

von Storch - Dire forecasts aren't new

The Deniers -- Part XXIV

By LAWRENCE SOLOMON, *Financial Post*

Published: Friday, May 25, 2007

Germany's Hans von Storch, one of the world's leading climate scientists, believes that climate change is for real and that humans are responsible. He also believes that we shouldn't fear climate change, that predictions of doom are "hysterical" when they aren't "completely idiotic and dubious," and that many of the science establishment's pronouncements on climate change are bereft of scientific merit.

"Theories of global warming have left laboratories far behind. Now, they are the stuff of Hollywood," he wrote in *Der Spiegel*, in an article that castigated global warming alarmists for debasing scientific inquiry and intimidating those who would challenge the conventional wisdom. Michael Crichton's novel *State of Fear* has it right in its portrayal of environmental extremism, Dr. Storch believes.

"Despite some artful fictionalization of the facts, Crichton has certainly delivered an accurate portrayal of the dynamics of communication among the scientific community, environmental organizations, government and civil society.

"Like the protagonists in Crichton's thriller, the general belief is that in order to keep public attention focused on the issue of 'climate catastrophe' [it must] be presented 'somewhat more attractively.' "

The "climate catastrophe" is hype, he stated. "In the early 1990s, just as Germany was being hit by severe windstorms, the German media were reporting that the storms were becoming more and more severe. Since then, storms of this magnitude have once again become less common in Northern Europe, a fact now ignored by the media. They have also ignored the fact that changes in barometric pressure measured in Stockholm since the days of Napoleon reveal no systematic change in the frequency and severity of storms."

The fear of climate change, and the blaming of humans for them, did not start with global warming and the Kyoto Protocol of the 1990s. This fear is a feature of human history, and likely part of human nature, he explained in a 2005 paper entitled: "A History of Human Perceptions of Anthropogenic Climate Change in the Past 1,000 Years."

In the last half century, global cooling theories arose, with man the culprit due to industrial pollution. Nuclear weapons testing also prompted an explosion of theories about the implication on the weather.

In the first half of the 20th century, First World War gunfire was blamed for wet summers, as was shortwave transatlantic radio communication. Because of a major warming that took place in large parts of the world, *Monthly Weather Review* in 1933 published an unsettling article entitled: "Is the Climate Changing?"

In the 19th century, European and North American scientists claimed that the water levels of rivers would fall continuously, leading to fears that the weather would change and to the laying of blame on both deforestation and reforestation. Europe's abnormally wet summer of 1816, meanwhile, was blamed on the lightning rods that had just come into vogue.

In earlier centuries, such as the 14th, which saw a prolonged wet period in England, the cause was

man's wicked lifestyle, which precipitated divine retribution. "And nowadays it's those hedonistic wastrels who pollute the air so that they can look at some pretty fish in the South Seas," Dr. Storch states, adding that "many scientists see themselves too much as priests whose job it is to preach moralistic sermons to people?it would be better if we just presented the facts and scenarios dispassionately --and then society can decide for itself what it wants to do to influence climate change."

But scientists don't, and neither do the governments and quasi-governmental scientific establishments that now lend their own authority to climate-change myth-making.

Dr. Storch thinks it would be helpful to learn why humans keep forgetting how wrong we have been in our past dire forecasts. Until we do, we are doomed to repeat history.

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CV OF A DENIER

Hans von Storch is director of the Institute of Coastal Research of the GKSS Research Centre and professor at the Meteorological Institute of the University of Hamburg. From 1987 to 1995, he was senior scientist and leader of the Statistical Analysis and Modelling Group at the Max Planck Institute for Meteorology. He is the author of 11 books and 120 peer-reviewed articles. He is a member of the advisory boards of the Journal of Climate and Meteorologische Zeitschrift and the Annals of Geophysics. Dr. von Storch was a lead author of the Third Assessment Report of the IPCC. He received his PhD from the Meteorological Department of the University of Hamburg in 1979.

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