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### **Test complainant reacts to Ofcom ruling about 'The Great Global Warming Swindle'**

Ofcom has upheld the public interest by ruling today (21 July 2008) that the 'The Great Global Warming Swindle', which was broadcast in March 2007, lacked impartiality and fairness, according to Dave Rado, the member of the public who organised the test complaint against the programme. However, the broadcasting regulator let down the public by ruling that the inaccuracies in the film were not a breach of the Broadcasting Code because they allegedly did not cause harm or offence.

Ofcom ruled that the programme had violated the Broadcasting Code in terms of impartiality and fair treatment of some scientific organisations and individuals, including Sir David King, Professor Carl Wunsch and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). But although the programme did contain inaccuracies, the regulator ruled that it did not materially mislead the audience so as to cause harm or offence.

Mr Rado, 50, of Colchester, Essex, organised a 176-page complaint following the broadcast on 8 March last year of the programme on Channel 4, and its repeat later on More 4. The complaint listed 67 alleged serious breaches of the Ofcom Broadcasting Code. Some of the world's most respected and experienced climate scientists, including chairs of the IPCC, were involved in the complaint as authors and peer reviewers, along with distinguished experts in epidemiology, entomology, renewable energy, economics and media studies.

Mr Rado said: "The programme seemed very convincing, but it systematically distorted the evidence on climate change and every other major topic it dealt with. It also misrepresented the motives and conduct of many dedicated researchers who work in the field. I am glad that Ofcom has ruled that the programme lacked fairness and impartiality, but I am disappointed that Channel 4 has been let off on the questionable technicality that the inaccuracies in the programme did not cause harm or offence. Climate change is a hugely important issue and a television programme broadcast on national television that misleads viewers about the science and policy implications of this issue is undoubtedly harmful to the public."

He added: "I felt compelled to complain to Ofcom because I was sure that it had breached the regulations that are supposed to protect the public against irresponsible programme-makers. I thoroughly uphold the right of broadcasters to give a voice to minority opinions, but not to systematically misrepresent facts and to attempt to mislead the public."

Nathan Rive, a PhD student at the Centre for Energy Policy and Technology, Imperial College and who was a lead author on the complaint, said: "Climate change involves enough interesting topics and uncertainties to set up an engaging discussion, without the need to resort to distortion, misinformation, conspiracy theories, and mudslinging. Channel 4, as such, missed a great prime-time opportunity to educate the public, as per the public service commitment mandated by its broadcasting licence."

The full text of the test complaint has been posted on the web at <http://www.ofcomswindlecomplaint.net>, so people can find out about the programme's inaccuracies and misrepresentations. Mr Rado said: "The website is intended to be an educational resource. It is important that people know about the programme's systematic misrepresentation of the facts."

Bob Ward, a former spokesperson for the Royal Society, who submitted one of the 265 complaints received by Ofcom and who reviewed parts of the test complaint, said: "The commissioning and broadcasting of this programme was clearly a calamitous mistake and revealed serious management failures at Channel 4. It is very disappointing that Ofcom has failed to fully uphold the public interest, and the ruling raises very serious doubts about the ability of the broadcasting regulator to recognise the harm caused by misrepresentations of the scientific evidence on climate change. Recent opinion polls show that a majority of the public mistakenly believe that many scientists disagree that greenhouse gas emissions"

He added: "I still hope that Channel 4 admits that it made the wrong decision to screen the programme, and carries out a thorough review of its internal processes to ensure that a similarly catastrophic failure to uphold the public interest does not happen ever again."

Mr Ward said: "Martin Durkin, who produced the programme for Channel 4, has so far been unapologetic about the misrepresentation of facts and the unfair treatment of scientists. He should also withdraw the DVD version from sale, because it contains many of the errors that appeared in the broadcast programme, and he should recall those copies that have already been sold. I hope that the trading standards authorities now investigate sales of the DVD."

Mr Ward also thanked Mr Rado for his efforts in relation to the test complaint. He said: "The general public and the scientific community all owe a huge debt of gratitude to Dave Rado for his careful and meticulous preparation of the test complaint and for dealing with Ofcom's long process of investigation. He has displayed admirable courage and determination in his lone crusade against the combined might of a powerful broadcaster and production company."

Mr Rado can be contacted for further comment through the Royal Society's Press Office on 020-7451 2516, or through Bob Ward on 07811-320346. Please contact the Science Media Centre for comment from scientists who are connected with the complaint, on 020-7670 2981.