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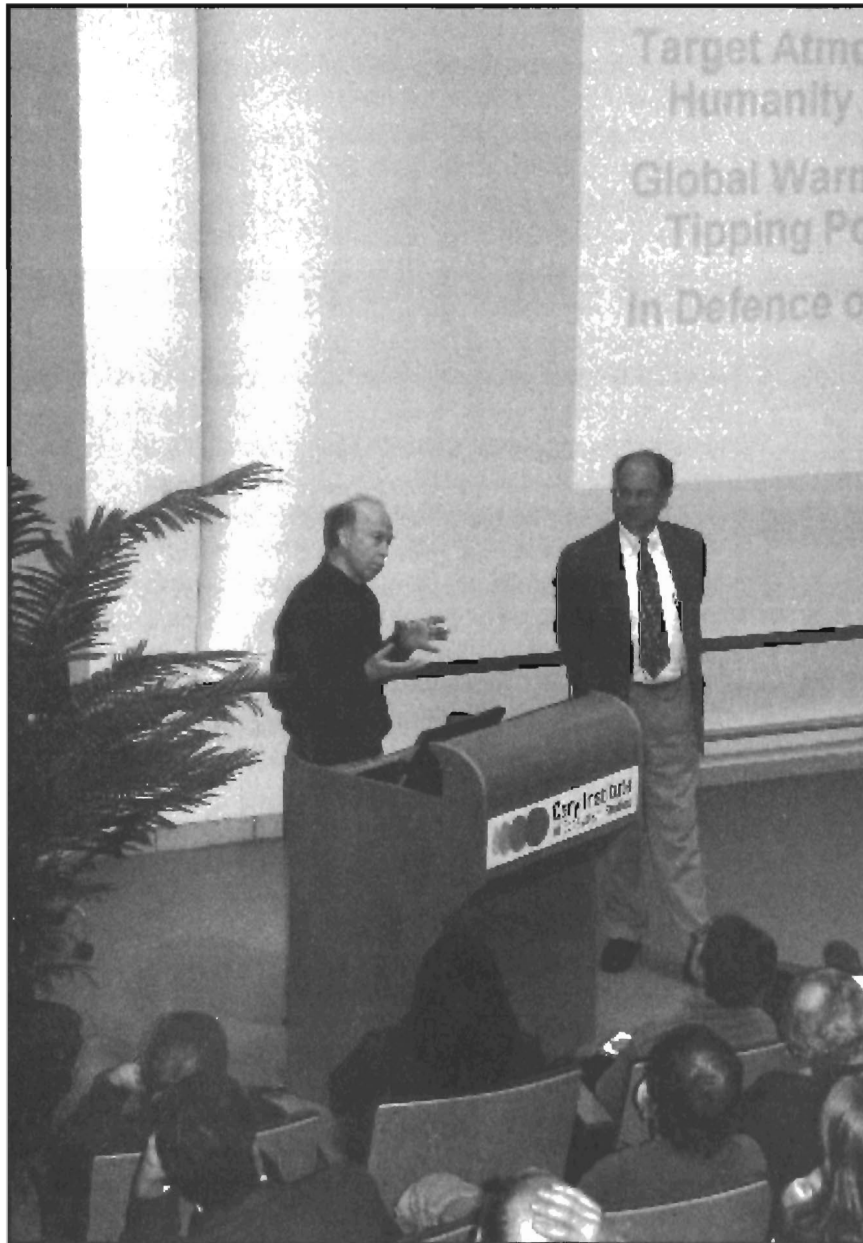
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## Dr. James Hansen Implores: Put Pressure on to Avert Climate Catastrophe

By Olesia Plokhii



Dr. James Hansen of the Cary Institute.

Courtesy photo

Climate change scientist James Hansen didn't need Al Gore's help filling an auditorium or sparking heated discussion during his unapologetic presentation on global warming at Millbrook's Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies Friday night.

"[Climate change] has a lot of irreversible consequences, which we have already started witnessing," Hansen warned from the podium.

In town to promote his first book, *Storms of my Grandchildren*, the head of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies told a crowd estimated at 180 people inside the packed auditorium—and more than a dozen outside, watching from a big screen—that climate change is caused by humans, the cap and trade approach to lowering fossil fuel emissions is flawed, and that "special interests" are working against a "fee and dividend" solution to cutting fossil fuel emissions.

"If a tax doesn't raise the price of energy, it won't do any good," said Hansen about the global cap and trade climate policy praised for aiming to limit carbon emissions from 2009 levels of 387 atmospheric parts per million (ppm) to 350 ppm by 2050 but criticized for being a model designed more for speculative traders than for the environment.

Opponents of cap and trade complain of free carbon permits being issued to industrial polluters with powerful lobbyists and permits being rewarded for hard-to-prove carbon offsets. Under cap and trade rules, Hansen said, "if you reduce your emissions and go buy a small vehicle or bicycle, all it does is allow someone else to buy a bigger vehicle."

Voicing his support for Rep. John Larson's 2009 bill designed to reduce carbon 30% by 2020, Hansen offered a fee and dividend solution to climate change which would require governments to impose a non-

fluctuating tax on oil, gas, and coal at the first port of entry or sale and offer dividends of that tax surplus to Americans. He also advocated a stop to the usage of coal - "the dirtiest of fossil fuels," according to Hansen, and the fuel with the largest reserves. He also stressed the importance of private and public investment into the technological development of clean energy and setting 'green' regulations on vehicles and buildings.

"The fee and dividend approach will cut emissions faster," said Hansen. "This time, if you buy a smaller vehicle, your neighbor might just do the same thing. We don't have to reduce energy, but fossil fuel use—and we want to have a system that encourages development of alternatives."

Hansen, who has grown increasingly more isolated from the climate change community since merging his scientific authority with a political agenda and being arrested on misdemeanor charges last June during a mountaintop coal mining protest in West Virginia, said that after sticking to science and declining public commentary for 15 years, he decided to speak out when the gap between scientific and public knowledge became too wide.

"I did not want my grandchildren, some day in the future, to look back and say 'Opa understood what was happening, but he did not make it clear,'" read one of Hansen's PowerPoint slides, available on his website.

Hansen offered skepticism of developing nations like China agreeing to cap their emissions and blamed the architects of the cap and trade policy, Enron and Goldman Sachs, along with the American

Congress, for preventing real political progress, like the fee and dividend approach, to combat climate change.

"The misinformation of disinformation has been so effective because half the people in this country believe [global warming] is a hoax despite it being crystal clear; special interests aren't going to design a policy for the people," Hansen said most likely in reference to the profit private intermediaries are speculated to make during the trading of carbon footprints.

Warning of heavier rains, stronger floods, fiercer forest fires, more severe droughts and warmer temperatures around the world unless atmospheric carbon levels are brought below 350 ppm in the next several decades, Hansen urged those in attendance to get involved in awareness, advocacy, and lobbying on behalf of his blond, blue-eyed grandchildren Jake and Sophie—and others like them.

"The public needs to get involved and influence the process or the special interests will get all the say and money," Hansen implored towards the conclusion of his presentation, as several people began spilling out of the tightly-packed auditorium. "People have to do this now for the future of our children and grandchildren."

