

COOL HEADS NEEDED ON GLOBAL WARMING

- Senator Cory Bernardi -

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Winston Churchill is attributed to having said, "A lie gets halfway round the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on." This statement could readily be applied to the current one-sided debate on man's contribution to climate change.

Climate change is the latest incarnation in a 30 year long claim that mankind is destroying the planet. What began as the hole in the ozone layer, became global warming caused by greenhouse gasses, and is now a war on carbon emissions, which has been neatly repositioned under the 'catch-all' banner of climate change.

Australians are continually exposed to alarmist headlines that seem to compete for ever-more extreme statements to describe man's contribution to our changing climate. Popular awareness has reached such levels as to be almost hysterical with most Australians saying the issue will affect how they will vote at the next federal election. Frightening headlines such as, "On the brink of climate disaster"¹ and "Tassie's coast facing peril"² certainly contribute to this.

Of course, the solutions proffered by the self-appointed experts vary according to the political beliefs of those proposing them.

Take for example, Federal and State Labor's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by **60 per cent of 2000 levels by 2050**.³ There is currently no mention as to how they will achieve this target and no mention as to how they will mitigate the potential catastrophic impacts this policy will have on Australia's economy.

This is a classic example of Labor's "shoot first and aim later" approach to policy making.

¹ Peter Hartcher, "On the brink of climate disaster: Scientists' grim new forecast", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 January 2007, pg 1.

² Alison Ribbon, "Tassie's coast facing peril", *Hobart Mercury*, 30 March 2007, pg 11.

³ Mike Rann, Media Release, "Federation Council agree to emissions trading timeframe, 12 April 2007. (See also: <http://www.premier.sa.gov.au/news.php?id=1470>).

As a Senator for South Australia, a State which has the potential to directly prosper from a mining boom, I strongly believe the public deserves to know how we will be able to sustain and grow our industry base while at the same time shutting down our power generation capacity.

And there is a much broader question that relates to the portrayal of climate change within our community.

After much reading and research, it is fast becoming clear to me that there are two sides to this argument and many extreme statements are made using questionable science to back them up. The public needs to know where the propaganda ends and the reality begins.

Over the past few months I have examined both sides of this debate and when the alarmist statements are discounted, the scientific evidence that remains does not support the scenario that is being presented to us. The facts do not fit the theory.

This isn't the first time scientists have made doom and gloom predictions about the future for human beings.

Back in 1798 Thomas Malthus postulated in his "Essay on the Principle of Population" an "inevitable" tendency for population to outrun available subsistence. Around 170 years later, four scientists from the Club of Rome got much publicity in 1972 when they argued in "The Limits to Growth" that developing shortages of resources required population to be "stabilized" and in his 1971 publication, "The Population Bomb", biologist Professor Ehrlich predicted early serious shortages of food unless population growth was reduced to zero.

A similar theme was advanced in "A Blueprint for Survival" signed in 1972 by a large number of eminent scientists, including five Fellows of the Royal Society and sixteen holders of science chairs in British universities. This Blueprint was described as a "major contribution to the current debate" in a letter to The Times signed by another 150 scientists, including nine more fellows of the Royal Society and 20 more university science professors.

I can remember as a student at school in the 1970's we were being warned about an imminent ice age after 3 preceding decades of falling temperatures! We laugh at that now given our warm climate and drought conditions (in this country at least) but I wonder if we'll look back in 50 years time on the current global warming debate and wonder what we were possibly thinking?

Professor Paul Reiter, Chief of the Insects and Infectious Disease Unit, Institut Pasteur, Paris, France recently stated:

“A galling aspect of the debate is that this spurious ‘science’ is endorsed in the public forum by influential panels of “experts.” I refer particularly to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Every five years, this UN-based organization publishes a ‘consensus of the world’s top scientists’ on all aspects of climate change. Quite apart from the dubious process by which these scientists are selected, such consensus is the stuff of politics, not of science. Science proceeds by observation, hypothesis and experiment. The complexity of this process, and the uncertainties involved, are a major obstacle to meaningful understanding of scientific issues by non-scientists. In reality, a genuine concern for mankind and the environment demands the inquiry, accuracy and scepticism that are intrinsic to authentic science. A public that is unaware of this is vulnerable to abuse.”⁴

Professor Reiter was also the person who alerted us to the fallacy of IPCC claims that incidents of malaria would increase in a warmer world as mosquitoes spread. Reiter pointed out that his detailed research on malaria showed mosquitoes exist in quantities in the Arctic and that malaria has caused many deaths in relatively cold areas because the disease is actually a function of poverty not temperature, and can therefore be prevented.

I have come to believe we're seeing a distortion of a whole area of science that is being manipulated to present a certain point of view to the global public, that is that the actions of man are the cause of climate change.

⁴ Professor Paul Reiter PhD, “Malaria in the debate on climate change and mosquito borne diseases,” *Testimony to the United States Senate*, 25 April 2006. See also: <http://commerce.senate.gov/pdf/reiter-042606.pdf>.

Indeed, a recent study published in the British journal, *Nature*, has shown that Mars is also heating up – and this is without the help of humans. Mars' surface air temperatures have increased by 0.65°C in the last 30 years, while Earth has experienced an almost identical temperature increase of 0.6°C for the same period.

Let me be frank here, the issue of our climate changing is not in question. Historical evidence suggests the climate of our planet has continually evolved and changed and it always will.

Throughout our history we've seen periods of warmth, and periods of immense cold. It is well documented that the earth has experienced ice ages and glacial periods throughout its history, and warm temperate periods, one of which is the well-known Holocene Thermal Maximum. During modern history, climatologists agree there was a medieval warm period around the 10th and 11th Centuries, followed by a little ice age around the 14th Century.

Are we so arrogant to think that humans are the sole cause of climate change? One look at the earth's dynamic and evolving history should cast doubts in everyone's mind. For example, 120,000 years ago the "sea level was 6 metres higher than at present, the planet was far warmer and wetter than now and atmospheric CO₂ was 78 per cent of that today,"⁵ and 18,000 years ago the "sea level was 130 metres lower than today, temperature was 10-15°C lower than today and the northern hemisphere was covered by ice to 38°N..."⁶

The more you read into this situation, the more the claims that man-made carbon dioxide emissions are responsible for our warming climate do not add up. However to deny man's contribution is to risk the wrath of those looking for a set of circumstances to suit their own agendas.

This is of great significance since governments of the world are facing intense political pressure to act immediately to reduce human carbon emissions. Such actions will detrimentally affect our economy and therefore our quality of life. Shutting down coal-

⁵ Professor Ian Plimer, "The Past is the Key to the Present: Greenhouse and Icehouse over time", *IPA Review*, March 2003, 9 at 10-11.

⁶ *Ibid*, 11.

fired power stations in favour of renewable energy sources such as windmills and solar panels will cause much economic hardship as individuals and companies are forced to pay much more for their power.⁷

Is it wise to go about making major changes to combat climate where the evidence as to its causes are so uncertain and so difficult to predict?

The 4th Summary Report of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recently warned that the burning of fossil fuels over the past 250 years, in addition to massive deforestation, was “very likely” to have caused increases in atmospheric temperatures.

However, this report is full of disclaimers and qualifying statements such as “the statements presented here are based largely on data sets the cover the period since 1970”⁸ and “these do not take into account any changes of developments in adaptive capacity.”⁹ The history of the planet goes back hundreds of millions of years, and why the IPCC is relying on data sets from only the past 37 years beggars belief. The IPCC has even stated that the 1990’s was the hottest decade and the planet is cooler since then.

It seems that not one scientist can be absolutely certain about a definitive outcome in a system which is as complex as the world’s climate.

Dr Patrick Moore, the founder of Greenpeace, states:

“Climate change is a wonderful example to demonstrate the limitations of science. There are two fundamental characteristics of climate change that make it very difficult to use the empirical (scientific) method to predict the future. First there are simply too many uncontrollable variables ... Second...is the fact

⁷ **COST OF RENEWABLE ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES – CURRENT AND EXPECTED TRENDS**

Energy Source	Technology	Cost \$/MWh	Price Trend
Coal	Coal fired steam	30-40	Stable
Wind	Wind turbine/generator	75-90	No indication of change
Solar radiation	Solar hot water	40-701	20% decrease in cost with increase in market size
Solar radiation	Photovoltaics	300-500	50% decrease by 2010
Solar radiation	Solar thermal electric	200-270	Cost may halve by 2010

(Source: “New Era New Energy: Renewable Energy Action Agenda”, Department of Industry, Science and Resources, June 2000).

⁸ IPCC Fourth Assessment Report, “Summary for Policymakers”, April 6 2007, Page 2.

⁹ Ibid, pg 17.

that we have only one planet to observe ... With only one Earth, we are reduced to complex computer models of questionable value, and a lot of guesswork.”¹⁰

Indeed, scientists have also stated that “widespread climate changes in the distant past were larger and more rapid than those experienced during more recent historical times.”¹¹ It is also a fact that the largest and most important concentration of greenhouse gas in our atmosphere is naturally occurring water vapour.

Man’s industrial growth has certainly changed the way we live, but has it really caused our climate to change?

While some scientists argue this is the case, there is equally enough evidence to the contrary. Even scientists on the IPCC concede there is room for doubt. Climate models are only as good as the data they have to work with.

The more detailed the research into the current climate change debate, the more one realises there is no consensus scientific sentiment, only populist sentiment that’s been exploited politically and by those that have strong anti-western and anti-industrialisation agendas.

This populist pressure to immediately reduce carbon emissions based on increasingly disputed extreme scenarios and without consideration of the true cost to our prosperity should really make us question the wisdom of changes such as those proposed by Federal and State Labor.

Their agreement to co-operate in ensuring a national emissions trading scheme which would be in place by the end of 2010 and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60 per cent of 2000 levels by 2050 is policy on the run.

This is the Party that wants to raid the Future Fund to pay for their promises, who have now decided to support the sale of Telstra (after the event) now that they have seen its

¹⁰ Dr Patrick Moore, “Environmentalism for the 21st Century”, from <http://www.greenspirit.com>.

¹¹ *US Global Change Research Program Seminar*, “Abrupt Climate Changes Revisited: How Serious and How Likely?”, 23 February 1998. (See also: <http://www.usgcrp.gov/usgcrp/seminars/980217DD.html>).

in the best interests of Australians, and who want to take us back to a workplace relations system that saw Australia with an average unemployment rate of 10 per cent.

As of yet, Labor has neglected to provide any details as to how they will achieve this emissions cut. They are unaccountable. Although, one thing we know for sure is that nuclear energy is ruled out.¹²

Labor is against nuclear energy irrespective of its economic or environmental merits. This is closed shop politics – how can Labor be in favour of a reduction in carbon emissions but at the same time be unwilling to consider an energy source that “is the only viable substitute for coal.”¹³

If nuclear power is okay for the rest of the world, and if it’s perfectly fine for Australia to export the uranium needed to power these stations, why is it not okay for Australia to at least consider it as an alternative source of power?

Having flagged the fact that nuclear energy can contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions, it is still the case that man’s contribution to atmospheric carbon is infinitesimally small in the grand scheme of things.

The amount of carbon contained in atmospheric carbon dioxide is about 730,000 million tonnes (730 Gigatonnes – GtC). The annual cycle of carbon between the land surface and the atmosphere is estimated at 120 Gt; and between the oceans and the atmosphere is 90 GtC. The annual emissions of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere resulting from human activities is only around 7 GtC, or less than 1 per cent of the total atmospheric carbon mass.¹⁴

A respected Australian geologist has said, “to attribute a multicomponent, variable natural process such as climate change to human induced carbon emissions is pseudo-science.”¹⁵

¹² Kevin Rudd has stated “our stance is clear cut – no nuclear power plants for Australia”, ABC Radio, 3 April 2007. Mike Rann has also stated in a media release that his government would not support the building of nuclear power stations in Australia, (21 November 2006).

¹³ Patrick Moore, “Going Nuclear: A green makes the case”, *The Washington Post*, 16 April 2006.

¹⁴ Professor Ian Plimer speaking at the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy in Sydney, 10 April 2007. (See also: <http://www.news.com.au/story/0,23599,21542331-5007133,00.html>).

¹⁵ Professor Ian Plimer, “Global warming a damp squib”, *The Australian*, 5 January 2006, 8.

Although a little dated, it is worth noting that in 1998 over 17,000 scientists signed a petition in the US declaring that “there is no convincing scientific evidence that human release of carbon dioxide, methane, or other greenhouse gases is causing or will, in the foreseeable future, cause catastrophic heating of the Earth’s atmosphere and disruption of the Earth’s climate”.¹⁶

Ultimately though, this focus on climate change is positive as it is forcing our communities to seek out alternative energy sources and be mindful of energy and water efficiency. These are beneficial habits for us all to get into in the long run, particularly in light of the current water shortages we are experiencing in Australia.

But to pursue an extreme policy agenda that is not supported by consensus scientific evidence has the potential to disadvantage Australia. We need to act prudently and cautiously to protect our prosperity. Meeting Australia’s long term environmental challenges requires practical solutions balanced with the needs of our economy, not knee jerk populist reactions based on conflicting scientific evidence.

I would like to finish with a quote by respected scientist and scholar, and Al Gore’s supposed mentor, Dr Roger Revelle, who is quoted as saying, “the evidence for global warming thus far doesn't warrant any action unless it is justifiable on grounds that have nothing to do with climate.”¹⁷

¹⁶ This petition was initiated by the then immediate past President of the US National Academy of Sciences, Professor Frederick Seitz.

¹⁷ Dr Roger Revelle as quoted in Richard Lindzen, “Why So Gloomy?”, *Newsweek*, 16 April 2007. (See also: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17997788/site/newsweek/>).