

COMMENT on “Raising the Ante on the Climate Debate”

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PART 1

On July 12, 2005, EOS published untrue comments by Thomas Crowley regarding my correspondence with Michael Mann and himself. Unfortunately I was not given the opportunity to respond prior to the publication, forcing me to engage here in an unseemly he said-she said account of this correspondence.

In December 2003, I sent a polite request to Crowley for an FTP location for the data used in Crowley and Lowery [2000], a prominent multiproxy study cited by IPCC, as follows: “I am interested in examining the actual proxy data used in Crowley-Lowery 2000, which was referenced by IPCC. I have been unable to locate the data, as used, at the World Data Center for Paleoclimatology. Can you direct me to an FTP location where you have archived this data or otherwise make the data available. Thank you for your attention.”. I’m not sure how the request could have been expressed more politely. Crowley falsely characterizes this request as being of a “somewhat peremptory character, requesting all my files, programs and documentation”.

Crowley did not acknowledge this request. A few months later, I followed up as follows: “I would appreciate it if you could respond to the request below [Dec. 12, 2003], which is consistent with most journal policies. Thanks for your consideration”. Again, I’m not sure how this could have been phrased more politely. Crowley falsely characterizes this letter as being “a quick followup by [McIntyre] had a more threatening tone, implying that the director of the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) would be contacted if I did not comply.” The tone was hardly “more threatening” nor was the director of the NSF mentioned. Neither this letter nor another similar email in May elicited any acknowledgement or response from Crowley.

In June 2004, after 6 months of no response, I did contact the director of the U.S. National Science Foundation in connection with the failure of several prominent climate scientists, including Crowley (and Mann), to provide a proper archive of their work. Shortly after this letter, Crowley replied to me for the first time, promising to archive his data with the WDCP before the end of the summer. Summer passed and Crowley still did not archive the data. I persisted, with emails adding up as Crowley prevaricated for one reason or another. All of my emails were polite. After many further exchanges, Crowley said that he had “misplaced” his original data in the move from Texas to Duke. (Such eventualities are a good reason for public archiving.) Crowley located a smoothed and transformed version of his data, which he sent me. Some of the data did not match graphs in the original publications, so I asked Crowley where he got the data. Crowley said that he did not remember and broke off correspondence.

In the EOS article, Crowley stated that an article by McKittrick and I “showed an unexpectedly large warming in the 1400s” and that “the consensus among climate

scientists most familiar with the data is that the MM warming in the 1400s is due to an error in the MM analysis method; it can also not be supported by an examination of the data.” Here Crowley misrepresents our article: we have never proposed a climate reconstruction of our own, our aim is to show what would result had Mann et al. done what they said they did using their cited data.

In March 2005, Crowley requested a data file for what he has characterized as the “MM reconstruction”. I told Crowley that there was no such thing as an MM reconstruction, stating: “We do not ourselves argue that 15th century temperatures were high - only that Mann et al. are not entitled to claim under their methods that 20th century values are robustly higher than 15th century temperatures.” Crowley re-iterated his request saying “Steve, thanks for the clarification. would it still be possible to obtain the temperature reconstruction showing the large warming - it is my understanding that some people are misinterpreting that series and i would like to have a copy for my records, tom” . I sent the temperature reconstruction to Crowley again with the very explicit statement: “We are not putting forward the attached calculations as "our approach" as we do not endorse MBH98 methods.” Crowley’s EOS article put forward the very misinterpretation that he had acknowledged in other people.

My correspondence with Crowley is posted online at <http://www.climateaudit.org/?p=246> . Crowley’s account of my correspondence with Mann is equally untrue, but cannot be discussed here within a 750-word limit and is also online at <http://www.climateaudit.org/correspondence/mann.correspondence.2003.htm>

PART 2

On July 12, 2005, in addition to publishing untrue comments about my correspondence with Thomas Crowley, EOS published untrue comments by Crowley regarding my correspondence with Michael Mann. The inaccuracy of Crowley’s remarks can be verified simply by inspecting the correspondence itself, which I have posted online at <http://www.climateaudit.org/correspondence/mann.correspondence.2003>.

In April 2003, I sent a request to Mann for the FTP location of the MBH98 proxy data. At the time, the proxy data was not archived with other MBH98 data at the University of Massachusetts or the WDCP; it was not linked at Mann’s website and was not indexed in the public area of Mann’s FTP site. In response, Mann said that he had “forgotten” the location of the data and that his associate, Scott Rutherford, would locate it for me. Rutherford said that the data was not in any one location. Crowley falsely characterizes this request as being for “all the files, data sets, algorithms and source codes”, falsely says that I requested it in a “different format” and falsely says that the data was “already available on a public FTP site”.

After some reminders, Rutherford identified a text file via a URL at Mann’s FTP site as the data used in MBH98. We observed many problems with this dataset and, in Sept. 2003, I asked Mann to specifically confirm that this was the data actually used in

MBH98. Mann said that he was too busy to respond to this or any other question. After publication of McIntyre and McKittrick (2003), a new directory containing MBH98 data suddenly materialized in the public sector of Mann's FTP site and the files identified by Rutherford were deleted. Mann said that the dataset identified by Rutherford was "garbage". An unseemly controversy broke out, which is too lengthy to summarize here.

Crowley stated that Mann's algorithm was described in the original 1998 Nature publication and "expanded" in 2004. This does little justice to this history. The original description was inaccurate in key particulars. Many series, listed in the original SI, turned out not to be used in the actual calculations. The "expansion" of the description of the algorithm in 2004 was not issued voluntarily, but accompanying a Corrigendum issued after a complaint by us to Nature. The "expanded" description remains incomplete. For example, it did not describe the highly biased "short-centered" principal components method analyzed in McIntyre and McKittrick [2005].

Crowley suggests that the Barton Committee is somehow picking on Mann. However, the MBH98 study was prominently displayed by IPCC and has been relied on for policy recommendations. Mann was lead author for the TAR section highlighting his own work. In an interview with the Wall Street Journal, Mann said that he would not be "intimidated" into releasing the source code, a position which seems both petulant and suspicious to most outside observers not involved in climate science. One would have hoped that some of the learned institutions and individuals now criticizing the Barton Committee would have spoken up at that time and encouraged Mann to recognize a public interest in divulging the code to permit independent verification of such a prominent result. Unfortunately, that did not occur.

Large policy decisions are being made based on claims by climate scientists. The IPCC has placed itself in the role of policy advisor, issuing reports that are every bit as consequential as business prospectuses. It is surely legitimate for a congressional committee to inquire on the procedures for disclosure and due diligence in such reports and in the articles underpinning such reports, not just from the executives of IPCC, but from IPCC authors, who have been publicly funded and who have highlighted their own work in their capacity as IPCC authors.