

Statement of Political Inclinations

This statement (available at <http://www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/polinclin.pdf>) responds to journalist requests and to several criticisms from the public (not scientific colleagues). I infer from the criticisms that the writers accept as true charges made by a former NASA Public Affairs employee. Specifically, the Washington Post quoted George C. Deutsch as “I quickly learned one thing: Dr. Hansen and his supporters have a very partisan agenda and ties reaching to the top of the Democratic Party. Anyone perceived to be a Republican, a Bush supporter or a Christian is singled out and labeled a threat to their views. I encourage anyone interested in this story to consider the other side, to consider Dr. Hansen’s true motivations and to consider the dangerous implications of only hearing out one side of the global warming debate.”

These claims are nonsense. Political inclinations should have no impact on science analyses, but in any case the above description of my inclinations is inaccurate. I can be accurately described as moderately conservative. I am registered to vote (in Pennsylvania) as an Independent.

In the 1980s I met politicians of both parties in the course of testifying to the United States Senate and House of Representatives. My favorite politician then, as I indicated to friends, was Senator John Heinz, a Pennsylvania Republican, who I hoped would one day run for President. I may have been biased by the fact that he called me at home to tell me that he had intervened with John Sununu (head of President George H. Bush’s staff) on my behalf (I have a 17 May 1989 letter from Heinz describing those interactions) after I complained about alterations of my Senate testimony by the Bush Administration. However, my rationalization for supporting Senator Heinz was his balanced support for the environment in the context of strong economic development. At his request I participated in his “Town Hall” meeting in Philadelphia on the topic of global warming and economic development.

In my “Iowa talk” (available at above <http://www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/> website) I indicated that my favorite for President in 2004 would have been John McCain, but he was not on the ballot. I appreciated the priority he gave to both decreasing the power of “special interests” in politics (campaign finance reform) and global warming, in addition to the fact that he calls a spade a spade and is an American hero. I indicated that I would vote for John Kerry because he recognized the global warming problem and he said that he would work with industry leaders to address it, but I also noted that I had reservations about Kerry (citing his appeal to Nevada voters to have no nuclear waste disposal there).

As for “ties reaching to the top of the Democratic Party”, early in the first Clinton/Gore term I was invited to and attended in the White House a “breakfast with the Vice President” (along with Joyce Penner and Bob Charlson), which was my only meeting with Gore during his eight years in the White House. In the middle of the Clinton/Gore administration, after publication of an Op-Ed in the New York Times (by Greg Easterbrook, I believe) that Vice President Gore objected to, it was suggested to me (via an intermediary) that I write an Op-Ed article to dispute the published Op-Ed article. I declined to do that. My next interaction with Vice President Gore was in January 2006 in a meeting at his request to discuss current understanding of global warming. In this meeting he apologized (I presumed it was in regard to the request for an Op-Ed article), said that he would like me to be on a board overseeing a campaign to alert Americans to the dangers of global warming, and asked if I would critically review his slide/PowerPoint global warming presentation. I did not agree to be on the board, but I subsequently (February 6) reviewed and offered scientific comments on his presentation.

I have great respect for Vice President Gore and his dedication to communicating the importance of global warming. He has a better understanding of the science of global warming than any politician that I have met, and I urge citizens to pay attention to his presentation, which I understand will come out in the form of a movie. Even if you don’t agree with Vice President Gore’s politics, you should pay attention to his climate message. He knows what he is talking about.

To the best of my recollection, I have twice contributed financially to election campaigns (probably \$1000 in each case). The first was to the 1992 Clinton/Gore presidential campaign. The second was also to the Democratic ticket in one of the last two elections, either to Gore/Lieberman or

Kerry/Edwards, I don't remember which. I could probably find out by digging through cancelled checks, but I don't think that it matters.

In summary, I do not have close political ties to a political party. I believe that Republicans and Democrats alike must abhor the partisanship that now infects the operation of technical government agencies. The constraints placed on scientists, preventing them from informing the public about their concerns, is much worse in places such as the National Institutes Health and the Environmental Protection Agency than it is in NASA. My quotation on 20 April 2006 Freedom Forum calendar, "In my more than three decades in government, I have never seen anything approaching the degree to which information flow from scientists to the public has been controlled as it is now", is accurate. For the good of the people, it makes no sense that political appointees are put into the agencies to control the flow of information to the public. It is hard enough to communicate science to the public as it is, without adding a requirement to get through a political filter. We would all be better off if a law were passed limiting Public Affairs appointments to nonpartisan professionals.

As for religion, I was baptized and raised as a Reorganized Latter Day Saint. Our long-time Sunday school teacher, Sarah Goeser, would be disappointed by the fact that I married a (Dutch) Catholic. By pure coincidence, both of our children married into strong Catholic families (Galileo, forgive them!).

I will not respond further to personal attacks.

James E. Hansen
February, 2006