

Economics, Climate and El Nino: Dispose myths to properly allocate resources¹

Bienvenido “Nonoy” Oplas²

I. Economics

Economics is a good discipline because it searches to find answer/s to one very basic human reality: how to efficiently allocate limited resources. In finding such mixture of resource allocation, people either use their own common sense, or those in government use their own political sense.

Take pricing of a particular product, say a kilo of tomato in one city where they have several small public markets and a number of groceries.

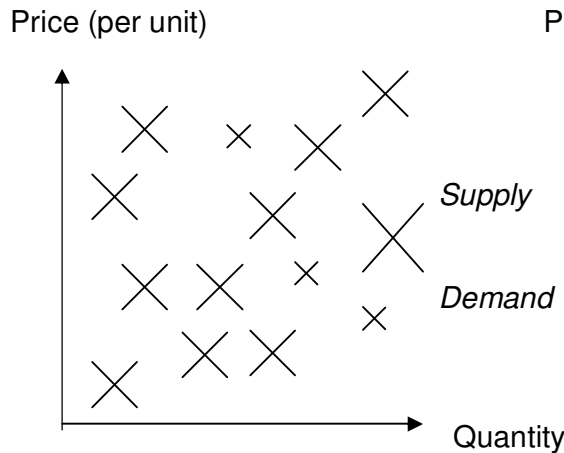
If politics is absent, then consumers can haggle with sellers and suppliers in a public market. If they both agree on a particular price, a sale is made; otherwise, the consumer walks out and move to another tomato seller, to suit his/her taste, preference and budget. Thus, it is possible to have plenty of “equilibrium points” for a single commodity in a single place in a single day, that involves plenty of buyers and plenty of sellers. There is a market for everyone, from the rich to the middle class to the poor.

If politics comes in, politicians decide and dictate what is the “socially-desirable price” of a particular commodity or service, say tomato, medicine, gasoline, per minute calls, etc. So what usually happens is that competition and equilibrium price-setting at a level higher than what was dictated by the politicians to be socially-desirable, are eliminated. Consumers’ choices and options are the immediate victims and hence, both consumers and sellers’ “proper allocation of limited resources” will be adversely affected. For instance, some consumers might decide to over-use and waste a commodity under price control because “it’s cheap anyway.” Whereas some sellers with little allowance for downward price adjustment might be forced to close shop because they cannot withstand being forced to sell at a loss.

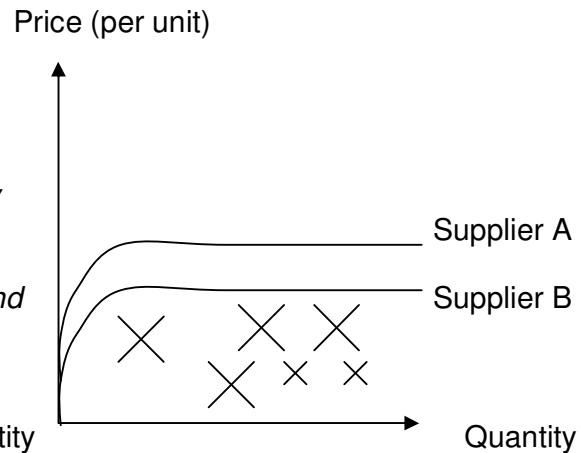
¹ Presented at an undergrad “Development Economics” class at the Ateneo de Manila University, February 23, 2010. Instructor, Joselito Sescon

² President, Minimal Government Thinkers, Inc.

A. Free Market Pricing



B. Price Control



II. (Man-made) Climate Change

The same can be said of the on-going climate debate. Those in the frontline of pushing anthropogenic (man-made) global warming (AGW) claim are big political groups – the United Nations (UN), governments of both rich and poor countries, big international environmental NGOs, and so on.

The main arguments of AGW can be summarized as follows:

1. There is unequivocal warming happening.
2. This warming is unprecedented in history, and
3. This warming is caused by humanity through the carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gases (GHGs) that they emit into the atmosphere.

From such claims, there is only one solution to fight global warming: drastically cut CO₂ emission, among other GHGs, through legally binding agreement among governments around the world.

Advocates of such claim say it is a theory, meaning it has withstood a battery of tests and therefore, has a great capacity to predict the future climate of the Earth. Others who do not believe such claim consider it as a mere hypothesis or untested theory, since there are other evidences that do not conform with the predictive capacity of the AGW claim.

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 4th Assessment Report (IPCC AR4), released on November 2007 showed a chart of GHGs for the past 10,000 years. It is on page 16 of the Synthesis report of AR4. The chart showed a relatively flat with little fluctuations, of CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere, then rose abruptly towards the 20th century.

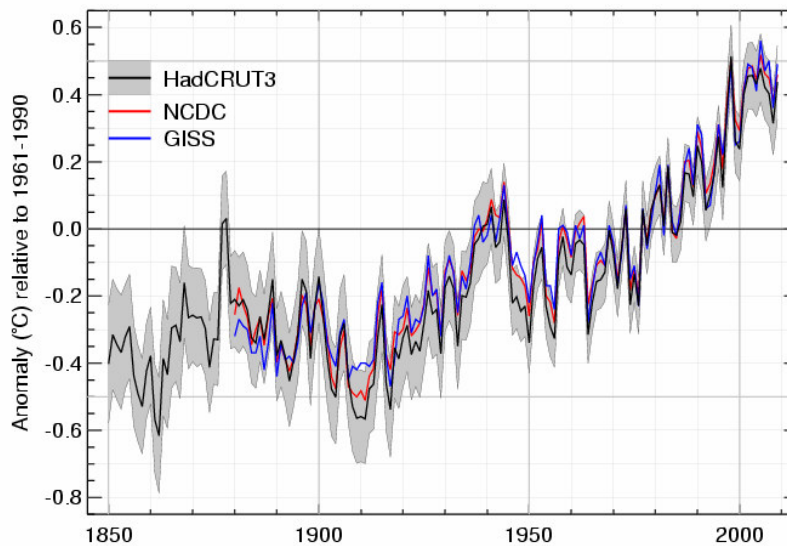
Now if you look for a global temperature over the past 10,000 years in the same AR4 document, there was nothing. One may wonder how come the IPCC did not show it,

when a number of scientific literatures could show charts and graphs of global temperature 10,000 years ago, even several million years ago. What AR4 showed was global temperature over the past 150 years, on page 9 of the Synthesis Report, where the Earth just emerged from the Little Ice Age (LIA) especially the Maunder Minimum and then the Dalton Minimum.

Last December, during the Copenhagen meeting of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN FCCC), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) released a press release with a chart showing that “this decade the hottest on record.”

Chart 1. WMO’s “2000-2009 Hottest decade on record”

(Source: http://www.wmo.int/pages/mediacentre/press_releases/images/NewImage.PNG)

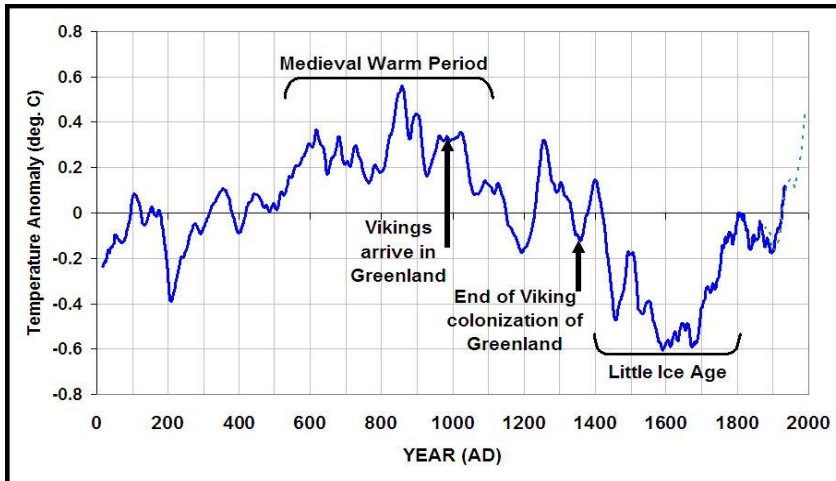


Data used by the WMO are from the Hadley CRU Team, NCDC, and NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS). The rise in temperature in this decade was about 0.4 C.

To discuss the above chart and show that the above 3 claims of AGW are wrong., the following charts are shown below.

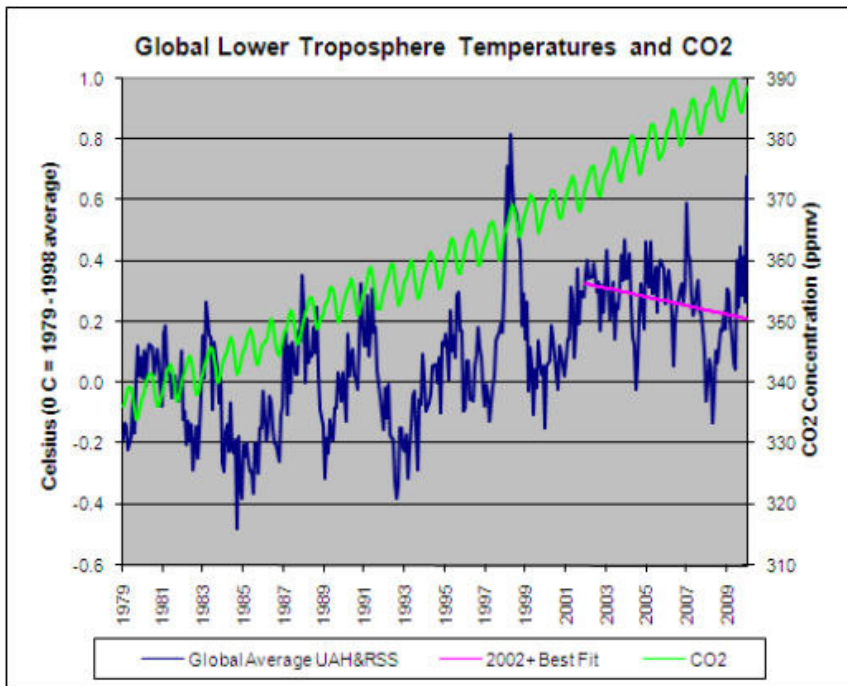
Chart 2: Global temperatures, past 2,000 years

(source: www.drroyspencer.com)



The above chart shows the following: **One**, the Earth emerged from the little ice age (LIA) – Maunder Minimum then Dalton Minimum – of nearly 400 years, from 1400 to almost 1800. Period after that showed warming of the planet. The WMO chart above, as well as the IPCC AR4 cherry-picked and showed temperatures only starting 1850, where there was indeed warming. And **two**, there were periods in the past, the Medieval Warm Period (WMP) which were a lot WARMER than today's levels. Thus, recent warming has a precedent. To say that "current warming is unprecedented" is therefore, not correct.

Chart 3. Global temperature and CO2 concentration, 1979 to January 2010



source:

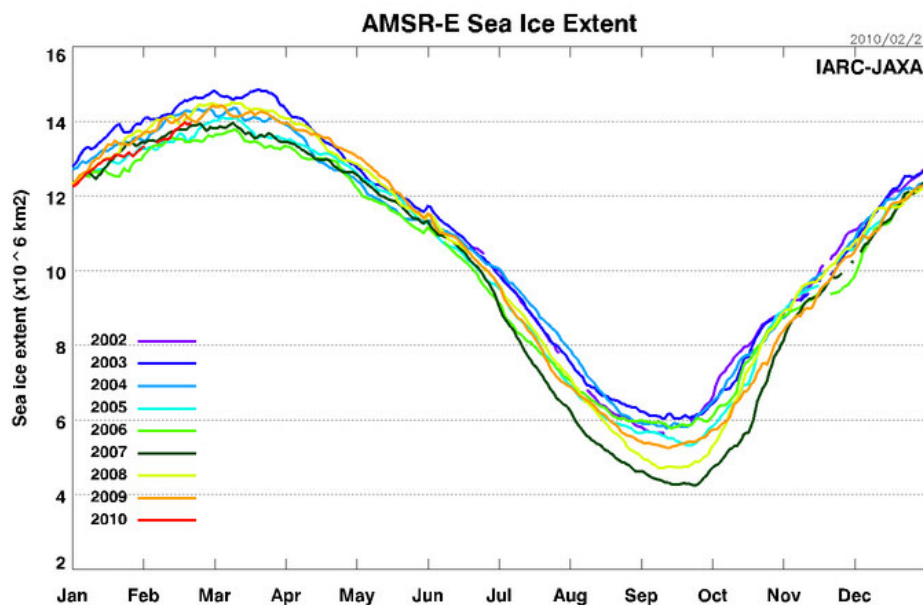
<http://www.friendsofscience.org/assets/documents/FOS%20Essay/GlobalTroposphereTemperaturesAverage.jpg>

Temperatures used here are from satellite data collected from the lower troposphere, 8 kms. above sea level, average for the northern hemisphere, tropics and southern hemisphere. Data interpreted by the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) and the Remote Sensing System (RSS).

The above chart shows two important things. **One**, the Earth is experiencing global cooling, not warming, over the past 8 years. Temperature decline from January 2002 to January 2010 was about 0.15 C. And **two**, CO2 is innocent of the charges of being the “main cause of man-made warming”. CO2 keeps rising, now at 388 parts per million (ppm) while temperatures are generally declining.

Chart 4. Arctic sea ice extent, January 2002 to February 21, 2010

(source: http://www.ijis.iarc.uaf.edu/en/home/seaice_extent.htm)



Data is from the International Arctic Research Center (IARC) and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA). IARC is affiliated with the University of Alaska in Fairbanks.

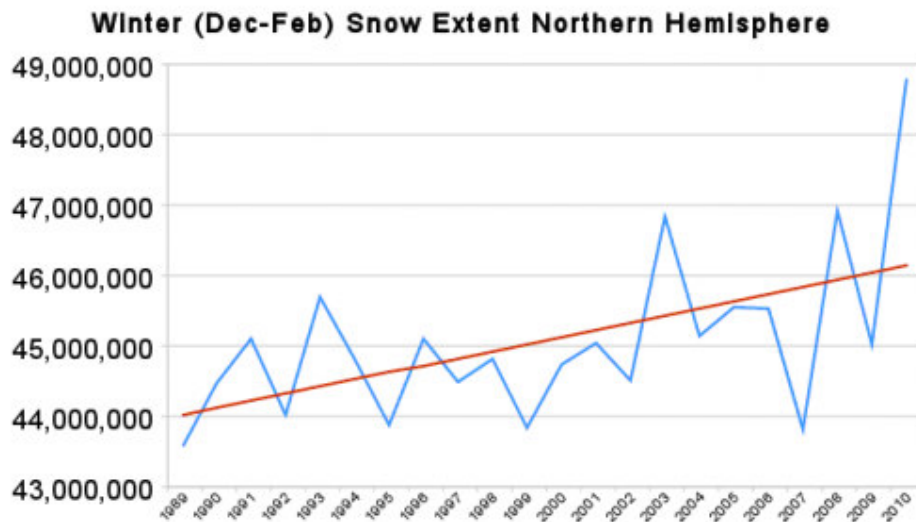
The above chart shows that Arctic ice is melting... and growing... and melting... and growing... year after year. There is NO truth to claims that “Arctic ice is melting towards an ice-free north pole in 10 or 20 years.”

This month, NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) reported that its new study showed that one reason why Arctic ice declined significantly, was because of the absence of "ice arches" that block sea ice from being pushed by winds or currents through narrow passages and out of the Arctic basin, to the warmer ocean and later melt. So they melted because of the wind that pushed them towards warmer ocean, and not because of a "warmer" world.

<http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/news/news.cfm?release=2010-056&icid=%27NewsFeaturesHome%27>

Winter snowfall has been increasing, currently at record levels, while summer snow is not changing much. See the chart below.

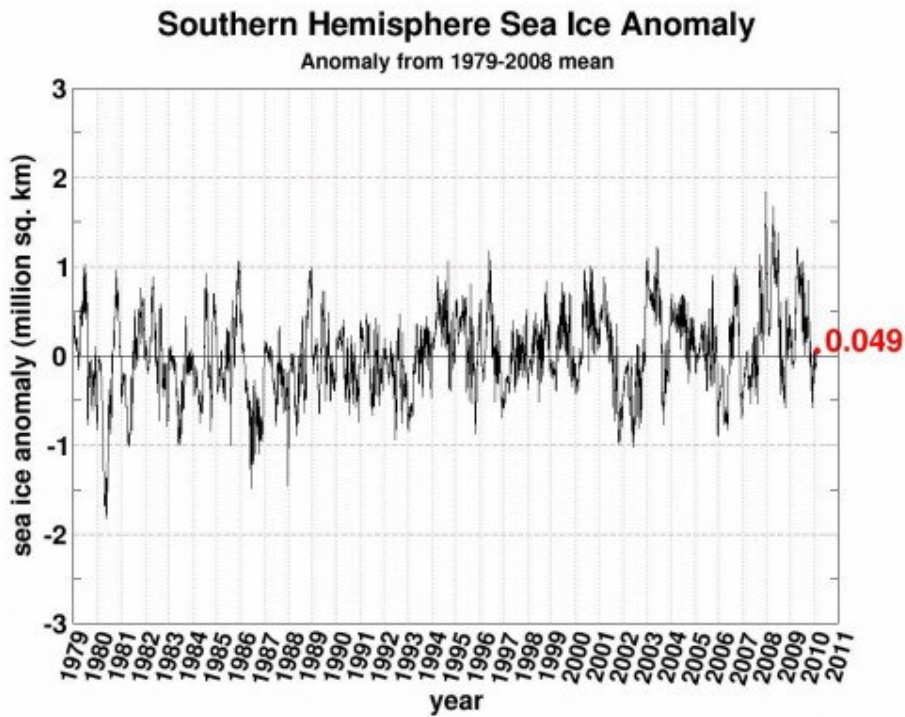
Chart 5. Winter snowfall



Source: <http://wattsupwiththat.com/2010/02/18/why-is-winter-snow-extent-interesting/>

It is not only the northern hemisphere which does not suffer from the alarmist claim of "near ice-free" condition, the southern hemisphere does, too. Sea ice here actually is increasing, not decreasing.

Chart 6. Southern Hemisphere sea ice anomaly



source:

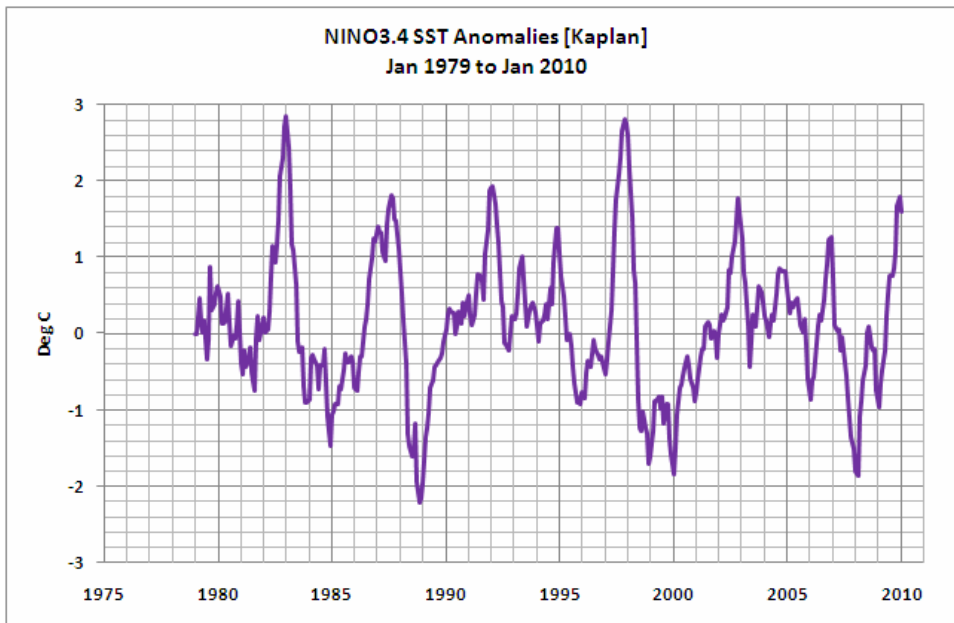
<http://blogs.news.com.au/heraldsun/andrewbolt/index.php/heraldsun/comments/arctic-ice-was-pushed-out-rather-than-melted#67373>

III. El Nino

El Nino events are where the ocean release heat from the tropical Pacific, and through ocean currents and changes in atmospheric circulation, they raise surface temperatures outside of the tropical Pacific. It occurs every 3 to 5 years, a cycle.

In a paper, “La Nina – the underappreciated portion of ENSO”, Bob Tisdale showed this and many other charts.

Chart 7. Sea Surface Temperature (SST) and El Nino – La Nino cycles, 1979 to 2010



source: <http://bobtisdale.blogspot.com/2010/02/la-nina-underappreciated-portion-of.html>

El Nino are positive SST while La Nina are negative SST. Big El Nino events occurred in 1982-83 and 1997-98, where SST anomaly reached almost 2.8 C, whereas big La Nina events of 1988-89, 1999-2000, and 2007-08 were only up to -2C.

The author of the article, Bob Tisdale, made this concluding comment:

”The La Nina event of 1973/74/75/76 provided the tropical Pacific Ocean Heat Content necessary for the increase in strength and frequency of El Nino events from 1976 to 1995. The 1995/96 La Nina furnished the Ocean Heat Content that served as fuel for the 1997/98 El Nino. And the 1998/99/00/01 La Nina recharged the tropical Pacific Ocean Heat Content after the 1997/98 El Nino, returning it to the new higher level established by the La Nina of 1995/96.. It would appear that La Nina events do all of the work, while El Nino events get all the glory—and the research.

IV. Concluding Notes

1. There is NO warming in global temperature that occurred since 1999, the Earth is experiencing global cooling, not warming, over the past 8 years.
2. There were periods in the past which are a lot WARMER than today's levels. Recent warming therefore, has precedent, and not "unprecedented."
3. CO2 is NOT the main driver of the earth's climate cycle (or natural climate change) of warming-cooling-warming-cooling. It's the natural factors – the Sun, cosmic rays, volcanoes, Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO), among others.
4. The current El Nino is a mild one. But climate alarmism makes it appear worse in media and in certain public discussions. This should pass within the next few months, and another bout with La Nina should come in after.
5. Too much climate alarmism has wasted the world's resources from addressing poverty and health issues. Among these are the mad rush to produce bio-fuel for instance, was a big factor for the spike in food prices in recent years up to now. Also the creation of new climate bureaucracies at the international, national and local government levels.

Annex: Two alarmist forecasts vs reality

(1) Snowfalls are now just a thing of the past

By Charles Onians

Monday, 20 March 2000

Britain's winter ends tomorrow with further indications of a striking environmental change: snow is starting to disappear from our lives.

Sledges, snowmen, snowballs and the excitement of waking to find that the stuff has settled outside are all a rapidly diminishing part of Britain's culture, as warmer winters - which scientists are attributing to global climate change - produce not only fewer white Christmases, but fewer white Januaries and Februaries.

The first two months of 2000 were virtually free of significant snowfall in much of lowland Britain, and December brought only moderate snowfall in the South-east. It is the continuation of a trend that has been increasingly visible in the past 15 years: in the south of England, for instance, from 1970 to 1995 snow and sleet fell for an average of 3.7 days, while from 1988 to 1995 the average was 0.7 days. London's last substantial snowfall was in February 1991....

However, the warming is so far manifesting itself more in winters which are less cold than in much hotter summers. According to Dr David Viner, a senior research scientist at the climatic research unit (CRU) of the University of East Anglia, within a few years winter snowfall will become "a very rare and exciting event".

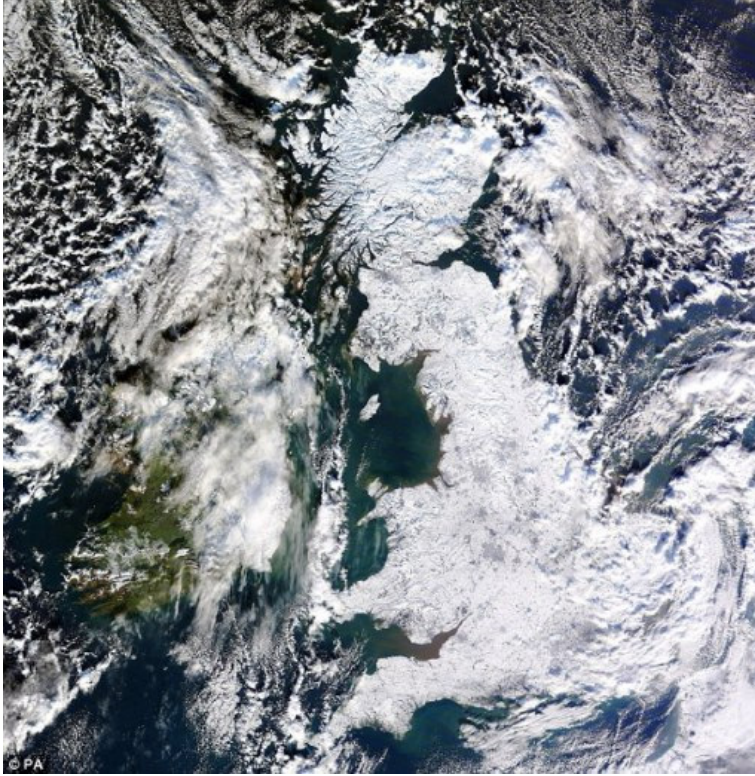
"Children just aren't going to know what snow is," he said....

<http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/snowfalls-are-now-just-a-thing-of-the-past-724017.html>

And in January 2010, here is one of the news reports about UK snow,

"All of England covered by snow", January 10, 2010

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2010/01/08/all-of-england-covered-by-snow/>



(2) Decadal to century scale trends in North American snow extent in coupled atmosphere-ocean general circulation models

Allan Frei

Department of Geography, Hunter College, Program in Earth and Environmental Sciences, City University of New York, New York, New York, USA

Gavin Gong

Department of Earth and Environmental Engineering, Columbia University, New York, New York, USA.

Geophysical Research Letters (GRL)

20th and 21st century decadal scale trends and variability in winter North American snow cover extent (NA-SCE) are investigated... These results suggest that snow cover may be a sensitive indicator of climate change, and that **North American snow extent will probably decrease in response to greenhouse gas emissions**, although the magnitude of the response may be nonlinear.

Received 5 May 2005; accepted 18 August 2005; published 23 September 2005.

<http://www.agu.org/pubs/crossref/2005/2005GL023394.shtml>