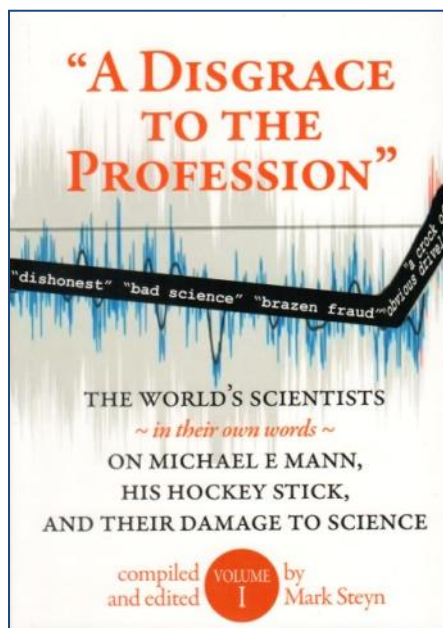


BOOK REVIEW

A Slap Shot to the Teeth of Science?



“A Disgrace to the Profession” (Volume 1): The World’s Scientists – in their own words – on Michael E. Mann, His Hockey Stick, and Their Damage to Science

Compiled and edited by Mark Steyn
Woodsville, NH: Stockade Books, 2015
308 pages
Softcover, \$19.95
ISBN: 978-0-9863983-3-9

REVIEWED BY GARY P. POSNER

TRIGGER WARNING: University students and professors, and all others who may require insulation from ideas with which they disagree, should not read this ad hominem book or the following justification for it!

The quote contained in this book’s title comes not from its politically conservative editor, but from a 2005 e-mail from Hendrik Tennekes, Ph.D., former Director of Research at the Royal Dutch Meteorological Institute and Professor of Aeronautical Engineering at Penn State University. An exponent of the limited value of predictions based upon scientific modeling, Dr. Tennekes’ condemnation, like the dozens more in this pithy collection of devastating quotes, was directed at Dr. Michael Mann, creator of the iconic “hockey stick” graph that quickly became so influential in galvanizing a worldwide political and scientific campaign to combat manmade climate change.

If reading anything a Limbaugh-like loudmouth has to say isn’t your cup of tea, you can tune out Mark Steyn’s 14-page “Introduction,” though you would miss some entertaining anecdotes about Mann’s defamation lawsuit against him. And, if you so choose, you can skip Steyn’s four-page introductions to each of the book’s sections. And contained within all of the 120 two-page chapters (10 per section), each of which is devoted to quotes (footnoted with their source URLs) from a credentialed scientist, are italicized contextual comments by Steyn, which can certainly be blurred sufficiently with a squint.

But reading, with open eyes and mind, the normal-case text (the scientists’ quotes) within those chapters might possibly lead to an appreciation that not all who harbor doubts relating to the threat of manmade global warming are necessarily scientifically ignorant or intellectually dishonest, and that in the eyes of many, circling the wagons to tenaciously defend Dr. Mann and his “hockey stick” graph may be bringing damage upon the scientific community itself.

In that graph, the lengthy “handle” represents a relative stability of temperature from 1080 to 1850, after which a sharp upward slope appears near the dawn of industrialization. But, as the saying goes, “garbage in, garbage out.” And the thrust of Steyn’s compilation of ad hominem and other assorted affronts is that the hockey stick’s stench has been permitted to ripen for far too long and begs a dishonorable burial in the cemetery of junk science.

Were such a funeral to take place, the stick’s pallbearers would never feel the Medieval Warm Period (approx. 1000 to 1300 A.D.) during which global temperatures are accepted by many experts to have exceeded today’s, or the Little Ice Age that followed shortly thereafter (lasting until the late 1800s). Thermometers capable of accurate air-temp readings were nonexistent in those eras, so Mann extrapolated mean global temperature by analyzing the rings of three ancient California bristlecone pine trees.

For the sake of brevity, I will not list herein all the scientists and their credentials, which appear to average about six-or-so lines apiece. And I doubt that many of them have published peer-reviewed studies in the climate-science literature. (Given their politically incorrect perspectives on such an acclaimed climate scientist’s work, would such submissions even be welcomed by most journal editors?) But the following are representative snippets from some of the quotes (ranging from the years 2005 through 2012) contained within the first of the book’s 12 sections:

“The hockey stick ... was the result of incorrect handling of proxy temperature records [from the rings of three trees] and incorrect statistical analysis.” ◇ “... the blade does not represent the observed climate record, it is unreliable.” ◇ “... if you want to claim that you are engaging in science, the programs are in your possession and you will not release them, then you are not a scientist.” ◇ “The IPCC process [regarding the Kyoto treaty] is fatally flawed. ... The behavior of Michael Mann is a disgrace to the profession.” ◇ “... this global deception. ... The extent of global fear inspired ... is incalculable. ... the underlying fraudulent science. ... We are either dealing with willful scientific deceptions or woeful and lazy scientific mediocrity from Ph.D.s themselves.” ◇ “... so-called predictions based on models of an inherently chaotic system that surely were a far cry from any representative simulation of nature.” ◇ “The justification [for the Climategate ‘erasing’ of the declining temperatures from 1969 onward] would not have survived peer review in any journal I’m willing to publish in.” ◇ “... in pseudoscience you begin with a hypothesis which is very appealing to you, and then you only look for things which confirm the hypothesis. ... And so the question then ... is global warming a pseudoscience?”

That last zinger was from a certified-non-climate scientist, though a Nobel Laureate in Physics. And I’ll spare you 11 additional similar paragraphs. But I can’t leave out this remark from another eminent physicist: “The Hockey Stick is obviously wrong. Everybody knows it is obviously wrong. ... It is the job of scientists of integrity to expose pathological science. ... [I]t is a litmus test of whether climate scientists are prepared to stand up against the bullying defenders of pathology in their midst.”

And there are 100+ more where those insolent comments came from, with Volume II “coming soon.” I thus recommend these books if for no other reason than to raise one’s awareness as to why so many scientists, and those who read their words, still struggle to make the leap upon the climate-change bandwagon.