

January 12, 2012

Dear Concerned Parties:

This letter is intended as supporting documentation in connection with the Leveson Inquiry. More specifically, I will discuss the importance of accurate reporting on the topic of climate change and I provide some examples of incorrect reporting which inhibits our ability to take meaningful and collective action. I believe that my position, as an active researcher in the fields of climate change and renewable energy development, and as an active communicator of climate-change topics with the larger public, well suit me to comment on the importance of accurate reporting.

My main research emphases are in the area of developing sustainable and clean energy supplies for the developing world and in monitoring the Earth's climate to detect global warming. I hold an academic position at the University of St. Thomas. I have published approximately 70 journal articles and a large number of technical conference works. In addition, I co-founded and co-manage THE CLIMATE SCIENCE RAPID RESPONSE TEAM (<http://www.climate rapidresponse.org/>) which is an organization of approximately 150 climate scientists whose mission is to communicate our understanding of climate change to the general public. We have fielded inquiries from many national and international organizations including CNN, ABC, CBS, Chicago Tribune, LA Times, Guardian, National Public Radio, etc. It is a non-partisan entity and our scientists receive no funding.

This organization was created in response to a disconnect between what scientists understand and what the general public knows about our changing Earth. Often, the media – and thus the general public – gains information about the Earth's climate from issue organizations whose goal is not accuracy; rather it is to advance an agenda. Many times, these organizations are created to parade as unbiased institutions with credible-sounding names such as the Marshall Institute, the Heartland Institute, the Heritage Foundation, the Global Warming Policy Foundation (GWPF), the Science and Public Policy Institute (SPP), or the Science and Environmental Policy Project (SEPP) to name just a few. These organizations then attempt to become unbiased sources of credible information when, in reality, they are staffed by non-scientists who are more interested in agendas other than science.

The importance of accurate reporting in the United Kingdom cannot be overestimated. Media outlets in the U.K. set standards for others around the world. Despite the usual high-standards of reporting from the U.K., it is apparent that in numerous incidents, reporting has attempted to mislead the public and elected representatives. As a consequence, the public is ill-informed about this important issue and more likely to make poorer, less-effective decisions. I provide a few examples of such reporting.

In an article published December 5, 2010 (*What happened to the 'warmest year on record': The truth is global warming has halted*), Mr. David Rose made a number of serious and incorrect assertions about the Earth's climate and the scientists who study the climate. He claimed, falsely, that global warming has stopped, that scientists misreported a period of warmth during the middle ages, and he then put forward an indefensible claim about 2010 temperatures. That claim, Mr. Rose reported, was provided to him by a member of the non-scientific think tank, the GWPF. It is interesting that Mr. Rose's errant climate claims were rebutted in a U.K. press article of Mr. George Monbiot by a number of scientists from my organization, including Dr. Michael Mann, Dr. Phil Jones, Dr. Andrew Dessler, and Dr. Kevin Trenberth. Further details can be obtained from Mr. Monbiot's article, published in the Guardian on Wednesday 8th December.

Mr. Rose is, by no account, unique. There are other personalities like him in the U.K. media, including Christopher Booker and James Delingpole, both of whom are columnists for the Telegraph and whose past reporting need no embellishment.

For instance, in a recent article (January 13, 2012) entitled “What happens when great fallacies, like wind power or European Union, collide with reality?”, Mr. Booker made a number of demonstrably false statements which were either intended to mislead his readers or were indicative of is nearly complete misunderstanding of climate change. First, he claimed that the concept of human-caused global warming is merely 20 years old. In fact, research on this topic stems back to the mid 1800s with the work of John Tyndall and Svante Arrhenius. He then discussed short-term temperature fluctuations associated with El Niño-La Niña cycles. He claimed that temperatures in 2007 fell by 0.75 C. This claim is absurd and wrong, as evidence by published data on global temperatures which are easily available at locations such as: <http://data.giss.nasa.gov/gistemp/2007/> where NASA reported that 2007 temperatures were tied for the second hottest year. Other organizations ranked 2007 as a very hot year as well. For instance, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration claimed that 2007 was a mere 0.05C below the hottest year on record (<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/global/2007/13>). In your country, the Climate Research Unit (CRU) concluded that 2007 temperatures were amongst the hottest on record, and certainly had not decreased 0.75C as claimed by Mr. Booker <http://www.cru.uea.ac.uk/cru/info/warming/>. Similarly, his claims that temperatures in 2011 fell by 0.65C are absurd. It is, in fact, difficult to understand how a writer could make these seriously incorrect claims without intention.

These items, which are just two examples of errant and misleading reporting which occur on a frequent basis, are brought forward simply to illustrate that a number of the media persons and the sources these persons have relied upon have a demonstrated history of misinforming the public on this important issue. Frankly, the reporting in the U.K. is held to a higher standard by the rest of the world. Other nations watch the discussions that occur within the press in the U.K. and often, that discussion frames the topic for others parts of the globe. Consequently, it is critically important for the United Kingdom to maintain its traditionally high level of accuracy.

As a scientist, I applaud your efforts to ensure the highest standards of reporting are maintained within your borders. I hope that my perspective, as articulated here, will be helpful as you assess the impact of misinformation that exists in the U.K. press with respect to climate change.

Respectfully,

[Redacted signature box]

Dr. John Abraham
Associate Professor
University of St. Thomas

[Redacted contact information box]

Steps before publication

1. If you are happy for the Inquiry to publish your submission please add and sign the following statement of truth to the end of your submission/statement:

Statement of Truth

I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed

Date ...January 29, 2012.....

Please be aware that by signing the statement of truth you are confirming that you agree that the contents of the submission/statement are true. Please take extra time to ensure that you are completely happy with your submission/statement before you sign it.

If you have provided a submission/statement in your private capacity you should state your full name in the submission/statement but should provide in a separate document personal details (e.g. address, contact address, mobile telephone number and e-mail address), which will not be published.

Please remove any personal details such as home address or telephone number before forwarding the final signed submission/statement.

If you have provided the submission/statement on behalf of an organisation, please state this clearly in the first line of the submission/statement.

- 2. Your signed submission/statement, in its entirety, should be returned to us by email.
- 3. Returning your signed submission/statement will confirm that you are content for the Inquiry to publish it on its website in the form you have provided. If this is not the case and you have any concerns or wish for certain sections to be withheld please make this clear in any response.
- 4. Your signed submission, once received, will initially be provided to those groups who have been designated as Core Participants to the Inquiry (a full list is available on our website: www.levesoninquiry.org.uk).
- 5. If the Core Participants do not raise any matters your statement will then be referred to in open session and at that point it will be published, along with your name, on the Inquiry's website.

The Inquiry intends to begin publishing submissions/statements on the website shortly and would therefore be grateful for your response by return.