

# U.K. lawmakers clear 'Climategate' scientists, but call for more openness

**Jeremy Lovell, Environment & Energy Publishing, 3-31-10**

LONDON, March 31 -- A committee of U.K. lawmakers has described the scientists at the center of the "Climategate" stolen e-mails scandal of operating in a shroud of secrecy, but cleared them of any wrongdoing because everyone else in the climate change field was working in the same way.

But Parliament's Science and Technology Committee said the refusal of scientists under professor Phil Jones at the University of East Anglia's respected Climatic Research Unit (CRU) to comply with a torrent of requests from critics for data under the British freedom of information law was "unacceptable."

"A great responsibility rests on the shoulders of climate science: To provide the planet's decision makers with the knowledge they need to secure our future," the committee's report says. "The challenge that this poses is extensive and some of these decisions risk our standard of living."

"When the prices to pay are so large, the knowledge on which these kinds of decisions are taken had better be right. The science must be irreproachable," it adds.

The committee said the words "trick" and "hide the decline" picked out of the thousands of e-mails stolen from a CRU server and said by climate skeptics to show proof of attempts to manipulate the science were in fact simple colloquialisms and innocent of any malevolent intent.

But in a brief, 59-page report, the all-party committee deplored the closed operating practices that pervade the climate science field, saying they led to a lack of clarity, boosting the case of the skeptics and causing mistrust and the likelihood of misunderstanding among the public.

## **Author acknowledges 'awful e-mails'**

"What this inquiry revealed was that climate scientists need to take steps to make sure that all the data that support their work, and the methodological workings, including their computer codes, should be made available," committee chairman Phil Willis said. "We believe that had both the data and the methodology been made available, many of the problems at CRU could have been avoided," he told reporters.

But he said the criticism leveled at the unit and specifically at Jones applied equally to other scientists in the highly specialized and relatively small area of global climate change, and they had simply been following accepted practice.

A series of e-mails from Jones and his small team were posted on the Internet last November and were immediately seized on by skeptics as proof that the whole basis of climate change science was deeply flawed.

In the e-mails, Jones asked for data to be deleted, said he would fight to ensure certain papers were not published, and refused requests for the raw data upon which his conclusions were based. He also wrote of the "trick" to make seemingly contradictory data suddenly fit the desired outcome that climate change was happening and was mainly caused by human activities.

"You have only seen one-tenth of one percent of my e-mails. But I don't think there is anything in those e-mails

that supports the view that the CRU has been trying to pervert the peer-review process in any way," Jones told the committee earlier this month. "But I have obviously written some very awful e-mails," added Jones, who has said he has received death threats since the revelations.

### **Scientist was 'scapegoated'**

The committee, which conducted a rushed inquiry because it is to be disbanded soon as Parliament is dissolved ahead of general elections expected on May 6, agreed with both statements and said Jones had been unjustly targeted.

"Jones said he had sent some appalling e-mails. There is no denying that," said Willis. "But there is no evidence that Jones hid any of the data at all. Jones has been scapegoated."

The committee said the whole climate science community should look closely at its practices and reform them urgently to make sure that everyone could rest assured that their conclusions could be replicated and verified.

"It is not standard practice in climate science and many other fields to publish the raw data and the computer code in academic papers. We think that this is problematic because climate science is a matter of global importance and of public interest, and therefore the quality and transparency of the science should be irreproachable," it said.

Although its task was not to examine the science of climate change -- that is being looked into by another independent committee, which is expected to report later this year -- the committee said it had seen no evidence to undermine the fundamental finding that climate change was happening and was primarily human-induced.