

[REDACTED]

From: Davies Trevor Prof (ENV)
Sent: 06 February 2010 22:07
To: Acton Edward Prof (VCO); Summers Brian Mr (REG)
Subject: FW: FYI - tomorrow's Sunday Times main spread

From: Neil Wallis [REDACTED]
Sent: 06 February 2010 21:43
To: Davies Trevor Prof (ENV); Jones Philip Prof (ENV); Preece Alan Mr (MAC)
Cc: Sam BOWEN; Alan Edwards; Neil Wallis
Subject: {Spam?} Re: FYI - tomorrow's Sunday Times main spread

SEE BELOW

From The Sunday Times
February 7, 2010

The leak was bad. Then came the death threats

Richard Girling

RECOMMEND?

PHOTOGRAPHS of Professor Phil Jones show a handsome, smiling, confident-looking man. Not chubby exactly, but in blooming good health. The man who meets me at the University of East Anglia (UEA) looks grey-skinned and gaunt, as if he has been kept in prison.

In a way, he has. Since November last year he has been a prisoner of public opprobrium and a target of such vilification that was he was almost persuaded to comply with the wishes of those who wanted him dead.

In bare outline, the story of the Climatic Research Unit emails — "Climategate" — is well known.

Unidentified hackers broke into the UEA website and made off with more than a thousand emails, plus some data and program files dating back over 13 years. The thieves' eureka moment came when they found messages from Jones, the unit's director, and others apparently encouraging climate scientists to refuse freedom of information (Fol) requests from known climate sceptics, and even to destroy data rather than surrender them to anyone they feared might misuse them.

BACKGROUND

The IPCC's Synthesis Report (See section 3.3.2)
International Institute for Sustainable Development - report on how climate change might affect crop yields
Climate change speech by Ban Ki-Moon, UN secretary-general

RELATED LINKS

Climate scandal professor considered suicide

Scientist says UN panel is losing credibility

At the worst possible time, in the days immediately before the Copenhagen climate summit in December, it enabled sceptics across the globe to claim that climate science was fatally flawed and its practitioners a shifty gang who twisted the facts to suit their agenda and shut out anyone who disagreed with them.

Jones insists that is not the way it was, but concedes it was the way it may have looked. He now accepts that he did not treat the Fol requests as seriously as he should have done. "I regret that I did not deal with them in the right way," he told The Sunday Times. "In a way, I misjudged the situation."

But he pleads provocation. Last year in July alone the unit received 60 Fol requests from across the world. With a staff of only 13 to cope with them, the demands were accumulating faster than they could be dealt with. "According to the rules," says Jones, "you have to do 18 hours' work on each one before you're allowed to turn it down." It meant that the scientists would have had a lot of their time diverted from research.

A further irritation was that most of the data was available online, making the FoI requests, in Jones's view, needless and a vexatious waste of his time. In the circumstances, he says, he thought it reasonable to refer the applicants to the website of the Historical Climatology Network in the US.

He also suspected that the CRU was the target of a co-ordinated attempt to interfere with its work — a suspicion that hardened into certainty when, over a matter of days, it received 40 similar FoI requests. Each applicant asked for data from five different countries, 200 in all, which would have been a daunting task even for someone with nothing else to do. It was clear to Jones that the attack originated from an old adversary, the sceptical website Climate Audit, run by Steve McIntyre, a former minerals prospector and arch climate sceptic.

"We were clearly being targeted," says Jones. "Only 22% of the FoI enquiries were identifiably from within the UK, 39% were from abroad and 39% were untraceable." What irked him was that the foreign applicants would all have had sources closer to hand in their own countries.

"I think they just wanted to waste our time," he says. "They wanted to slow us down."

It was pure irritation, he says, that provoked him and others to write the notorious emails apparently conspiring to destroy or withhold data. "It was just frustration. I thought the requests were just distractions. It was taking us away from our day jobs. It was written in anger."

But he insists that no data were destroyed. "We have no data to delete. It comes to us from institutions around the world. We interpret data. We don't create or collect it. It's all available from other sources."

If the leak itself was bad, the aftermath was the stuff of nightmares. Even now, weeks later, Jones seems rigid with shock. "There were death threats," he says. "People said I should go and kill myself. They said they knew where I lived." Two more death threats came last week after the deputy information commissioner delivered his verdict, making more work for Norfolk police, who are already investigating the theft of the emails.

The effect on Jones was devastating. The worldwide outcry plunged him into the snakepit of international politics. It was, he agrees, "a David Kelly moment".

"I did think about it, yes. About suicide. I thought about it several times, but I think I've got past that stage now." With the support of his family, and particularly the love of his five-year-old granddaughter, he began to look forward again. He is still unwell, getting through the day on beta-blockers and the night on sleeping pills, and he has lost a stone in weight. But at last there is optimism.

Until the inquiry is over, he will stand aside from his directorship of the CRU. On the question of the science, however, he remains bristlingly defiant. He may have tripped up over the FoI requests, but nobody has laid a glove on the science. To prove his point, he spreads the table with graphs, tracing the outlines with his fingertip. He shows how the warming trend plotted by the CRU precisely matches the plots from two independent sources in America. "There, you see!" The three coloured lines precisely overlay each other, proof positive of scientific probity.

"I am obviously going to be much more careful about my emails in future. I will write every email as if it is for publication. But I stand 100% behind the science. I did not manipulate or fabricate any data, and I look forward to proving that to the Sir Muir Russell inquiry [the UEA's independent review into allegations against the unit]."

Then, he believes, at the age of 57 he will be ready to resume his career and get on quietly and invisibly with what he does best. His hope for the future? "I wish people would read my scientific papers rather than my emails."