural charlatan Trofim Lysenko ("the inheritance of acquired characteristics") look like Gregor Mendel. Disagreeing with Lysenko got you a trip to the Gulag; agreeing with Mauritsen's model will only get you a trip to the poor house where there's little energy and a permanent economic lockdown.

The Second Climate Feedback Opinion

Climate Feedback's second complaint states that I am "misleading in asserting that warming 'either slows down or ends' in the mid-1990s." But I didn't say that. I said "late-1990s" for a reason—the big El Niño of 1998 seems to have resulted in the temperature standstill evident in the early part of this century.

Anyone who cares to look at Figure 1 can see that there indeed are two periods of warming in post-1950 surface temperature histories, 1976 to

1998, and 2014 to the present. The detailed CRU record in Figure 2 (p.7) shows even more clearly the decided lack of any warming I claimed from 2000 through early 2014.

In Figure 2 (p.7) are the monthly global temperature departures from a long-term average (beginning in 1997) from the CRU that were current at the time of the Levin interview.

The reason I use this record is that it doesn't show data where there aren't any. The Climate Feedback reviewers cite a modification of this record that statistically boosted Arctic Ocean temperatures (where there are no thermometers) based upon surrounding land observations. That's physically silly: much of that ocean is a mix of water and ice, even into the late summer. In Physics 101 you will learn early on that the temperature of a mixed ice-water vessel remains at freezing until all the ice melts. The really high-latitude temperatures therefore don't care what the weather station at the nearest land point says. But forcing the opposite indeed puts a warming trend in the data that in my opinion is not scientifically justified.

Conclusion

I have purposefully sprinkled this Science & Policy Brief with a word: opinion, which is an individual (or group) judgment based upon a collection of facts that are—to the opiner—more internally consistent than other syntheses. And it indeed is the *opinion* of those who "fact-check" for Facebook that my opinion is wrong.

Free flow of opinions is what Facebook used to be all about. That was what was so cool about it. I think this and here is why, you think that and here is why, and so on. But not on global warming, where anything that deviates from Facebook's opinion that the end is near is, well,

not an appropriate one and has to be labeled as false. Of course, that's just my opinion.

I haven't actually accessed my Facebook account in years, because of their tendentious meddling in my business. But I have it on good authority from the CO2 Coalition, which did post my video and did see it get labeled "false," that a lot of people agree with me that Facebook's "fact-checking" is not appropriate for disputes over scientific opinion on the precise contributions of the various causes of global warming.

The CO2 Coalition's post of my Levin video was their most viewed and commented on ever, and among the flood of comments were many that sounded like these: "every time so called

fact checkers suppress an article i take more notice," and "This guy Michaels seems to know what he's talking about and has far better credentials than the crowdsourced fact checkers. I probably wouldn't have watched the interview were it not for the FB warming."

Science & Policy Briefs

This series summarizes issues that are addressed in more detail in our White Papers and *Climate Issues in Depth* publications. They are available at www.co2coalition.org.

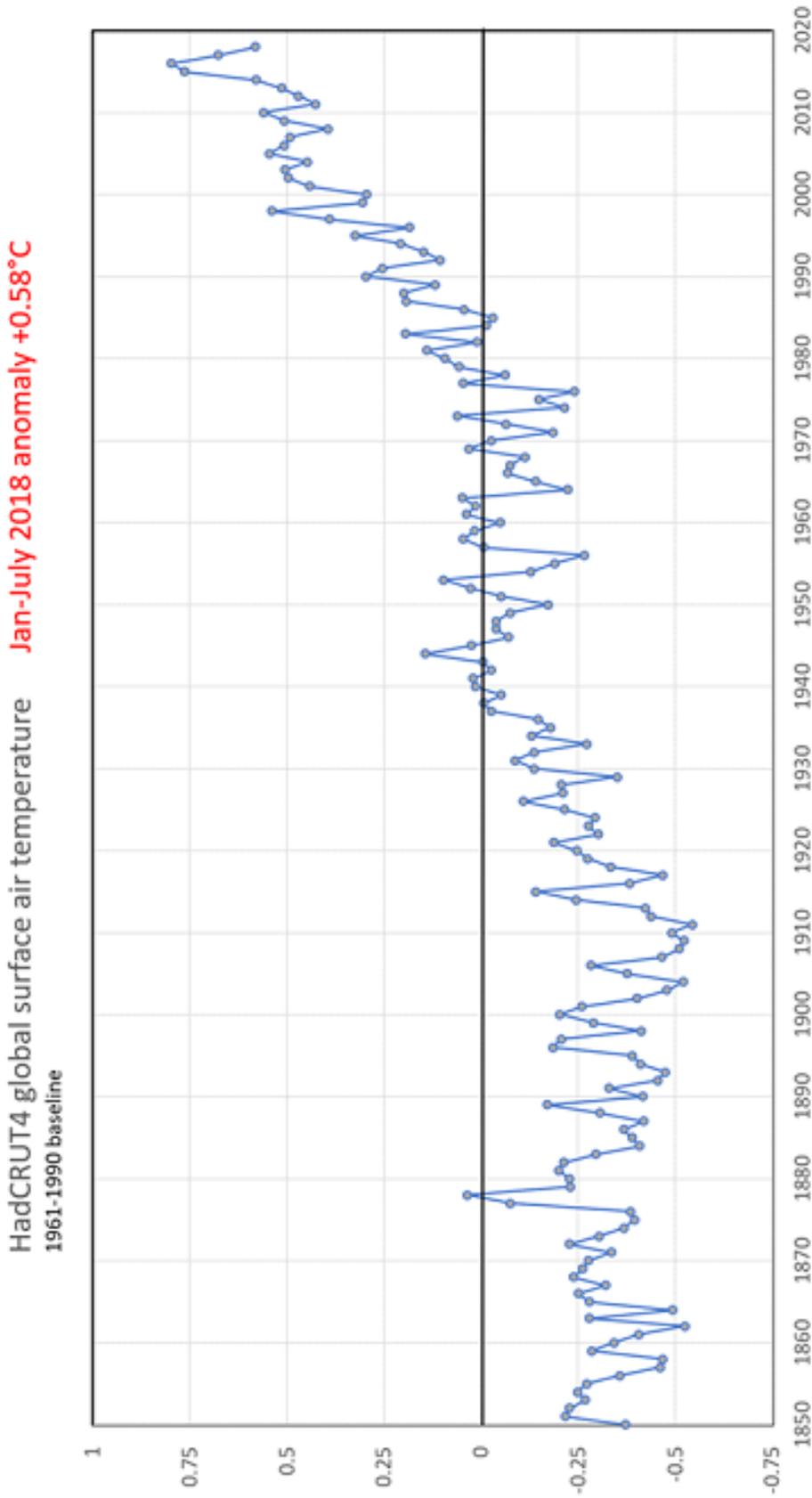
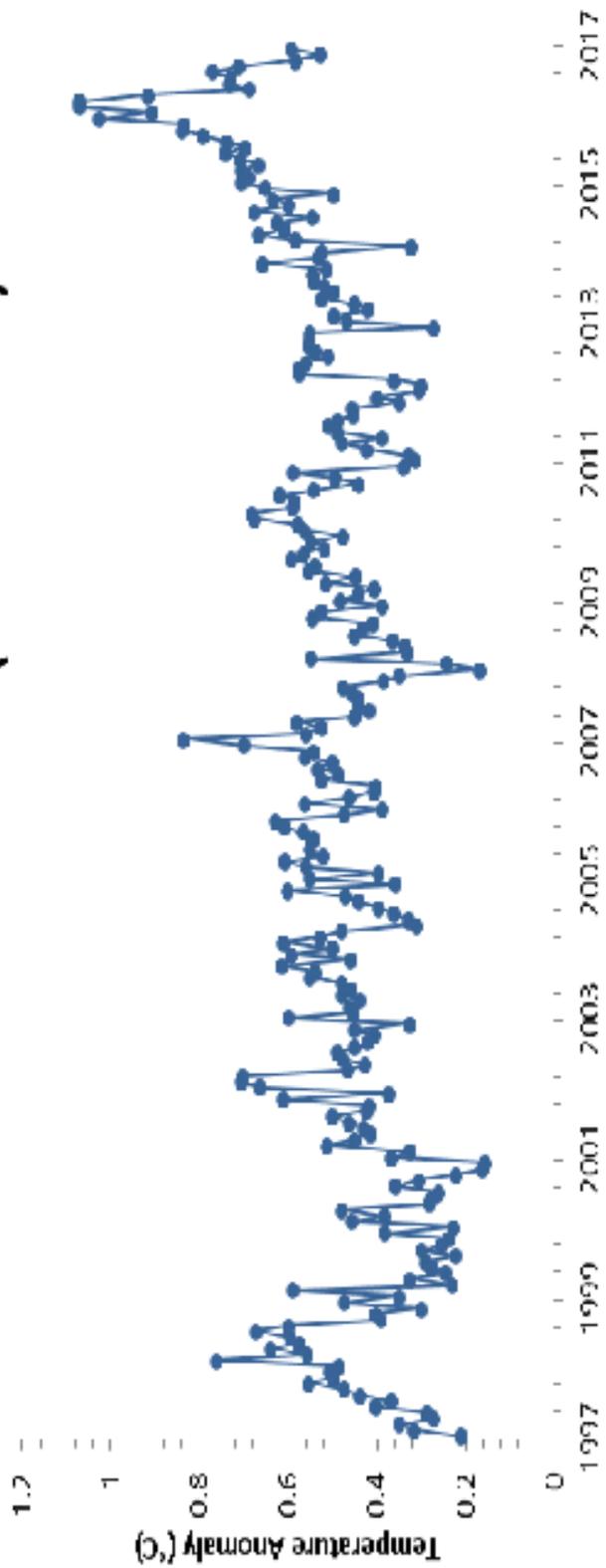


Figure 1

Annual temperature anomalies in the CRU record. The warming that begins around 1910 has little if any human component, as detailed below.

Surface Observations (HadCRUT4v5)



Monthly temperature anomalies from 1997 through early 2017. Note that from 2002 to early 2014 there's no warming trend whatsoever in the record.

Figure 2