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CNN'S AMANPOUR

A New Look at the Climate Change Debate

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[15:00:00]

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR, CNN ANCHOR: Tonight, calls for a criminal investigation of climate change scientists. What on Earth is going on here?

Good evening, everyone. I'm Christiane Amanpour, and welcome to the program.

The debate over climate change is getting hotter than ever. A U.S. senator now claims the scientists have illegally profited from what he calls, quote, "the hoax of climate change." And the U.N.'s point man on the environment is leaving his job amid accusations that both sides in the climate change debate have twisted the data.

So how did we get here? Much of the world expected an international agreement to reduce emissions to come out of the summit in Copenhagen in December. U.N. climate change chief, Yvo de Boer, had staked his reputation on it, and here's what he said before that summit.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

YVO DE BOER, UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHIEF: There is no Plan B for Copenhagen, only Plan A, and Plan A stands for action.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

AMANPOUR: But the conference failed, and then the skeptics went on the offensive. And that senator we talked about, James Inhofe, is demanding an investigation into what he calls the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. JAMES INHOFE (R), OKLAHOMA: The minority staff found that some of the world's leading climate scientists engaged in potentially illegal and unethical behavior. In other words, they cooked the science.

(END VIDEO CLIP).

AMANPOUR: So are Senator Inhofe's claims hot air or do they have merit? Joining me now from Washington to discuss all of this, New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman, who's also the author of "Hot, Flat and Crowded," from Copenhagen, the renowned climate change skeptic, Bjorn Lomborg, who's author of "The Skeptical Environmentalist," and here in the studio, Jim Hansen, head of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies and who's credited with sparking concerns about climate change as much as a quarter of a century ago.

Gentlemen, thank you all for joining me.

Let me go straight to you, Mr. Hansen, because it looks like you are the target of Senator Inhofe's -- at one of the targets -- of Senator Inhofe's call for an investigation, cooking the books, he's saying.

JAMES HANSEN, NASA'S GODDARD INSTITUTE FOR SPACE STUDIES: Yeah, well, I'd love to have an investigation, which should include Senator Inhofe, who's one of the most well-oiled, coal-fired politicians in Washington. He's very well funded to protect the fossil fuel industry, but he was elected to support the people.

AMANPOUR: Well, let me ask -- I see Thomas Friedman, who's done a lot of work and writing, as everybody knows, on this climate debate. You just laughed when Jim Hansen described the U.S. senator in that way. What is going on here? Is there really a question about whether scientists have been illegally cooking the books?

THOMAS FRIEDMAN, NEW YORK TIMES COLUMNIST: Well, you know, just to pick up where Jim Hansen left off, Christiane, Senator Inhofe wants an investigation. I'm for an investigation. I'd love to see all the e-mails between his office and various coal and oil companies over the last 20 years. So I bet Jim Hansen would be very happy to lay all his -- I won't speak for him -- but lay his documentation and research on the table, and we'll let Senator Inhofe lay all his e-mails on the table going back and forth between oil and coal companies, and we'll let citizens and voters decide where the real science is.

AMANPOUR: So you're saying -- I can hear you saying that this is -- a lot of it is politically motivated. I want to bring in Bjorn Lomborg, because there's so much out there that says, in fact, all the evidence hasn't been collated, not that -- not that questions about the evidence, but the fact, as Thomas just said and Jim just said, let's put all the information out there. Is an investigation a good idea? Or is it -- is it a lot of hot air?

BJORN LOMBORG, DIRECTOR, COPENHAGEN CONSENSUS CENTER: Well, I think, Christiane, we need to step a little bit back and, first of all, realize that both Jim and Tom and I -- and I think most of the people in the -- who are following this debate -- agree that global warming is real, it's manmade, and it is an important problem.

But I think we also got to acknowledge that certainly a fair number of people have gotten a little ahead of themselves, certainly a lot of environmental activists have thought that the best way to motivate people to move on climate change was to scare the pants off of them, and it's very clear when we look at the British investigation into the -- the British climate unit in -- in East Anglia, that they actually did break the law in the fact that they didn't submit the data as it was requested and they should have done.



[15:05:00]

So I think we need to be careful and say -- obviously, Jim Inhofe has a political agenda, and I don't agree with him, but I think we need to say, if we're going to re-establish credibility with the climate science, we need to dial back on the scariness and start talking about, what is it the facts actually are telling us?

AMANPOUR: OK, let me take this point by point. And, first, we must say we did invite Senator Inhofe to be with us. He wasn't able to be. We asked some other members of his committee. They weren't able to join us. But they have had committee hearings.

We made this Wordle, this world cloud, over their report, the Inhofe report on this, and we want to show you it, because it's interesting. It, obviously, shows the word in big which are most used, and one of those is IPCC, which is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. That's essentially the U.N. panel on climate change.

And it seems to me that that seems to be the brunt and the crux of the senator's complaint, the IPCC and Al Gore. Would you agree, Jim Hansen?

HANSEN: IPCC, that's an excellent example, because they claim that IPCC made a mistake in the melting of the Himalayan glaciers. But if you step back and look at this, glaciers are, in fact -- IPCC did say that the Himalayan glaciers would be gone in 25 years, which is not correct. They will last longer than that.

But, in fact, if you look at the glaciers, they're melting all around the planet. Glacier National Park will be Glacierless National Park within 25 years.

So the essence of everything that IPCC said is correct. They pick on a detail.

AMANPOUR: And by detail, you mean the issue of the length of time of the Himalayan glaciers?

HANSEN: Right.

AMANPOUR: Look, what he said was, the minority report -- and he talked about that -- shows that the world's leading climate scientists are acting like political scientists. Is -- I mean, he's referring to you and...

HANSEN: Well, what some of the scientists have realized is that if we don't connect the dots from the science to what the implications are for policy, then no one will do it, because there are interests which would prefer that we not take the actions that are needed. And in particular, if we burn all the fossil fuels, we will hand our children and grandchildren a situation that's out of their control.

AMANPOUR: OK. Bjorn Lomborg said that we've been scaring the pants -- or people like yourself have been scaring the pants off the rest of the world. Thomas Friedman said that we should have all of this evidence out in the public domain. I want to ask you, Tom, you heard Jim Hansen say that, in fact, this claim that the glaciers would be gone in 25 years was erroneous, I mean, it's wrong, but they are going.

Is the problem that the climate change camp never acknowledges any mistakes? Is that a problem?

FRIEDMAN: Well, you know, what you talked about the IPCC report, as Jim did, Christiane, you're talking about a report that includes, you know, thousands of pages and input from several thousand scientists. That there's one or two mistakes in there, I'm shocked. I'm devastated.

And what the critics have done is seize on a small mistake and say, because that is wrong, everything's wrong.

This isn't all that complicated, Christiane. What do we know? We know our planet, Earth, is enveloped by a blanket of greenhouse gases, methane and CO-2, and that greenhouse gas blanket is what regulates the temperature on Earth and keeps it at this nice moderate temperature where human beings can live there.

What we know is that the climate changes naturally over the years. We go from ice ages to warming periods. We know that, too.

But what we also know is human beings burning fossil fuels can make that blanket of greenhouse gases around the world, around the Earth thicker. When we do, we trap more heat. We raise average temperatures. Oceans will rise.

Now, none of know exactly how that will exacerbate the natural climate changes of nature.

AMANPOUR: Right.

FRIEDMAN: But what we do know is this, Christiane, and this is really important. We know the gases we put up there stay there for like 3,000 years. In other words, they're irreversible. And we know that the chances of them producing possibly catastrophic climate change, some may say, is 90 percent, 80 percent, but it's not 0 percent.

AMANPOUR: OK.

FRIEDMAN: Whenever I see something -- whenever I see something that is irreversible and potentially catastrophic, I buy insurance. That's what this is all about.

AMANPOUR: All right, Tom. So, Bjorn, you've also said that everybody agrees that there is climate change. I mean, you're a skeptic, but you say there's climate change and man has made it or has contributed to it. Why -- what do you think of the failure of the Copenhagen summit? Is that -- what does it say for trying to find a solution in the future?

LOMBORG: Well, Christiane, I'm not a skeptic of the climate science, and I think Tom put that very well. We are going to see a temperature rise. I'm a skeptic of the way that it's being communicated, and I'm a skeptic of the way that we're proposing our solutions.

And I think we're seeing that very clearly here today.

[15:10:00]

We're essentially seeing both Jim and Tom saying, listen, it was a minor mistake -- although we know that the party involved has actually admitted that he said he put it in there to push policymakers. And there's been a lot of push.

I agree that most of the IPCC is very sound and actually very good at resisting this sort of intervention. They did not push up the sea level rise. They're estimating sea level rise somewhere between 18 and 59 centimeters, not as, for instance, we saw in Al Gore's movie, a six-meter sea level rise. So they are in many ways good at telling us, this is a problem. It's not the end of the world.

I think fundamentally what's happened is, the last 18 years, a lot of people have been pushing to scare the pants off of people, strategy to get us to cut carbon emissions, but we haven't done so. And, essentially, what we saw in Copenhagen was exactly the failure of that strategy. We need a new and a smarter way forward.

AMANPOUR: What is that new and a smarter way forward, if you agree, Jim?

HANSEN: Well, yes. In fact, we do need a smarter way forward, and that is we have to recognize that as long as fossil fuels are the cheapest source of energy on the planet, we're going to keep using them and all the more so. So the things that they were talking about, both in Kyoto and in Copenhagen, cap-and-trade with offsets, that is not going to work. We have to be honest about the fact that we have to have a rising price of carbon emissions.

And the way that that would work is if the money that is collected at -- and it has to be done across the board at the mine or wellhead or port of entry -- all of that money should go to the public in the form of a monthly green check and some combination of tax reduction, payroll taxes or other taxes, to bring in the Republican Party.

We need a bipartisan approach which recognizes the fundamental situation. We've got to put a price on these fossil fuels, because right now we're subsidizing them.

AMANPOUR: We'll talk about that, a bipartisan approach, when we come back.

And next, are the climate change skeptics going too far, some of them, when they say that Al Gore should hand back his Nobel Peace Prize?

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[15:14:00]

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. BERNIE SANDERS (I), VERMONT: The reason that this debate is so important is that it reminds me in some ways of the debate taking place in this country and around the world in the late 1930s. And during that period, with Nazism and fascism growing, a real danger to the United States and democratic countries all over the world, there were people in this Congress, in the British parliament, saying, "Don't worry. Hitler is not real. It'll disappear. We don't have to be prepared to take it on."

(END VIDEO CLIP)

AMANPOUR: So is the world unprepared or even unwilling to tackle climate change? Joining me again, New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman, the leading climate change skeptic, Bjorn Lomborg, and here, Jim Hansen of NASA in the studio.

That was a pretty stark statement from the lawmaker there, Sanders, in Congress, Tom. That was a pretty stark statement. What has to happen to give an irrefutable look to everybody around the world of the actual science of what's going on?

[15:15:00]

Why isn't it -- why isn't there some compendium of scientific fact out there?

FRIEDMAN: Well, you know, all of these climate studies are based on models. And they look at the past, how things developed, and they project into the future. And so no one can say exactly where it's going to go, but we are on one of those paths, Christiane; we just don't know which one.

Now, what I would simply say is this. If we listen to the climate change scientists, like Dr. Hansen, and we prepare for climate change, but climate change doesn't happen, what happens? Well, let's see. We have a cleaner air, cleaner environment. We have a more energy-independent economy, new industries, and global respect.

Let's see now. If we listen to Jim Inhofe, the climate deniers, and we don't get ready for climate change and climate change comes, we're a bad biological experiment. So, like, which part of the sentence don't you understand?

I mean, I'm a Dick Cheney guy on this. I'm with Dick Cheney. Dick Cheney said, if there's a 1 percent chance that Iraq has a nuclear weapon, we need to take that on. Well, if there's a 1 percent chance on climate change, just like Cheney said -- I'm with Cheney -- we need to prepare for it.

AMANPOUR: All right. Let me put up this video, then, of what everybody probably has seen already, and that is the igloo that was created by Senator Inhofe and his family, basically saying that the snow in Washington, D.C., negates the idea of global warming.

So, Bjorn Lomborg...

FRIEDMAN: Christiane, can I say one thing about the igloo? That is flat-out stupid. In the same week that that igloo was being built, it was raining in the Winter Olympics in Vancouver, on the -- on the downhill ski rack. In Jerusalem, I believe it was 96 degrees one day. And my friend and stock broker in Maine was playing golf that day, OK? So the fact that it snowed in Washington tells you nothing.

AMANPOUR: But what it does tell you is that there are very clever ways of that camp using the media...

FRIEDMAN: There are clever ways of making people stupid, yes.

AMANPOUR: Well, Bjorn, then how do you make people unstupid on this? Where have we, the media, the general public, failed to get a grip? Because you know what? The polls are showing in the United States that the number of skeptics among the civilians is rising. Bjorn?

LOMBORG: Absolutely. And that's true virtually everywhere, Christiane. We're seeing that rise everywhere. And I think...

AMANPOUR: But why? Why?

LOMBORG: ... fundamentally we've seen a very good example -- well, because we have had people like Al Gore, but also many others, overplay their hand, and now there's a reluctance to say, "Well, maybe we overplayed it."

AMANPOUR: So what should they do?

LOMBORG: I mean, honestly, Tom, I totally agree with you that you shouldn't be -- you shouldn't be using the igloo. I think that's a terrible example. But likewise, let's just remember that Al Gore was very explicit about the fact that we were seeing a very, very warm January back in 2007. So, I mean, it's been played both ways.

I think what we need to do is come back and say it's not the Inhofe way, but it's not the Jim Hansen way, either, to cut dramatically. Let's just remember Tom left out one little, tiny aspect, which is what the climate economists are telling us, namely, leveling off at 2 degree Centigrade or 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit, which is what everybody has agreed on, would cost at the end of the century -- and this is the average of all the macroeconomic models, if we do it really smart -- \$40 trillion a year.

So there is a cost. And that's, of course, why we can't get people on board. We can't get people on board because we've been trying to sell a very expensive solution.

Jim Hansen is absolutely right that a carbon tax is part of a solution, but it will never drive the main part. The main part has to be innovation. As long as solar panels and windmills and all these other wonderful technologies are too expensive, we only have rich, well-meaning Westerners put up a few of them, what we need to do is to make sure that they get so cheap that everyone, the Chinese and the Indians, will want to use them. And that's about investing dramatically more in research and development. It's fortunately much cheaper and it's much easier to get...

(CROSSTALK)

FRIEDMAN: Well, it's about investing in research -- it's about investing in research and development -- it's about investing in research and development, but even more important, it's about deployment, OK? China this year, I believe, will become the world's leading manufacturer of solar panels, and the reason that solar panel prices have fallen dramatically in China is not just because of research -- Bjorn's absolutely right about that, research is necessary -- but what brings the price of your iPod down from \$500 to \$100 is mass

manufacturing based on deployment here and now.

LOMBORG: Tom...

AMANPOUR: And China -- hold on a second, Bjorn -- China, of course...

LOMBORG: Tom, you know very well that your...

AMANPOUR: Hold on one second. One second. China does understand this, because it is heavily investing in clean green technology, and it is basically out-investing and outperforming so many of the Western countries.

Jim, you were trying to get in on this.

HANSEN: That's absolutely right.

[15:20:00]

Yeah, that's absolutely right. We do need a price on carbon emissions in order to drive those innovations, but China does get it. And if the United States doesn't begin to move, we're going to leave our children and grandchildren as second-class in the world.

AMANPOUR: But why was China, then, the spoiler in Copenhagen?

HANSEN: Well, because we were going at them with this cap and trade. We're telling them they've got to cap their economy. There's no way that you can make a cap and trade global. They will not cap their economy.

But they recognize, they do not want to go down the path that the United States did, where we became dependent, addicted to fossil fuels, so they know that they need to put a price on carbon to encourage energy efficiency, renewable energies, and other energies that don't use -- produce carbon dioxide.

AMANPOUR: And you, the climate scientist, do you have to change what you do? Because the "scare the pants off" brigade has resulted in...

HANSEN: Well...

AMANPOUR: ... a lot of skeptics around.

HANSEN: Let me -- let me correct that. The scientists have been conservative. IPCC was very conservative. All the new data comes in shows that we were too conservative. Greenland and West Antarctica are beginning to shed ice twice as fast as they were five years ago. So, no, we have not been exaggerating the story at all.

AMANPOUR: Tom, you used the term "global weirding." What do you mean by that?

FRIEDMAN: Well, global weirding is a term that was coined by, I believe, Hunter Lovins in the Rocky Mountain Institute to simply explain something that a climate scientist like Jim Hansen can tell you, which is that, you know, global warming, that sounds so nice, sounds so cuddly. To a kid from Minnesota, it sounds like golf in February, OK?

But what you actually get when the climate changes, the weather gets weird. The hots will tend to get hotter. The wets will get wetter, because the atmosphere -- you have more evaporation. It will store more water in certain places. Therefore, what goes up will have to come down. The colds could get colder.

What climate change really represents is that it changes the weather in some very weird and unpredictable ways.

AMANPOUR: So if the -- if the U.N. forum has not yet worked, the whole big global summit forum, whether it was in Rio, whether it was in Kyoto, whether it's now in Copenhagen, what does one do? I mean, I know you've outlined a little bit, Bjorn. I'll give you 30 seconds, and then you, Dr. Hansen. Go on, Bjorn. What does one do now?

LOMBORG: Just remember, we -- well, we've heard that China is ramping up enormously. Let's just remember, they have -- one-half of one-thousandth of one percent of their energy comes from solar. It's nothing. They are selling solar panels to us because we're willing to pay an enormous extra amount, for instance, in Germany.

So instead, what we need to do is invest dramatically more, 50 times more than what the world spends right now on research and development. That's cheap. And that will actually work. The climate economist tells us that is 500 times better way to tackle global warming.

So let's get off the high horse and actually start working with promises that will function and deal with climate change in the long run.

AMANPOUR: Last brief word, Dr. Hansen?

HANSEN: The United States has to exert leadership. We -- we created the cap-and-trade idea in 1997 at Kyoto. We've got to realize that we've got to put a price on carbon, and now I'm working with Creation Care, the religious community, to make a bill, a people's bill which would put a price on carbon with the money going back to the public.

AMANPOUR: OK, thank you so much. This debate could go on and on and on, and it's endlessly interesting. Thank you all for joining me today. I appreciate it.

And there's one controversial energy idea that is now back in the mix. Join us on amanpour.com/facebook, where we have two fascinating articles on the arguments for and against nuclear power and whether it can help stop global warming.

And in our "Post-Script," we'll tell you which of our programs have had the biggest online response, again, on Facebook and Twitter. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[15:25:45]

AMANPOUR: And now our "Post-Script." We were pleased to note that one of our stories sparked another global conversation. It started last week, when we focused on the economic crisis in Venezuela. We had talked to a government official and to an opposition leader. And after the show, we saw a huge response on our blog, on Facebook, and on our Twitter pages.

The discussion had struck a chord with Venezuelans all over the world. Listen to this. Andreina Gallegos (ph), a Venezuelan who lives in Singapore, wrote, "Please, the Venezuelan ambassador is 100 percent wrong. Just go and visit Venezuela for a few days. While the world moves forward, we move back to electricity crises, food shortages, and total lack of security."

Now on our Facebook page, Boris Ortega (ph) defended the Chavez government. He said, "Venezuela is a democracy, just that when the poor and the excluded participate, the privileged and the powerful try to take legitimacy away from it."

Social media can take over the discussion when the TV program ends as we all know, and sometimes it goes on for days, as it did in this case. We've talked to our guests, and they've now agreed to take more questions from you. So log on to Twitter and use the hash tag "AmanZuela" to send us your questions.


That's it for now. We'll be back tomorrow with a look at Europe and whether it will ever speak with one voice in world politics. And in the meantime, catch our daily podcast -- it's doing really well -- on amanpour.com/podcast. For all of us here, goodbye from New York.

END

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