

Berkeley Earth Response to March 30, 2013 Article in *The Economist*: “Global warming: Apocalypse perhaps a little later”

SIR – Your hopeful interpretation that climate change has slowed is based, unfortunately, on careful clipping of data. When climbing stairs it is optimistic but unwise to interpret each landing as evidence you’ve reached the top. Prior to 1992 (where your plot begins) there were landings (flat or cooling periods) in 1960-1975 and 1980-1990. The likely cause: instability in ocean currents, not slowing of the warming trend.

Your discussion of policy misses that most current and future emissions come from the developing world. Policies in the rich world are impotent to address developing world emissions; the famous international treaties (Kyoto, Copenhagen) barely even try. China already emits twice the CO₂ of the US, and by 2020 it will emit four times as much.

You mention that reductions in emissions in the USA have come in part from shale gas displacing coal, but you fail to note that a similar displacement could take place in China. The US Energy Department estimates shale gas reserves in China are 50% greater than in the US. Policies that help China switch from coal to natural gas could truly slow global warming, not just in fits and spurts, but for the long haul.

ELIZABETH MULLER
RICHARD MULLER
Co-Founders of Berkeley Earth
Berkeley, CA