

[Dan wants to know](#) why “climate skeptics” don’t seem to care about uncertainty:

Let me try just one more time. Suppose you have some symptoms that could be a fatal disease or could be something minor. You’re not certain which it is. Is that a good reason for ignoring the problem? *Really?*


There is a simple answer to his question: *they aren’t actually climate skeptics*. The rabid conservative opposition to climate regulation does not come from “skeptics,” who might doubt the science. It comes from those who aren’t “skeptical” at all: they are, instead, *absolutely sure* that climate change is a fraud. It is a conspiracy to scare the public into expanding the state.



Sen. James Inhofe (R - Olduvai Gorge)

Consider [the words](#) of Senator James Inhofe of Oklahoma: “man-made climate change is the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people.” Yes, he framed it as a question, but it was clearly rhetorical: no one has any doubt what his answer was to it. He is not alone.

What about the science? For climate “skeptics,” the science is simply another part of the vast conspiracy, and scientists are members in good standing of elite liberals at elite liberal universities (and that means you, Dan). This is why they seized on some completely innocuous statements to invent the nonexistent “Climategate” scandal.

 This isn’t about skepticism; it is about paranoia. The relevant texts here aren’t Socratic dialogues: they are the writings of Richard Hofstadter, especially this one.

It would be nice if American political discussion, especially about issues that include a critical scientific component, could be based upon reason. But our system rarely allows for that.

Acknowledging this doesn’t make the problem any easier; in fact, it probably makes it harder. But at least we know what the real problem is.