**Heidi Hall, Michael Mann: Let's have a worthy debate**

We believe that Dr. Michael Mann’s opinion piece in The Union on Sept. 22 should have been the end of the opinion wars in our local news on the internationally debated topic about whether or not climate change exists.

While scientists can be wrong, and all theories are subject to credible challenges, the world’s scientists have spoken — climate change is real, caused by human activity, and already a problem.

The topic we should be debating is what we can do about it, how much and what kind of intervention will be useful and how do we make it work economically.

Locally here in Nevada County, the topic is even more narrow — what can a small community with limited influence and budgets do to move us forward to address the harsh consequences of climate change, for our kids’ sake and future generations if not for ourselves.

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Instead, some simply want to engage in bad faith attacks on the underlying science and on the scientists themselves, in hopes of distracting the public and policy makers from the challenge at hand.

Thus we have continued attacks on Dr. Mann and his iconic “Hockey stick” curve, which demonstrates that modern global warming is unprecedented for at least the past 1,000 years.

Despite the fact that the highest scientific body in the U.S., the National Academy of Sciences, affirmed his findings in an exhaustive review in 2006 (see e.g. “[Science Panel Backs Study on Warming Climate”, New York Times, June 22, 2006](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/22/science/22cnd-climate.html?_r=0)) and despite the fact that dozens of groups of scientists have independently reproduced, confirmed, and extended his findings (including most recently an international team of nearly 80 scientists from around the world) and despite the fact that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has concluded that recent warmth is likely unprecedented over an even longer time frame than Dr. Mann and his colleagues had originally concluded (at least the past 1,400 years), this paper has continued to publish attacks against Dr. Mann’s work and, equally important, to publish commentaries full of outright falsehoods when it comes to the issue of human-caused climate change.

Journalists and editorial page editors need to stop wasting ink to give a false sense of equity from “both sides of the issue.” In this time of Internet jockeys thinking that every opinion is equal regardless of their actual understanding of the issue, this matters.

Publishers and bloggers do us a disservice by not distinguishing credible opinion from absurdities, and continuing to give both equal time. We understand that it can be difficult to determine the credibility of opinions. But doing so is, in our opinion, a key responsibility of journalists today.

When 97 percent of the publishing scientists, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, and nearly every scientific society in the world is in agreement that we have a problem, it is time for publishers to move on to the real issues at hand: What we can do to reduce our vulnerability to the climate changes that are already in the pipeline, and what can we do to prevent those changes which are still avoidable.

That is where the worthy debate still lies.

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