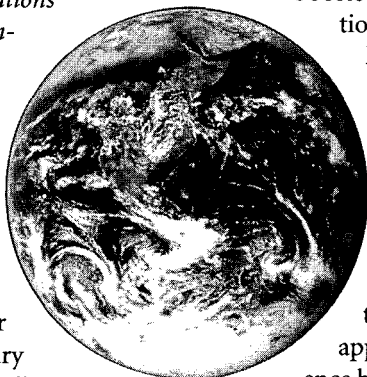


Rush to Judgment

By Ronald Bailey

In January, the National Research Council, the working arm of the National Academy of Sciences, released a report called *Reconciling Observations of Global Temperature Change*. The most quoted line asserted that the increases in the Earth's surface temperatures over the past century are "undoubtedly real." For Michael Oppenheimer of the Environmental Defense Fund, this ends the global warming debate. "It totally deflates the argument of the so-called skeptics that had used the apparent difference between ground-based and satellite data to argue that we really didn't know whether the world is warming or not," he crowed to *The Washington Post*. The *Post*'s editorial page concluded that "denials that warming has happened are just plain wrong....Some kind of action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is urgent."

Case closed? Not quite. John Christy, the NASA climatologist who is the principal investigator for satellite temperature measurements, says that the NRC report—which he helped put together—simply concludes that the surface of the earth has warmed over the last century. This has never been in dispute, even by global-warming skeptics. The report



also concluded that surface temperatures in the past two decades have risen at a rate substantially greater than average for the past 100 years. However, Christy notes that the recent rate of increase in surface temperatures is in fact less than it was in the early part of the 20th century, which occurred before humanity had significantly boosted concentrations of "greenhouse gases" like carbon dioxide and methane in the atmosphere.

Oppenheimer's rush to dismiss "the apparent difference between ground-based and satellite data" is also simply wrong. The report plainly acknowledges that those differences are real and substantial. The surface apparently warmed by 0.25 C to 0.4 C since 1979. However, the NRC panel estimates the change in the temperature of the atmosphere as between 0 C to 0.2 C during that time. In other words, the atmosphere may not have warmed at all since 1979. None of the computer models pushed by global-warming promoters produces or explains this difference between surface and atmosphere warming. In fact, the models predict the exact opposite. They say that the atmosphere should warm faster than the surface.

As for the *Post*'s editorial and its call to action: The NRC report nowhere deals with the question of what has caused warming over the last century, and its data do nothing to advance the warming crowd's claims. All it ultimately calls for, in fact, is bet-

Balance Sheet

By Jeff A. Taylor

ASSETS

- ▲ **Das Cut.** Germany's Social Democratic government reverses course and backs budget and tax cuts. The corporate tax rate would be cut to 38 percent and capital gains taxes would be slashed. German businesses react by canceling plans to pack up and leave the country.
- ▲ **Wine Crime.** Wine lovers get a champion against state laws prohibiting the direct shipment of wine by out-of-state wineries. The Institute for Justice challenges New York's anti-wine law—and by extension those of 29 other states—in federal court, citing a little document called the Constitution that bars interstate trade wars.
- ▲ **Comp Time.** The Clinton administration takes steps to ease the export of both encryption software and super-fast computers. The new trade regs still need lawyers to navigate, but at least recognize the futility of trying to rope off innovation from global markets.
- ▲ **Dressed Down.** Three-quarters of 4,519 locals surveyed by the Littleton, Colorado, school district reject a strict new dress code suggested in the wake of the Columbine shootings. The code would ban hats, camouflage, shorts, skirts more than three inches above the knee, and pants with a waist size more than two inches greater than student's waist.
- ▲ **Reich Stuff.** Former Clinton secretary of labor Robert Reich blasts the trend to use federal lawsuits to make policy. Reich argues that attacks on guns and tobacco may succeed in the short term, but the strategy makes "our frail democracy even weaker."



ter monitoring and more research. Who can disagree with that?

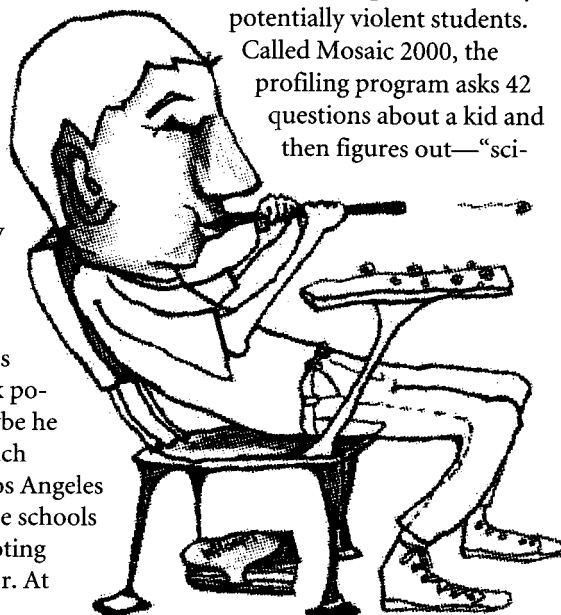
Mental Detector

By Mariel Garza

Has Johnny threatened another student or a teacher? Does he write dark poetry? Or maybe he plays too much Doom? In Los Angeles County, some schools aren't just noting such behavior. At

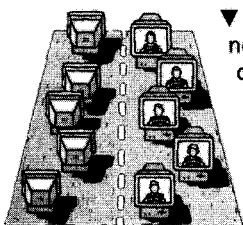
the behest of the district attorney, they're testing a computer program that they think will help them identify potentially violent students.

Called Mosaic 2000, the profiling program asks 42 questions about a kid and then figures out—"sci-



▼ **Mayberry FreeTV.** The Senate Agriculture Committee is the locus of a plan to underwrite \$1 billion worth of loans to bring satellite broadcasting to rural communities. Politicians are loathe to consider the alternative for rural TV junkies: They could move or buy their own mini-dishes.

▼ **Psychic Fiends.** A perfectly sane plan to turn New York City welfare recipients into telephone psychics earning \$10 an hour is torpedoed when "real" psychics complain. At least there is a demand for these phony jobs.



▼ **Digital Debunk.** President Clinton announces a \$2 billion plan to help low-income families gain access to digital goodies. Too bad he's a day late and a few dollars long. Given current trends, Arthur Andersen projects 91 percent of U.S. households will be connected to the Internet by 2005 (more than now have cable TV).

▼ **Empire Stink.** New York state's Health Care Reform Act 2000 will cost \$9 billion, much of it coming from a new cigarette tax of \$1.11 per pack, the nation's highest. Yet if the higher price discourages consumption, lawmakers will be left without a way to pay for benefits the plan extends to an additional 1 million state residents.

▼ **Hot Issues.** Fire inspectors find the U.S. Capitol building "a potential threat to human life." The architect of the Capitol concedes that if the venerable structure were a private building, it probably would be closed down. Some 10 years worth of upgrades are needed to bring the dome up to code.



LIABILITIES

entifically," of course—whether his anti-social ways constitute an "escalating pattern" of problem behavior.

The district attorney's office insists that the information won't be used in a sinister way. In fact, a D.A. spokeswoman says each individual's data will be deleted after the information has been entered and an evaluation completed.

Maybe L.A. schools will choose to store the information Mosaic 2000 gleans, and maybe they won't. But other school districts around the country are saving that type of information for later use. In Wallingford, Connecticut, teachers and administrators are keeping files on troubled

students—not just to find the already violent ones, but to pick out those "predisposed" to violence. Schools in Granite City, Illinois, are gathering the names of "at-risk" students, which can simply mean students who watch questionable movies or write bleak fiction.

Not surprisingly, this trend has raised the hackles of civil libertarians, particularly the American Civil Liberties Union: "We're concerned about decisions made to discipline students based on the fact that they fit a profile that might include information as disparate

as what movies they watch and books they read and whether parents have guns in the home," the ACLU's Ann Beeson told *The Christian Science Monitor*.

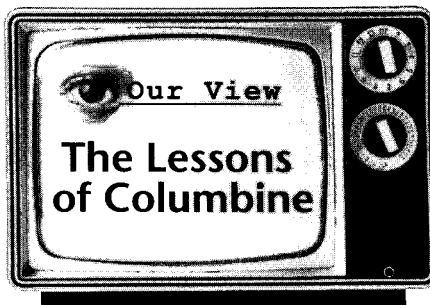
Anti-Gun Culture

By Jacob Sullum

Anyone who regularly watches television news will not be surprised by the general conclusion of a recent Media Research Center study: TV reporters do not like guns. Still, the conservative group's attempt to quantify the bias (available at www.mediaresearch.org/specialreports/news/sr20000105b.html) yields some startling numbers.

The center's analysts examined coverage of gun issues by four evening newscasts (on ABC, CBS, NBC, and CNN) and three morning shows (on ABC, CBS, and NBC) from July 1, 1997, through June 30, 1999—a period that includes the massacre at Columbine High School and its aftermath. Counting up reporters' pro- and anti-gun statements, they classified a story as "pro-gun" if the ratio of pro-gun statements to anti-gun statements exceeded 1.5 to 1; they called a story "anti-gun" if the ratio went the other way. The rest of the stories were considered neutral.

"In 653 gun policy stories," the center reports, "those advocating more gun ▶



SOURCES

Journalist Daniel Forbes caused quite a stir earlier this year when he revealed in *Salon* (www.salon.com/news/feature/2000/01/13/drugs) that federal drug warriors leaned on TV producers to incorporate anti-drug story lines in their shows. However, the shenanigans at the Office of National Drug Control Policy don't end with attempts to make a very special episode of *Beverly Hills 90210* even more special. For another example of disguised propaganda, check out www.freevibe.com, an ONDCP-sponsored site produced with the help of Disney that tries to be cool as it scares kids away from drugs. By contrast, the ONDCP's TV ads (viewable at www.mediacampaign.org/mg/index.html) are plainly labeled as messages from the government—not that anyone would mistake them for honest information in the first place.

QUOTE

"Commercial airlines don't fly in and out of New Hampshire and South Carolina and all these little places."

—Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.) explaining why politicians have to use corporate jets, at the American Enterprise Institute, January 6, 2000