

A Response to Michael Mann and Tom Toles

Writing in the Washington Post (September 16 [online](#), September 18 print), Michael Mann and Tom Toles present me as a prominent climate change denier. They claim that I do “insidious climate change denial,” disregarding “the seriousness of the threat” and “lowballing climate projections.” Here are the facts. Since my very first book, I’ve explicitly accepted climate change. Here’s the summary from my 2008 book *Cool It*: “Global warming is real and man-made. It will have a serious impact on humans and the environment toward the end of this century.” Not exactly disregarding the seriousness.

The argument in this book is simple.

1. Global warming is real and man-made. It will have a serious impact on humans and the environment toward the end of this century.

Curiously, Mann and Toles mostly highlight an article I wrote on EU-funded research that took the UN’s worst-case estimate and multiplied it by 5 to give a picture of totally catastrophic sea-level rises – not exactly lowballing climate projections. They use very selective quotations to imply that I’m indifferent to the fate of 400 million people, but forget to include that the actual research I quoted shows 15 million people will have to be relocated, not 400 million, and that over a century. In their zeal to expose what they see as straw-man arguments and cherrypicked facts, Toles and Mann seem to have resorted to those very practices. Have a look at the text:

This was what I wrote:

“The point isn’t that we can or should ignore global warming. The point is that we should be wary of hyperbolic predictions... Consider, for example, the findings of climate scientists Robert J. Nicholls, Richard S.J. Tol, and Athanasios T. Vafeidis...Here are the facts. A 20-foot rise in sea levels (which, not incidentally, is about ten times more than the United Nations climate panel’s worst-case expectations) would inundate about 16,000 square miles of coastline, where more than 400 million people currently live. That’s a lot of people, to be sure, but hardly all of mankind. And most of those who do live in the flood areas would never even get their feet wet. That’s because the vast majority of those 400 million people reside within cities, where they could be protected relatively easily, as in Tokyo. As a result, only about 15 million people would have to be relocated. And that is over the course of a century.”

<http://bit.ly/2cys17A>

Dr. Michael Mann quoted just this:

A 20-foot rise in sea levels would inundate about 16,000 square miles of coastline, where more than 400 million people currently live. That’s a lot of people, to be sure, but hardly all of mankind.

<http://wapo.st/2c12IHf>