

The hundred-faults* of Claude Allègre

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[* a play on words; *sans-fautes*, a homonym of *cent-fautes* (hundred-faults), means *faultless performance* in French]

In his latest work, *The Climate Deception*, the former minister strongly denounces climatology. An indictment riddled with errors.

In his latest book, *The Climate Deception* (Plon, 300 pp., €19.90), a work of interviews with the journalist Dominique de Montvalon, the geochemist and former minister Claude Allègre formulates extremely grave accusations against the climate science community. The principal target of the work is the IPCC, wrongly defined by the author as the “International Group for Climate Study” – it concerns in reality the Group of Intergovernmental Experts on the Evolution of the Climate [GIEC in French].

M. Allègre mentions a “*mafia system*” having conspired to turn a “*myth*” into a scientific fact, as viewed by the world at large. The work, which has been well covered by the media, contains many approximations and factual errors, even to the point of deceiving the public. Here are some.

P. 22. “A study published in the journal *Science* suggests that the increase in temperature of the northern hemisphere from 1970 to 2000 is perhaps due to the elimination of carbon dust in the atmosphere, which has facilitated solar heating. The increase [in temperature] therefore has nothing to do with CO₂” writes M. Allègre, citing a study published by *Science* in March 2007. The first two sentences of this paper rebut the interpretation taken from it by the former minister. “The marked tendencies to warming are observed in the Arctic. Even though the human emission of long-lived greenhouse gases are certainly the principal cause [of the warming], the atmospheric pollutants are also important”.

P. 68. “As a whole, the Antarctic does not seem to be melting. In any event, it is imperceptible”. The reduction of Antarctic ice is not due to melting, but to sliding of the glaciers into the sea. It is very obvious. Thanks to satellite data, the research of Isabella Velicogna (JPL, University of California at Irvine) showed that between 2002 and 2006 the Antarctic has lost, on average, 104 billion tonnes (Gt) of ice per annum. Between 2006 and 2009 the rate has increased to 246 Gt per annum. The



losses of glaciers of Greenland and of the Antarctic are one of the principal causes of the increase in sea level.

P. 68. “In the Middle Ages, when the Vikings discovered Greenland, there was already less ice than today. That’s why they called it the ‘green land’ ”, writes M. Allègre. The etymology is correct, but the cause proposed is false. The saga of Eric the Red (dating from the thirteenth century AD) witnesses that “Eric [the Red] set off to colonise the land which he had discovered and which he called the ‘green land’ because, he said, people would have a strong desire to go to a land with such a beautiful name”.

The [existence of the] warm period in the middle ages – at any rate in the northern hemisphere – is unequivocal. But the overwhelming majority of palaeoclimatic reconstructions suggest that it was less warm than the present.

P. 73. Regarding the influence of the warming on hurricanes, “some specialists like Wester, Tech and Kerry Emmanuel think” that it is real, writes the author. “Wester” is Peter Webster. As for “Tech”, this name does not exist. The author has confounded the name of Mr. Webster (of Georgia Tech, short for Georgia Institute of Technology), with that of a person.

P. 78. The author makes a summary of research showing that 125,000 years ago it was “6°C higher than today, and atmospheric CO₂ was at a lower level”. The reference cited is the work of “Sine” and his collaborators, claimed to have been published in *Science* in November 2007. This publication does not exist in the archives of *Science*.

P. 94. Clause Allègre is outraged that the research of Jean-Pierre Chalon on clouds has not been taken into account by the IPCC. M. Allègre quotes this passage from a book by M. Chalon: *“These processes are still poorly understood. It is one of the main difficulties and one of the main sources of uncertainty which the attempts to predict climatic evolution encounter”*. *“I ask myself, continues M. Allègre. Why has such an expert not been more involved in the procedures of the IPCC? ... Reply: it’s part of the ‘climatic totalitarianism’. To admit to shades of opinion is to be classed as an enemy of the ‘climatically correct’.”*

However, this is what is to be read in the summary of the IPCC’s last report: *“At the present, cloud feedback constitutes the principal source of uncertainty in estimations of climatic sensitivity”* [the original wording in the fourth IPCC report, 2007, actually states more succinctly *“Cloud feedbacks remain the largest source of uncertainty”*].

P. 109. Clause Allègre produces a diagram showing a close link between several curves: one showing the evolution of the mean global temperature at the base of the atmosphere in the twentieth century; one showing solar irradiation, and two others showing the variations in terrestrial magnetism.

This diagram has indeed been published in 2005, then in 2007, in the journal *Earth and Planetary Science Letters* (EPSL). But it was clearly refuted in December 2007 due to errors in the attribution of the data.

P. 138. Clause Allègre presents the opposition of the scientific community to the conclusions of the IPCC as very strong. He writes: *“The most significant event is perhaps the vote which took place among the American climate specialists. (...) On 19 October 2009, the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society made public the results [of the poll]. Here they are: 50% of them did not believe in the influence of man on the climate, 27% had doubts about it. Only 23% believed the predictions of the IPCC.”*

Paul Higgins, a representative of the American Meteorological Society, was interviewed, and recalls this poll. It had practically nothing to do with *“American climate specialists”*, but concerned the weather presenters of the American TV channels.

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Translated from the French by David Smythe