



The IPCC and the Peace Prize

(hyperlinked version)

In late 2012, the art director of a reputable Canadian magazine [contacted](#) photographer Alex Waterhouse-Hayward. How would he like to meet a Nobel laureate? Three months later, the photographer posted a black-and-white portrait on his blog, announcing to the world that this was "Nobel Laureate Mark Jaccard." [link backed up [here](#)]

But Jaccard - an economist who teaches at Canada's Simon Fraser University - has never won a Nobel prize. Not in economics or in any other field. If you visit NobelPrize.org and type his name into the search box in the top right corner, you'll find no mention of him.

Why did the smart people at *The Walrus* magazine think otherwise? Why did the [cover](#) [[backup](#)] of this award-winning publication refer to him as a "Nobel economist?"

The short answer is that Jaccard is one of an [estimated 9,000](#) people who've helped the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) write its many reports over a span of 25 years. In late

2007, following news that this UN body had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with Al Gore, the IPCC's chairman profoundly over-stepped his authority. [Writing](#) to IPCC-affiliated academics en masse, Rajendra Pachauri proclaimed: "This makes each of you Nobel Laureates." [\[backup\]](#); see note¹ below.]

Everyone should have understood that this was mere rhetorical flourish. When an individual wins a Nobel Prize, they are contacted directly by Nobel officials. As Australian researcher John McLean would later [tell](#) meteorologist Kevin Trenberth, "Pachauri can't hand-out laureates like cups of coffee, and you, Kevin, surprise me by seeming to believe that he can." [\[backup\]](#)

The IPCC is [not the first organization](#) to receive the Peace Prize. In [1977](#), it went to Amnesty International. In [1999](#), it was Doctors Without Borders. In between, in [1988](#), it was UN peacekeeping forces.

It would be odd, indeed, if someone who used to work for Amnesty International - or who once served in a peacekeeping capacity - went around calling themselves a Nobel laureate. Most of us would regard such a claim as evidence of an insecure ego run amok.

But the climate world isn't a normal one. Instead, it resembles the Wild West. Poorly socialized adolescents swagger and bluster, grownups are in short supply, and the sheriffs turn out to be as lawless as everyone else.

The Walrus misled its readers because a significant part of the climate community chose to embrace a Nobel fiction. These people took a lofty tribute and dishonoured it. Why? Because it exaggerated their own importance. It enhanced their personal prestige. No doubt, it helped some of them meet girls.

Jaccard is by no means an IPCC mover and shaker. He was [among 23 people](#) who worked on one chapter (out of 47) of the IPCC's [1995 report](#). Along with 24 others, he helped write a second chapter. The role he played was so minor that, when he co-authored a 2007 book on climate change with a prominent Canadian journalist, his IPCC involvement [wasn't even mentioned](#). Shortly afterward, however, he suddenly became a nobelist.

In 2008, an activist group issued a [press release](#) about a report written by Jaccard. The release described him as "a winner of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize." [\[backup\]](#); see note²] In 2009, a public library hosted an event in which he delivered the keynote address. The [poster](#) advertising the event featured his photograph alongside large lettering that identified him as an "author and Nobel Laureate." [\[backup\]](#)

[For years](#), an [online listing](#) at Canada's National Speakers Bureau said Jaccard was a "Nobel Peace-Prize Winner" (this was changed to "Climate Change Expert" sometime after mid-May, 2013).³

In 2011, when Jaccard submitted [written testimony](#) to a British Columbia Utilities Commission inquiry, he declared:

I have been honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize (2007) as an author with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change... [\[backup\]](#)

Jaccard's employer, Simon Fraser University, has [told the world](#) that he is a Nobel laureate. [\[backup\]](#) So have journalists.⁴

In [April 2013](#), the public relations firm Hoggan & Associates issued a [press release](#) concerning Jaccard's appearance before a US congressional subcommittee. Its headline began with these words: "Canadian Nobel

¹ Independent corroboration of Pachauri's proclamation appears [here](#) [\[backup\]](#), [here](#) [\[backup\]](#), and [here](#) [\[backup\]](#).

² This entity describes itself as "an advocacy group" [here](#) [\[backup\]](#).

³ More info about Jaccard's speakers' bureau profile [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

⁴ Examples of media stories that claim Jaccard is a Peace Prize winner & Nobel laureate are [here](#) [\[backup\]](#), [here](#) [\[backup\]](#), and [here](#) [\[backup\]](#).

Laureate Testifies..."⁵ The next day, a [headline](#) on the front page of a Canadian newspaper dutifully referred to Jaccard as a "Nobel winner." [[backup](#)]

Because the IPCC is an international body, there are many Jaccards, in many countries.⁶ And on the world's stage, the chairman himself has been setting the worst possible example. The fact that Pachauri attended a ceremony and delivered an acceptance speech on behalf of his organization did not magically transform him, personally, into a Nobel laureate. There should have been no confusion on this point since the prize money wasn't given to Pachauri - it was bestowed on the IPCC, which used it to fund [scholarships](#). [[backup](#)]

But the pixie dust that elevated thousands of IPCC authors to the status of Nobel laureates apparently extended to Pachauri, as well. The first thing Amazon.com [tells us](#) about his 2010 novel, *Return to Almora*, is that it was written by a "Nobel laureate." [[backup](#)]

Take a spin with an Internet search engine and thousands of news articles, interviews, videos, and [photos](#) [[photo example backup](#)] all promulgating the myth that Pachauri has personally received a Nobel prize will present themselves. In many of these cases, the implication is that the public should pay special attention to what Pachauri is saying. He isn't just anyone, we're told - he's a Nobel laureate. Except that he's not.

Among those who've erroneously described Pachauri as a nobelist we find:

- the US [Secretary of State](#) [backed up [here](#)]
- the office of the [Prime Minister of Norway](#) [backed up [here](#)]
- the [Mayor of London](#) [backed up [here](#)]
- the [New York Academy of Sciences](#) [magazine cover backed up [here](#)]
- the [United Nations Environment Programme](#) [backed up [here](#)]
- the UN [Economic Commission for Africa](#) [backed up [here](#)]
- [UNICEF](#) [backed up [here](#)]
- the [World Bank](#) [backed up [here](#)]
- the [Asian Institute of Technology](#) [backed up [here](#)]
- the [World Wildlife Fund](#) (WWF) [backed up [here](#)]
- [350.org](#) [backed up [here](#)]
- [EarthDay.org](#) [backed up [here](#)]
- [DemocracyNow.org](#) [backed up [here](#)]
- the [Swiss Broadcasting Corporation](#) [backed up [here](#)]
- the [Australian Broadcasting Corporation](#) [backed up [here](#)]
- the [BBC](#) [backed up [here](#)]
- the [New York Times](#) [backed up [here](#)]
- the [Japan Times](#) [backed up [here](#)]
- Germany's news weekly, [Der Spiegel](#) [backed up [here](#)]
- the [Vancouver Sun](#) [backed up [here](#)]
- [The Times of India](#) [backed up [here](#)]

This fiction has also infected university campuses. In 2009, North Carolina State University issued a press release titled [Nobel Laureate to Deliver Fall Commencement Address at NC State](#). Judging by its first sentence - which describes Pachauri as a Nobel Prize winner and NC State alumnus - everyone who attended that event was misinformed in this regard. [[backup](#)]

⁵ Press release is backed up [here](#). Another version of it appears [here](#) [[backup](#)].

⁶ See [here](#) and [here](#) for examples.

Yale University's *Environment 360* magazine, a prestigious, specialist publication that should know better, titled an article [A Conversation with Nobel Prize Winner Rajendra Pachauri](#). [backup]

A few years ago, Utrecht University, in the Netherlands, sponsored a [lecture](#) by "Nobel Laureate Rajendra Pachauri" as part of a masters degree program. [backup]

The University of Eastern Finland has gone so far as to make "Nobel Prize Winner, IPCC Chair Dr Pachauri" its [first honorary professor](#). [backup]

Australia's Deakin University, when announcing the opening of a research centre in cooperation with Pachauri's TERI institute, [told the world](#) it was partnering with a "Nobel Prize winner." [backup]

And then there's [that list](#) on the website of Gustavus Adolphus College, near Minneapolis. It enumerates the Nobel laureates on whom this institution has also bestowed an honorary doctorate. Currently, Pachauri's name appears first. [backup]

To recap, then: Pachauri elevated thousands of people, including himself, to the status of Nobel laureates. And no one called him on it. Not the Nobel committee. Or the UN bodies that established the IPCC. Or the media.

Did we all lose our minds?

The world's science academies deserve special scrutiny in this regard. Why do they remain mute, year after year, when Pachauri and others are being falsely described as Nobel laureates? If the public can't count on science academies to police a matter this straightforward, what purpose do they serve?

But let us circle back to economist Jaccard. He is a special advisor to the Climate Action Team - which operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Environment, in the Canadian province of British Columbia.

It is a rare occurrence to find oneself in the same room as a Nobel laureate. But according to an official [government web page](#), when the Climate Action Team meets, eight such personages are present. [backup] The biographical sketches of Ken Denman, Greg Flato, John Fyfe, Werner Kurz, Terry Prowse, John Robinson, Andrew Weaver, and Frederick Wrona all include this identical wording:

His contribution to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change jointly won him the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 with Al Gore.

When we stretch the truth so extravagantly, this is where we end up. Being one of approximately 9,000 contributors to the IPCC's activities is not equivalent to Al Gore's full half share of the Peace Prize. None of the above-listed gentlemen "won" that prize. When they congregate, a meeting of Nobel laureates is not taking place. For a government website to suggest that this is the case is absurd.

But the absurdity extends further. Late last year, meteorologist Michael Mann filed a defamation lawsuit against two journalists and two publishers. The second paragraph of Mann's [37-page legal document](#) reads as follows:

Dr. Mann is a climate scientist whose research has focused on global warming. Along with other researchers, he was one of the first to document the steady rise in surface temperatures during the 20th Century and the steep increase in measured temperatures since the 1950s. **As a result of this research, Dr. Mann and his colleagues were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.** [bold added, [backup](#)]

Notice there isn't any mention of the actual recipient of that award - the IPCC. Someone unfamiliar with this matter could be forgiven for thinking that Mann himself was the person at the Nobel podium. On page five, we learn that Mann served as a lead author on a single chapter of the IPCC's 2001 report. At the bottom of page six, this document implies once again that the prize is connected to Mann's own research:

The work of Dr. Mann and the IPCC has received considerable accolades within the scientific community. In 2007, **Dr. Mann shared the Nobel Peace Prize with the other IPCC authors for their work in climate change**, including the development of the Hockey Stick Graph. [bold added]

But the Peace Prize is not a science honour. It was bestowed on Gore (a politician) and the IPCC for non-scientific reasons. The Nobel committee believes climate change "will increase the danger of war." The prize therefore recognizes the efforts of Gore and the IPCC to educate the world "concerning man-made climate changes and the steps that need to be taken to counteract those changes."

To claim, in the context of legal proceedings, to have received a Nobel Prize on the strength of having contributed to one chapter in one IPCC report is nothing less than comical. But Mann's legal document also suggests he has been elevated to a higher plane of existence:

It is one thing to engage in discussion about debatable topics. It is quite another to attempt to discredit consistently validated scientific research through the professional and personal **defamation of a Nobel prize recipient.** [bold added, see paragraph 5 at the top of [page 3](#)]

Apparently, you're being extra naughty if you defame someone who's won a Nobel.

This is the poisoned fruit that Pachauri's pixie dust summoned into existence. When he told thousands of people they were Nobel laureates, the poorly socialized adolescents took him seriously. They started to believe that their own research had received this honour. From that point forward, criticism of their work wasn't just unwelcome, it became intolerable. Anyone challenging them was an anti-science moron.

Eventually, however, hot air deflates. Mann filed his legal papers on October 22, 2012. Less than two weeks later, the IPCC finally began to behave like a grownup. It issued a one-page [Statement about the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize](#) that flatly contradicts Pachauri's "This makes each of you Nobel Laureates" claim. Here's an excerpt:

The prize was awarded to the IPCC as an organization, and not to any individual associated with the IPCC. Thus it is incorrect to refer to any IPCC official, or scientist who worked on IPCC reports, as a Nobel laureate or Nobel Prize winner. [[backup](#)]

After examining Mann's legal document, a journalist had [contacted](#) a Nobel official in an attempt to confirm that Mann was, indeed, the recipient of a Peace Prize. [[backup](#)] The official said he was not. Presumably, someone from the Nobel organization then quietly suggested to the IPCC that it would be a good idea to clarify this matter.

Although the IPCC posted the above statement on its website, it did not send a copy to the same list of people who received Pachauri's erroneous proclamation years earlier. Nor did it issue a press release.⁷

Despite the fact that the Internet is saturated with accounts that falsely describe Pachauri and other IPCC personnel as Nobel laureates, despite the fact that numerous academics continue to make inaccurate claims about their relationship to the 2007 Peace Prize in their CVs and other biographical material,⁸ setting the record straight isn't an IPCC priority.

⁷ On July 30, 2013, Jonathan Lynn, the IPCC's head of communications and media relations, replied to some questions with the following:

Dear Donna,

We posted that [Peace Prize] statement on our website, in the history section at the mention of the Nobel Prize, at the end of October last year. If I recall correctly we didn't distribute it to media or authors. It was intended to be a timeless document that people can refer to rather than something topical.

best wishes

Jonathan

⁸ See, for example, the CV of Pennsylvania State University Dean, William Easterling, [here](#) [[backup](#)]; Susanne Becken's online bio at Australia's Griffith University [here](#), Camille Parmesan's bio on page 114 of [this](#) US National Academy of Sciences report; Marilyn Brown's [academic bio](#) at Georgia Tech [[backup](#)]; and Trent University's Chris Furgal's [CV here](#) [[backup](#)]

Via e-mail, chief communications officer Jonathan Lynn says he didn't raise the matter when he made a presentation at the launch of the European Climate Communications Officers (ECCO) network in Oslo in May 2013:

In our experience, this is not an issue that the media are interested in; I don't recall journalists raising the question at any of the briefings we have conducted this year. I don't recall it being mentioned at the ECCO meeting that you refer to. It is because of this lack of interest that we have not included it in any of the media briefings...

Media outlets aren't known for being overly concerned about their own mistakes. When *The Walrus* realized it had erroneously described Jaccard as a Nobel laureate (on its [cover](#), in a [headline](#), as well as in its [table of contents](#)), did it issue a proper *mea culpa*? Did it tell its readers about the international scale of the disinformation it had inadvertently helped to promulgate?

Is the magazine now more skeptical of a climate community that indulges in - nay, stoops to - puerile exaggeration? Are there signs it has developed second thoughts about the judgment of the individual whose political views it helped promote (the Jaccard-authored piece was titled *The Accidental Activist: How an energy economist, Nobel laureate, and former government adviser found himself blocking a coal train*)?

Hardly. Jaccard's article appeared in the March 2013 print edition. Three issues later, in June, the two-page letters-to-the-editor section of *The Walrus* published the remarks of 11 individuals. [Item #12](#) in that section read as follows:

Tusk-Tusk

The March issue of *The Walrus* identified Mark Jaccard as a Nobel laureate. While he was part of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007, individual members are not recognized as laureates.

Tusk-tusk. When the magazine was employing the term "Nobel" on its cover, that word had heft and meaning. Three months later, it became a triviality - the magazine's misstep didn't even rate the standard "we regret this error" declaration.

Nor is there reason to believe *The Walrus* is distancing itself from Jaccard. The books section of the July 2013 edition [tells us](#) the names of the travelogues he plans to read this summer. [[backup](#)] In other words, he continues to be treated like a Nobel-winning celebrity rather than what he actually is - a self-aggrandizing climate change expert.

The IPCC's Lynn says his organization will "include reminders for how to accurately convey [the Peace Prize] issue" in media briefings connected to the release of its upcoming, multi-part climate report. Should this transpire, a small and feeble beginning will have been made to set the record straight.

So where does this leave us? Five years after the fact, the IPCC finally acknowledged that its chairman and others have been basking in a glory that they, personally, did not earn. It acknowledged that the medals on their chest are made of tinfoil.

But much of the public will continue to be told that those medals are real.



This essay first appeared in Donna Laframboise's 2013 book, *Into the Dustbin: Rajendra Pachauri, the Climate Report and the Nobel Peace Prize*. This version of the manuscript includes hyperlinks to the source material on which Ms. Laframboise relied.

Her book is available in paperback, as a Kindle e-book, and as an iPad and printer-friendly PDF. If you value her investigative journalism, please support her by purchasing an extra copy for a friend or your public library.