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The Solved Riddle of the 2016 Climate Change “Consensus Letter”

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The latest [“Consensus” Letter on Climate Change](#), allegedly [signed by leaders of 31 scientific organizations](#) and published on the websites of the AAAS, AGU, AMS, and others, appears to be a forgery. The letter consists of few sentences of alarmist “content” (which is beyond the scope of this paper) and the names of 31 organizations, printed at the end of the letter and having the appearance of signatures. The [press release](#) and the [accompanying article](#) , published on June 28, 2016, stated that the letter was signed by all 31 named organizations. In fact, **some of the listed scientific societies did not sign the letter prior to its publication, and their alleged signatures on the letter were forged**. This forgery was revealed by some routine fact-checking the author conducted, which this paper details.

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Timeline of Events

In early morning of July 6th, the author sent fact-checking emails to the CEO of the AAAS and to the top officials and/or media contacts of the 30 other organizations. Appendix B contains the email exchange with AAAS. The emails asked only about signing the letter, not about its content. Specifically, the author's email asked whether the letter in question was signed by the listed organizations or their leaders, and asked for an opportunity to see the actual signatures. In its reply, AAAS changed the published allegation that the letter was signed to "reflect the participation of leaders of each of the 31 named scientific societies" (**Fact #1**). The author's follow up letter, asking AAAS to confirm that the letter was actually signed, went unanswered.

That same day, a different email (Appendix A) was sent to each of the other 30 organizations. All these emails had substantially the same text, but each organization was contacted separately, usually with copies to multiple recipients within that organization. The organizations were not cc'ed on emails sent to their peers, and were not told that other organizations were contacted, except for the triplet of the Agronomy/Soil Science/Crop Science Societies. 9 out of these 30 organizations answered, and all 9 confirmed that they signed the letter. 5 out of 9 replies flatly denied that there was any pressure to sign, and none indicated otherwise. Some probably thought that the question about the pressure was inappropriate. Thus, all replies and non-replies can be divided into two categories: "yes" and "no answer." If the respondents acted independently, the 9 positive replies would be a valid statistical sample, confirming the null hypothesis that the letter was properly signed by all participants.

But the respondents did not reply independently, as one might expect from any organization simply asked to confirm its signature on a published document. "Leading scientific societies" might also be expected to think independently, but that's another matter. Instead, the respondents colluded and coordinated their responses or non-responses in an unthinkable manner. This is evidence of foul play by itself (**Fact #2**). Honest people do not need to coordinate their answers. This lack of independence also makes it impossible to use statistical methods to infer what answers would be given by the 21 organizations that did not reply.

This routine fact-checking exercise suddenly evolved into an experiment, and its timeline is as important as the questions and answers. The replies started to arrive immediately after the author sent his questions. In fact, 6 out of 10 replies (including the one from AAAS) arrived within eight hours. Then, an email from the Ecological Society of America arrived, and it was as if a silence spell was cast on the "leading nonpartisan scientific societies." This is the email:

Thanks [name of the recipient redacted],

Halperin is a climate denier and writes several blogs. Throughout the day, I've learned he has contacted many other societies with the same questions. Most are declining to respond to his inquiry.

Your response was good. I hope he won't email you again. I'm sure he will write a scathing piece on the letter.

*Best,
[name of the sender redacted]*

This email was sent by a PR person (who will be referred to here as “Maura” to protect her privacy) in the Ecological Society of America to its President, and was received by the author at 11:57am CT. It is short, but when combined with the timing of the other responses, it gives a lot of clues:

- An absolutely innocent fact-checking email, which could have been answered by a clerk, caused sudden agitation in the Ecological Society of America. Before midday, Maura of ESA had not only contacted “many other societies” but had learned of the decision on how to deal with it, or even made that decision.
- “Many other societies” shared this agitation. The staff of these “leading nonpartisan scientific societies” did not ask her who she was, or what the hell she was talking about. Apparently, the self-professed “leaders of major scientific organizations” did not refuse to talk with Maura about their correspondence with an unrelated third party, as any decent person would have done. Instead, they readily shared with her all the information.
- “*Most are declining to respond...*” was a misleading statement. The timing of the responses (see below) shows that within a few hours of the first email, somebody (possibly Maura) identified this fact-checking exercise as a threat, collected information from multiple recipients, and made a decision not to respond (**Fact #3**). And many “scientific societies” which did not respond before that decision obediently complied. Like a good military - quick reaction, admirable discipline, and excellent chain of Command, Control, & Communication. But whom does this military serve?
- The alertness of the “consensus guard” is a separate indicator of foul play (**Fact #4**).
- Finally, Maura revealed the fact of the wrongdoing and her knowledge of it in the last sentence: “*I’m sure he will write a scathing piece on the letter*” (**Fact #5**).

After this communication from Maura, the author received only four responses. The first one (from the Geological Society) arrived two days later. The second one was from a Tier 3 organization. The last two, from AGU and COL, arrived five and six days later, and contained virtually identical evasive answers, obviously crafted with great care by PR people.

Raw Data and Intermediate Analysis

The organizations that allegedly signed the letter are very diverse in their sizes, capacities, and relevance to the subject matter. The *American Association for the Advancement of Science* (AAAS) is in a tier of its own because of its size, visibility, and the respect it used to command a few decades ago. It is unashamedly partisan (AAAS head Dr. Rush Holt Jr. was a Democratic Congressman for sixteen years, 1999-2015) but this is not an exception. Judging by their websites, many of the listed organizations look like branches of the Democratic Party, showcasing its declared and even hidden agendas: LGBT, “diversity,” climate change, Cuba, growing hemp etc.

Tier 1 includes 11 organizations. With the exception of the Consortium for Ocean Leadership and UCAR, each organization in Tier 1 is a formerly respectable scientific society, possessing all of the following attributes:

- Its science is relevant to the content of the letter
- It claims to prioritize communicating science to the public
- It has significant full-time staff and other organizational resources

The majority of members of these societies understand, or should be able to understand after a few days of study, that both the content and the thrust of the letter in question contradict well-known facts and/or first principles of their respective scientific fields. The Consortium for Ocean Leadership (who would know that the ocean needs leadership?) is not a scientific society, but it is headed by a retired Rear-Admiral. An Admiral does not have to study science, but should be able to recognize enemy action.

Tier 1 is the most important one. Only two out of 11 societies that were classified as Tier 1 – the American Meteorological Society and the Geological Society of America – plainly confirmed that they signed the letter. Remarkably, the Geological Society disavowed the content of the letter simultaneously with its publication, right in the [press release](#):

Geological studies have demonstrated that climate has changed repeatedly in the past and that future climate change is inevitable. Understanding the complex processes involved in climate change is necessary for adaptation and mitigation.

— Jonathan G. Price, Ph.D., CPG, President, Geological Society of America

In its reply, the Geological Society has confirmed both its signature under the letter and its statement flatly contradicting the letter’s content and intent.

Two other organizations – AGU and COL – replied after a long delay with practically identical text (the emphasis is the author’s):

The American Geophysical Union, on behalf of its members and its volunteer leaders, is pleased to be a signatory on the letter.

The Consortium for Ocean Leadership, on behalf of its member institutions, is pleased to be a signatory to the letter you reference.

This is, of course, no coincidence. The author interpreted this answer as yes, but took notice of the delay, evasion, coordination, and excessive exertion (**Fact #6**).

The remaining seven organizations (64% of Tier 1) failed to reply. The word “failed” is used because all these organizations declared science communication as one of their priorities, yet they failed to communicate at this opportunity.

Tier 2 consists of three societies – agronomy, soil science, and crop science – sharing the same address, some of the staff, and a website: www.sciencesocieties.org. Nevertheless, only one of them has confirmed that it signed the letter. The other two (67%) have not.

Table 1. AAAS and Tier 1 & 2 organizations.

| Organization | Top Officer | Position | Reply | 2009 | contacts |
|---|---------------|----------|-----------|------|----------|
| American Association for the Advancement of Science | Dr. Rush Holt | CEO | not asked | S | 3 |
| Tier 1 | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|--|------------------------------|------------------|----|-----|
| American Geophysical Union | Dr. Margaret Leinen | President | Yes (**) | S | 4 |
| American Meteorological Society | Dr. Keith Seitter | Exec. Director | Yes | S | 5 |
| American Statistical Association | Dr. Jessica Utts | President | N/A | S | 3 |
| Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics | Dr. Pamela Cook | President | N/A | S | 4 |
| American Chemical Society | Dr. Donna Nelson | President | N/A | S | 3 |
| American Society of Plant Biologists | Dr. Richard Dixon, Dr. Crispin Taylor | President, Exec. Director | N/A | S | 3 |
| Botanical Society of America | Dr. Thomas Ranker | President | N/A | S | 4 |
| University Corporation for Atmospheric Research | Dr. Michael Thompson | President, Interim | N/A | S | 4 |
| Society for Mathematical Biology | Dr. Santiago Schnell | President | N/A | NS | 4 |
| Geological Society of America | Jonathan G. Price | President | Yes (*) | NS | 2 |
| Consortium for Ocean Leadership | Adm. Jon White (Ret.) | President & CEO | Yes (**) | NS | 3 |
| Tier 2 | | | | | |
| Soil Science Society of America | | | Yes: 1 N/A: 2 | S | 3-4 |
| American Society of Agronomy | | | | S | |
| Crop Science Society of America | | | | S | |

Remarks

Top Officer and **Position** refer to the person or persons to whom the author's email was addressed. For the Tier 2 and Tier 3 organizations, the names of the contacted officers are omitted to protect their privacy.

2009 – whether the organization signed (S) or did not sign (NS) the similar letter in 2009.

Reply – whether the organization signed the 2016 letter prior to its posting, according to its reply. To avoid possible embarrassment to the respondents, only the total per tier is shown for Tiers 2 and 3.

Yes – yes

Yes (*) – yes, but *E pur si muove*

Yes (**) – evasive yes; two unrelated organizations sent exactly the same evasive response

N/A – not answered; in case of the Tier 1 organization, it is interpreted as a failure to answer

Contacts – number of contacts within the organization to whom the fact checking email was sent.

Tier 3 comprises all other organizations. They are either remote from the subject, or appear small, or are not scientific societies. 67% of them did not answer.

Table 2. Tier 3 organizations.

| Organization | Reply | 2009 | contacts |
|---|-------------------|------|----------|
| Tier 3 | | | |
| American Institute of Biological Sciences | Yes: 4 N/A: 12 | S | 1-4 |
| Natural Science Collections Alliance | | S | |
| Organization of Biological Field Stations | | S | |

| | | | |
|--|--|----|--|
| Society of Systematic Biologists | | S | |
| Association of Ecosystem Research Centers | | S | |
| Ecological Society of America | | S | |
| American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists | | NS | |
| Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles | | NS | |
| Society of Nematologists | | NS | |
| American Public Health Association | | NS | |
| American Society of Naturalists | | NS | |
| Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography | | NS | |
| Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation | | NS | |
| BioQUEST Curriculum Consortium | | NS | |
| Entomological Society of America | | NS | |
| National Association of Marine Laboratories | | NS | |

Analysis & Conclusion

Facts 1-6, as defined above, demonstrate that something was seriously wrong with the letter signing. Nevertheless, multiple hypotheses can be formulated as to what exactly was wrong. Speaking only of the Tier 1 organizations that did not reply, the following hypotheses come to mind:

- 1) The organizations that did not reply considered the author's communication unworthy of their attention.
- 2) They did sign the letter before publication, but their leaders were aware that the content of the letter was a lie and pseudo-science, and were too embarrassed to acknowledge their signatures.
- 3) They did not sign the letter before publication, or did not sign it at all. This hypothesis does not imply that the leaders of these organizations were not complicit in the publication of the letter. Rather, they tried to have it both ways – to avoid signing it, but to make people believe that they did sign it.

Of course, different organizations might have had different reasons. But their collaboration on this project and willingness to “speak with one voice” suggests that there were similarities between their ways of thinking and acting. Extensive coordination between many of the alleged signers and the hysterical reaction of the ESA prove that the fact-checking received a lot of their attention, and led to a conscious decision to stonewall or dodge. That leaves only hypotheses 2 and 3. The author thinks that the hypothesis 2 (signed, but embarrassed to acknowledge) is correct for some signing organizations. But it is obvious that neither Maura nor her collaborators in other organizations are embarrassed by anything of this sort. Thus, at least for some of the allegedly signing organizations, hypothesis 3 is correct.

Some organizations whose alleged signatures appear on the letter did not sign it prior to its posting, making the letter a forgery.

Final Remarks

The American Physical Society has explicitly rejected the discussed letter: *“The American Physical Society did not sign the letter because it was presented as a fait accompli, and there are significant differences between the letter and the APS Statement on Earth’s Changing Climate.”* This fact alone refutes the letter’s claim to represent “consensus scientific view.”

Almost every attempt of the climate alarmists to show broad support of scientists led to a forgery, so letter is in no way an exception. One forgotten, but still relevant case was described by Richard Lindzen in his 1992 article [Global Warming. The Origin and Nature of the Alleged Scientific Consensus.](#): *“The activities of **the Union of Concerned Scientists** deserve special mention. That widely supported [in 1992] organization was originally devoted to nuclear disarmament. ... Over the past few years, the organization has turned to the battle against global warming in a particularly hysterical manner. In 1989 the group began to circulate a petition urging recognition of global warming as potentially the great danger to mankind. Most recipients who did not sign were solicited at least twice more. The petition was eventually signed by 700 scientists including a great many members of the National Academy of Sciences and Nobel laureates. Only about three or four of the signers, however, had any involvement in climatology. Interestingly, the **petition had two pages, and on the second page there was a call for renewed consideration of nuclear power. When the petition was published in the New York Times, however, the second page was omitted.** In any event, that document helped solidify the public perception that “all scientists” agreed with the disaster scenario.”*

In plain language, somebody in the Union of Concerned Scientists altered the text after it was signed and published the forged document.

Clarifications & Acknowledgements

Nothing in the paper is to be interpreted as an accusation or even suggestion that somebody has broken a law.

The finding following the routine fact-checking email could not be ignored by the author, so this paper might have accusatory undertones. But the author has absolutely no intent to doubt the honesty, integrity, or qualifications of the members of the respective scientific societies. On the contrary, the author wants to underscore that their “leaders” do not represent their members. Unfortunately, media personalities, pseudo-scientists, and well-known frauds keep dressing up as scientists. The media gives star treatment to them and to third-rate scholars. When the blowback comes, the science-ruining politicians and their academic sidekicks will hide behind real scientists as behind human shields.

The goal of the paper is to report the data and conclusions of this impromptu research. Besides that, and with little relation to this research, the author wants to raise an alert about the desperate situation of American science in general (with the exception of a few areas.) The scientific enterprise was raped by Al Gore, degraded by his appointees behind the back of G.W. Bush, and stomped into the ground by Obama.

The author thanks everyone who answered his questions.

Appendix A. The email to AGU, a sample of what was sent to all 30 orgs

July 6, 2016

Dr. Margaret Leinen

President

American Geophysical Union

Dear Dr. Leinen,

I'm writing regarding a letter posted by the American Association for Advancement of Science and dated June 28, 2016. The letter is at <http://www.aaas.org/sites/default/files/06282016.pdf>, and the accompanying article claims that you signed it. However, since no signatures are present in the posted copy, I would like to verify your participation and hear your side of the story, for an article I'm writing on the letter. Would you be so kind as to answer the following questions?

1. Did you sign the letter?
2. If you did not sign personally, did any other officer, employee, or board member in your organization?
3. If someone in your organization signed the letter, would you please tell me his or her name and title? Was the signature in a personal capacity or on behalf of the organization?
4. Was there any pressure involved to sign the letter?

If you prefer not to answer these questions, please feel free to say so. I would also welcome your opinions on the letter's content, or anything you want to say related to it. Since my article deadline is coming up, I would greatly appreciate a response within one week. Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

/Ari Halperin/

Ari Halperin

Appendix B. Email exchange with AAAS

July 6, Halperin to AAAS

July 6, 2016

Dr. Rush Holt

Chief Executive Officer

American Association for Advancement of Science

Dear Dr. Holt,

The American Association for Advancement of Science recently published a letter dated June 28 (<http://www.aaas.org/sites/default/files/06282016.pdf>), addressed to Members of Congress and written on behalf of 31 major scientific organizations. Unfortunately, the posted copy of the letter is missing individual signatures, unlike a similar letter published in 2009 (http://www.aaas.org/sites/default/files/migrate/uploads/1021climate_letter1.pdf).

As a scientist and a writer on this topic, I am writing an article about this letter. Because of the unfortunate omission of the signatures, I would like to satisfy myself that the letter is authentic, and that it was properly signed prior to posting. Would you be so kind as to clarify whether the 2016 letter speaks on behalf of individuals or organizations? The letter starts out, "We, as leaders of major scientific organizations," so I would also appreciate a list of the persons who signed. Ideally, I would like to inspect a copy of the full original signature page, either through email or in person at a time and place of your choice. If these options are unacceptable to you, please feel free to confirm the letter's authenticity in another way. Thank you for your consideration. I would appreciate a reply within one week, as I have a strict deadline for my article.

Best regards,
/Ari Halperin/
Ari Halperin

July 6, AAAS to Halperin

Dear Mr. Halperin,

The consensus letter of June 28, 2016 reflected the participation of leaders of each of the 31 named scientific societies. Many of those leaders were quoted in the related collaborative news release, so you will find some specific names there.

Kind regards, Ginger Pinholster

July 12, Halperin to AAS

Dear Ms. Pinholster,

Your reply is appreciated, but it does not answer my main question. **Was the letter signed by all 31 named organizations prior to posting?** I expect a simple "yes" or "no", and need your reply today.

Kindest regards,
Ari Halperin

No Reply from AAS