

Reply to the Seitz, Singer, and Elsaesser letters in the July 11, 1996 issue of the Wall Street Journal¹

The ~~recent~~² July 11 letters to the ~~Editor Wall Street Journal~~ by Frederick Seitz and S. Fred Singer (~~July 11~~, “Coverup in the Greenhouse?”) echo the theme of an earlier ~~Wall Street Journal op-ed editorial-page~~ by Mr. Seitz (~~June 12~~, “A Major Deception on ‘Global Warming’ ” June 12). The theme is that, as ~~Lead~~ ~~A~~author of a key chapter in a recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), I violated IPCC rules of procedure and made unauthorized changes to the chapter. ~~Messrs.~~ Seitz and Singer further allege that these changes were made for political purposes, and that I suppressed scientific information that might cast doubt on the IPCC’s conclusion that “*the balance of evidence suggests that there is a discernible human influence on global climate*”.

These allegations lack any factual basis, and have been refuted previously in a letter to the ~~Editor Wall Street Journal~~ by myself and 40 other scientists involved in the production of the IPCC report, and in a separate letter by the ~~C~~chairmen of the IPCC (~~June 25~~, “No Deception in Global Warming Report” June 25). Our previous replies point out that changes to Chapter 8 of the IPCC report were made by myself, not shadowy, unnamed “others”; that these changes were required by IPCC procedures, in order to respond to comments by governments and scientists, and were authorized by the IPCC in a key meeting held in November 1995 in Madrid; that all changes were made for scientific and not political purposes; and finally, that important scientific uncertainties have not been suppressed and are covered comprehensively in the published version of Chapter 8.

The Wall Street Journal has received many letters supportive of my actions as Lead Author of Chapter 8, but chose to publish only two of these. Instead, considerable prominence has been devoted to the views of a small group of individuals who were not directly involved in the lengthy IPCC process, and whose main endeavors seem to consist of writing editorials rather than doing original scientific research. Not only is the IPCC report itself under attack by such “experts” – my own scientific research is now being criticized, as in a recent letter to the Wall Street Journal by Hugh Elsaesser (July 11). Unlike the research that Elsaesser criticizes, his purportedly authoritative (and flawed) analysis of my work has not gone through a rigorous peer-review process prior to publication in the Wall Street Journal.

¹ This reply was published in the Wall Street Journal on July 23, 1996, under the header “Global Warming Critics, Chill Out”.

² Red denotes deletions made by the Wall Street Journal. Green denotes insertions.

These unjustified attacks have taken their toll on my time and energy, and on the well-being of my family. The irony is that science really is being subverted – not by myself or the IPCC, but by the prodigious and well-publicized efforts of special-interest groups and so-called “experts”, who have shunned the very peer-review process they now criticize.

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The letters by Messrs. Seitz and Singer continue to make allegations that the scientists involved with the 1995 Report of the IPCC made unauthorized changes in one of the chapters between its acceptance by the IPCC Working Group Plenary in Madrid in November and its publication in April. These allegations are without foundation.³

The crucial error made by Messrs. Seitz and Singer is their assumption that the draft version of the Chapter of Oct. 9 was accepted unmodified at the Madrid meeting. This is not the case. The changes made followed the clear decision at Madrid to accept the draft chapter subject to its modification to improve its presentation, clarity and consistency in accordance with the views both of scientists and delegates expressed at length during the meeting. The rules of procedure were strictly followed and none of the 96 countries represented at Madrid have challenged either the changes or the procedures.

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³ This is the version of the Bolin/Houghton/Meira Filho letter which was actually published in the Wall Street Journal on July 23, 1996. I do not have the version of the letter which was submitted to the Wall Street Journal, and I am therefore unable to identify any changes to the submitted letter which may have been made by Wall Street Journal editors.