

upon us to take urgent action." He then issued a warning—presumably based on his interpretation of the SAR—about such dire consequences as regional famine, water shortages, flooding of coastal areas, and the spread of malaria and other diseases. Trying to marginalize scientific critics of the SAR, Wirth referred to "dissent from a dwindling band of skeptics," even though about a hundred atmospheric scientists had signed a declaration following a November 1995 conference held in Leipzig to discuss the evidence for global warming. The signatories had declared that they could not support "the so-called 'scientific consensus' that envisages climate catastrophes and advocates hasty actions," that the UN Climate Treaty was "unrealistic" and that any restriction on energy use that inhibits economic growth "should be viewed with caution." (Text is available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.his.com/~sepp>.)

Most scientists would not object strongly to the IPCC phrase about "discernible human influence." We have known for some years that the stratosphere is cooling,² the diurnal temperature range has been decreasing,³ the frequency of hurricanes has been diminishing⁴ and so forth—quite possibly as the result of some human influence. It is unfortunate, however, that the IPCC's Summary for Policy Makers (SPM) juxtaposes that particular phrase with the results of unproven climate models predicting a temperature rise of between 1 °C and 3.5 °C by 2100. In fact, though, the SPM presents the underlying facts selectively, fails to validate climate models and should not be used to deduce anything at all about "climate sensitivity" and future warming.⁵

The ministerial declaration specifically, and improperly, links the IPCC phrase about human influence to a temperature increase of 2 °C by 2100—a serious misinterpretation of the IPCC report and of climate science. It will be a test of the scientific integrity of the IPCC—and of the scientific community as a whole—to make this fact known to the world's policymakers.



How much do you want for this weapons-grade plutonium?

References

1. B. D. Santer *et al.*, *Climate Dynamics* **12**, 77 (1995); B. D. Santer *et al.*, *Nature* **382**, 39 (1996).
2. See, for example, R. W. Spencer, J. R. Christy, *J. Climate* **5**, 847 (1992).
3. See, for example, T. R. Karl *et al.*, *Bull. Am. Met. Soc.* **74**, 1007 (1993).
4. See, for example, C. W. Landsea *et al.*, *Geophys. Res. Lett.* **23**, 1697 (1996).
5. For a discussion of the SPM's flaws, see, for example, S. F. Singer, *Science* **271**, 581 (1996).

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Need for Unity in Physics Prompts Call for Changes in *PT*

I commend the American Physical Society and the American Institute of Physics for recent efforts to reach out to all segments of the physics community. Such initiatives as the Forum on Industrial and Applied Physics and *The Industrial Physicist* are steps in the right direction.

Especially in this time of rapid change in national priorities, it is essential that physicists from industry, academia, government laboratories and other organizations work together to promote physics within society. We can no longer afford professional associations that cater only to research university and Federal government scientists.

To further the cause of unity, I suggest that the subject matter of *The Industrial Physicist* be integrated into PHYSICS TODAY and that, in PHYSICS TODAY itself, the "Washington Reports" and "Physics Community" sections address issues of interest to all segments of the physics community. Focusing on proposed cuts in university science while largely ignoring massive industry layoffs projects a less-than-ecumenical image.

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Fundamental Law of Problems Is Traced to TV Reporter

Pacific Northwest National Laboratory's Gerald Stokes is quoted in Toni Feder's "Physics Community" story on radioactive waste (April, page 56) as saying, "The Hanford site is a series of problems that are previous solutions." This is a specific example of a fundamental law—Sevareid's law—that is largely unknown: "The chief source of problems is solutions."¹

We teachers need to be more aware of this important law, and we need to help our students understand its full implications.

Reference

1. Eric Sevareid, speaking on CBS News, 29 December 1970; quoted in T. L. Martin, *Malice in Blunderland*, McGraw-Hill, New York (1973).

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Corrections

July, page 72—Thermionics Northwest's location (text column two, line 26) should have been given as Port Townsend.

July, page 73—The capacitance design of MKS Instruments' new switches provides an accuracy of 0.5% of full scale, not 5% as stated (text column one, line 8).

June, page 37—In the table in box 2, the listings for nitrate and nitrite stored at Hanford were inadvertently switched. There are, in fact, 106 000 metric tons of nitrate (NO₃) and 9400 metric tons of nitrite (NO₂).

June, page 92—PNPI USA Corp's zip code (text column one, line 12) should have been given as 77036. ■