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THE 2006 CLIMATE CHANGE AND GOVERNANCE CONFERENCE, WELLINGTON, NZ: HANSENISM IN THE CAUSE OF "COMMAND AND CONTROL" CLIMATE POLICIES

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Abstract

That human activities are causing dangerous global warming is unproven and unlikely. Assertions towards that end are based on circumstantial evidence and unvalidated computer modelling. Public discussion of climate change is dominated by self-interested scare mongering against a background of inculcated social guilt. Most commentators, and even many scientists, appear unaware of the distinction between short-term weather trends and long-term climate change, and of the great range of variability of natural climate events. Vigorous debate continues in the scientific community as to whether any human-caused global climate change can be measured, and its likely magnitude or even sign.

Following the failure of the Kyoto Protocol, powerful political forces are now being applied to voters in western democracies "to do something about global warming". A meeting held in Wellington, New Zealand, in March 2006, is typical of many similar meetings that have the intention of stimulating political action to combat global warming. This paper analyses the media coverage of the New Zealand meeting, based mostly on newspaper reports published in the Wellington Dominion Post. Conference papers, and the subsequent news coverage, are shown to have been carefully targeted to raise fears about global warming and threats to several icons of the New Zealand life style. It is concluded that the organizers of the meeting, working on a dangerous presumption of "greater moral good", aimed to reinforce fears amongst the New Zealand public of hypothetical human-caused climate change. The implications of senior scientists and science organisations being involved in such activity are considered.

Future climate change in both directions is inevitable. Attempts to stop it are expensive, doomed to fail and therefore futile. Planning to react responsively to damaging climate change when it occurs, both warmings and coolings, would in contrast be cost-effective, wise and a suitable basis for public policy formulation.

"There is a great gap between scientific knowledge and public perception. The gap widens whenever power can be gained by pretending to have knowledge where science knows only conflicting conjectures. We know only too well that our conjectures frequently are influenced by our interests, desires and ideologies".

Arthur Kantrowitz, 1998, The Scientist 12(3), 9.

1.1. Introduction

In late 2005 and early 2006, three major climate conferences were convened in Australasia, namely:

- *GREENHOUSE 2005: Action on Climate Change*, 13-17 November 2005, Melbourne¹.
- *Climate Change & Business - 2nd Australia-New Zealand Conference*, 20-21 February 2006, Adelaide².
- *Climate Change and Governance Conference*, 28-29 March 2006, Wellington³.

The three conferences shared the features of widespread pre-meeting publicity, and of sponsorship by major science organisations (CSIRO, Bureau of Meteorology, Royal Society of New Zealand), government departments (governments of Victoria, South Australia and New Zealand, foreign embassies (U.K., Holland), Greenhouse organisations and lobby groups (Australian Greenhouse Office, Greenpeace, World Wide Fund for Nature, Pew Center for Climate Change), and a wide range of companies and business organisations.

Press coverage before and during each meeting often gave the impression that the *science* of climate change was to be the focus, but in fact the conferences were dominantly concerned with greenhouse politics and governance, with a special emphasis on the development of presumed environmental-good "command and control" measures such as carbon taxes. As the organizer of the Wellington meeting noted, "This is a *policy conference*, not a science congress or a diplomatic negotiation"⁴.

I present here an analysis of the face that was presented to the public by the Wellington conference, *Climate Change and Governance*, hereafter often called simply the climate conference. The conclusions that I draw are, however, applicable also to the Melbourne and Adelaide meetings and to others of like kind. I assess the intentions of the Wellington conference organizers, the degree to which the general and policy discussions were informed by an adequate understanding of the science of climate change, the role played by the media in informing the public, and assess the outcomes. Troublesome ethical issues emerge, the most important of which include the role in society of scientific organisations and universities, and the way in which government-employed and other scientists are today constrained in the public comment that they can make on controversial issues of the day. Another major concern is the way in which scientific results are now routinely deployed into the public domain with a clear greenhouse propaganda intent.

Human causation aside, compelling scientific evidence exists that natural climate change, both warmings and coolings, presents a future hazard to mankind. Worldwide, however, the needed public and political debate on this genuine climate hazard is being derailed by hypothetical "human-caused global warming" evangelism, which the media encourage and for which the three recent Australasian climate conferences provided strong sustenance. To remedy this state of affairs requires first that you recognize it, and second that you understand its causes. The analysis in this paper is a contribution towards these two ends.

2.1. New Zealand climate policy: political background

The name New Zealand conjures up images of a green and picturesque land. Images of a mixed European and Polynesian population, with high environmental consciousness and a standard of living such that ordinary families can aspire to owning a holiday home by the beach. A David of a nation that signed the Kyoto Protocol and is a provider of high quality food and drink to the world, and a hospitable host for tourists.

Concerned to maintain this image, in late 2005 leading New Zealand scientists and politicians determined that a *Climate Change and Governance Conference* should be held in Wellington on March 28-29, 2006. The conference was announced in a press release issued on December 21st, two days after cabinet had approved a paper⁵ that specified new directions for New Zealand climate policy, drawn from a comprehensive review by the Ministry of Environment (MOE)⁶. The political links that led to the conference are thus clear.

Between 1999 and a general election held in December, 2005, New Zealand was governed by a two Labour-led coalition governments. The second of these coalitions (2002-2005) gave strong endorsement to New Zealand's membership of the Kyoto Accord. Leadership towards this end was provided by the long-serving (1999-2005) Minister for Science, Pete Hodgson, who displayed strong personal beliefs regarding greenhouse warming⁷. After the late 2005 election, Labour emerged as leader of a new Labour-New Zealand First-United Future-Progressives coalition government which no longer included the Green Party as a member. Mr Hodgson was reassigned to become Minister for Health and Minister for Land Information, his former position as Minister responsible for climate change being taken over by David Parker.

Mr Hodgson led New Zealand into the Kyoto Protocol on the back of wide public support. At the time of signing, there was also a firm expectation that - because of its large acreage of plantation forests - New Zealand would profit from the sale of carbon credits by about \$350 million. In early 2005, a revision of the Kyoto accounting system clarified the rules for plantation credits. This, combined with other calculation errors, meant that instead of New Zealand meeting its emissions target with room to spare, it would fail and thereby accrue a carbon debt over the operating period 2007-2012. Government apparently reported these miscalculations quietly to the United Nations as early as mid-April, 2005. Meanwhile it inhibited their public scrutiny in New Zealand by placing them in the depths of the contingent liabilities section of the Budget papers, accompanied by a comment that it was not feasible to quantify the extent of the liability at the time. Government also set up a Department of Environment (DOE) review of climate policy⁶.

The miscalculations from the previous forecasts - which were that N.Z. would exceed its CO₂ emissions target by 55 Mt (2002 estimate) or 33 Mt (2004 estimate) - stemmed from two factors. First, emissions proved higher than anticipated because of economic growth in New Zealand that was amongst the strongest in the world. Second, that part of the originally claimed forest carbon sink which applied to plantings on what was previously scrubland was disallowed, and at the same time the changing economics of land use decisions resulted in a reduction in new plantings of commercial forests. The net result of all these changes was an estimated overshoot of the carbon target by 36 Mt, which at a carbon price of \$15-30 a tonne for carbon

credits represents a bill up to a billion dollars or more. This is no small amount in an economy of \$94 billion (2004 estimate). Not surprisingly, therefore, New Zealand's Kyoto membership became a live issue in the December 2005 election, with the opposition National Party promising a review of climate policy if it were elected, and the new Labour-led coalition government announcing soon after the poll that it no longer planned to implement a carbon tax. Subsequent public discussion has included the possibility that New Zealand might withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol, and, like Canada, consider joining the Asia-Pacific Climate Accord (AP6).

2.1.1. Climate policy review

This review⁶, released in November, 2005, was concerned primarily with identifying policies through which New Zealand could meet its obligations under two United Nations agreements: the Framework Convention on Climate Change⁸ (UNFCCC; ratified by New Zealand in 1993) and the Kyoto Protocol⁹ (ratified in 2002). The review, issued by the New Zealand Climate Change Office, was commissioned by Cabinet, and conducted by a cross-departmental team drawn from the following ministries: Treasury, Economic Development, Agriculture and Fishery, Transport and Environment. No substantial consideration was given to the strongly disputed science of climate change. Rather, the review team appears to have accepted *a priori* the adjuration of Minister Hodgson that "*the science is settled*"¹⁰, and therefore dealt only with policy formulation. The overall tenor of the review is well represented by the following remarks contained in its Introduction:

"Climate change matters for New Zealand. New Zealand is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change through its coastline, the strong role of agriculture in its economy, its infrastructure, and its unique ecosystems. However, some sectors and regions could benefit under a modest amount of warming. In general, the balance between positive and negative impacts is expected to become more negative as the amount and rate of warming increases."

"Globally significant changes, such as melting of ice sheets and associated sea-level rise and changes in ocean circulations, would impact on New Zealand just as they would impact on any other part of the world. Major disruptions associated with large-scale climate change impacts occurring elsewhere could affect New Zealand through diverting flows of goods, services and financial resources".

No indication is given as to the meaning of the term "climate change" as used in the quotation above, and elsewhere in the report. This is a non-trivial criticism, because UNFCCC usage of the term is under the meaning of "human-caused climate change"⁸, whereas Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) usage¹¹ is under the meaning "human-caused and natural climate change". It seems apparent, and I assume, that usage of the term in New Zealand is that of the UNFCCC, i.e. climate change is generally used to mean human-caused climate change. In

this paper, however, unless reporting the views of others, I distinguish clearly between these two quite different concepts.

Summary

Given the long history of government-led public discussion in New Zealand about the dangers of climate change, and the merits of the Kyoto Protocol as a solution, the revelations and events of 2005 proved severely embarrassing. The new Government needed to be seen as active in addressing new climate policies in lieu of the abandoned carbon tax. Three main initial responses emerged that were designed to meet this need, viz: (i) public engagement meetings on climate change held by the MOE; (ii) amendments to the Resource Management Act to require (in lieu of a carbon tax) that climate change be included again in the planning process; and (iii) the Wellington *Climate Change and Governance Conference*, and related publicity activity.

3.1. Public engagement meetings in early 2006

Building on the 2005 report on climate change⁶, and its related cabinet minute⁵, the MOE held a series of 2 hour-long "public engagement" meetings on Climate Change¹² in Auckland (February 22, attended by 34 persons), Christchurch (February 24, 60 persons) and Wellington (March 27, 78 persons). The selection of these dates, with the last just predating the climate conference, is unlikely to have been coincidental. The meetings were intended "*to provide information on the current status of Climate Change policy in New Zealand and to give people an opportunity to express their viewpoints*". Presenters included the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry, and three other senior officers.

The Ministry's presentation started with the bullet point "*Everybody's climate is changing and will keep changing*", a vacuous statement which is both entirely true and ever has been. The statement was supported by a slide that displayed an increasing global average temperature from 1900 to just past 2000, then projected on upwards to achieve a 2-3^o C warming by 2100 according to two different growth scenarios (Fig. 1). The temperature projections are based on computer models that their creators expressly term "scenarios" rather than "predictions", precisely because they have no proven predictive skill, i.e. the models are not validated. Yet Ministry staff used this diagram in a situation where they were clearly implying that the curves had predictive power. As Lindzen has remarked elsewhere¹³:

"The GCM models are just experimental tools, and now these tools are (being) forced to make predictions that they are not able to There is nothing wrong with the GCM modellers, they do the best job they are able to. The problem is that too many people believe in the unreliable predictions. The problem is thus not scientific, it is political."

Later in the Ministry presentation, a set of specific future climate changes was predicted for New Zealand by 2080. These were listed as:

Temperature increase of 2⁰ C
Rainfall increase of 15% in the west; decrease of 15% in the east
Increased risk of drought in the east
Risk of heavy rainfall events
Sea level rise of 30 cm
Fewer frosts, more frequent hot days

Some of these predictions can be drawn empirically, by simply projecting known (measured) trends of, for example, sea-level change. The majority, however, are based upon deterministic computer modelling. As such, they are scenarios, and have only a random chance of eventuating. Their use by the Ministry as firm predictions in public discussion was therefore inappropriate.

Experts in computer climate modelling and meteorology are in general agreement that regional climate models have no predictive skill, which is why the Australian CSIRO inserts the following disclaimer into its regional modelling reports:

"This report relates to climate change scenarios based on computer modelling. Models involve simplifications of the real processes that are not fully understood"¹⁴.

Meteorologist John Zillman's view is that:

"The most important question - should global warming proceed as the IPCC reports suggest - is how will warming be manifest at the national, regional and local level, and what would that mean for each of us? I believe this question is, at present, completely unanswerable"¹⁵.

And modellers McCracken, Smith and Janetos say:

"We strongly agree that much more reliable regional climate simulations and analyses are needed. However, at present such simulations are more aspiration than reality"¹⁶.

The detailed notes of the MOE presentations¹², and listed questions from their audiences, make it clear that the intent of the meetings was to address political realities rather than scientific objectivity. One desultory Christchurch questioner, out of more than 100 questioners across the country, asked whether the current phase of warming could be part of a larger natural cycle, and another commented, accurately, that "*the top scientists disagree with the alliance of Kyoto*". Otherwise, no one is reported as having raised the issue of whether or not dangerous human-caused climate change is actually occurring. A third comment, also made in Christchurch, was: "*Thank you for a great meeting How do we focus on getting the message out that this (climate change) is a serious problem? How can we best engage the media to best engage the community? Climate change is usually low on the agenda in the papers*". And one final, chilling suggestion was that "*in terms of raising awareness within the community, one way to do this is to do it in schools. Climate Change needs to be in the curriculum - it is voluntary at the moment*".

Conclusion - The Ministry's description⁹ and the statements quoted above indicate that the "public engagement" exercise involved leading public opinion to the conclusion that anthropogenic climate change is an established and dangerous hazard. The discussions took place in a virtual reality climate universe where real-world, scientific assessment was ignored, and - as two other participants put it - the overwhelming requirement to be met was that New Zealand be seen to be "*a co-operative global society*" and to "*portray the stance of global responsibility*". At the same time, the relatively small numbers of persons who attended the meetings suggests that in early 2006 climate change was not seen by the New Zealand public as a high priority issue.

3.2. Changes to the Resource Management Act

The decision in late 2005 not to proceed with a long-planned carbon tax required that New Zealand identify alternative measures that would discourage greenhouse emissions and enable the country's Kyoto commitment to be met. In fact, it was probably an earlier recognition of this need that led the government to establish the 2005 Climate Policy Review⁶. But dropping the carbon tax also presented the Green Party with an opportunity to argue that "*there is a gaping hole in climate policy, and it must be filled*"¹⁷.

Accordingly, early in 2006, Green Party co-chair Fitzsimmons presented a Resource Management (Climate Protection) Amendment Bill to parliament that restores to regional councils the power to adjudicate on climate change issues during their planning approval process under the Resource Management Act (RMA). Such a power, part of the original Act, was removed in 2004, on the assumption that the need for RMA control had been superseded by a national climate policy that then centred around a proposed carbon tax. The new bill defines climate change as "*a change of climate that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and that is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods*". That change above natural variability has occurred is specifically assigned to be made as a human judgement; it therefore does not require objective justification, i.e. such judgements will be made on political and not scientific grounds.

The amendment to the RMA was tabled in parliament, probably not by coincidence, on the first day of the climate conference (March 28), where it received the support of the government.

3.3. The Wellington Climate Change and Governance Conference

3.3.1. Intentions of the conference organizers

Greenpeace campaigner Vanessa Atkinson commented a little beforehand that the climate conference would be "*an excellent opportunity for key officials and members of the public to become more informed about the latest climate science*", expressing at the same time the hope that "*this information translates into (carbon policy) action once the conference closes*"¹⁸. Similar public perceptions that the conference was about science, though widespread, and fostered in the media by interest groups such as Greenpeace, were in fact wrong. As this paper will show,

the conference was never intended to be a dispassionate presentation and discussion of climate change science.

The conference was organised jointly by the Institute of Policy Studies and the School of Earth Sciences, Victoria University. Prior to the meeting, the Chairman of the Conference Coordinating Committee, Professor Jonathon Boston remarked that the general tenor of scientific opinion is that the world is warming up, and that man is contributing to that¹⁹. Why such an anodyne statement should be regarded as newsworthy was never explained. However, the conference website²⁰ upped the ante by presenting the unsubstantiated assertion that: "*There is now little doubt that climate change represents one of the greatest and most urgent challenges faced by the world community*", and noted that the focus of the conference was to be "*on framing the governance and policy issues, and the scope for global, regional, national and local initiatives to reduce and manage the risks inherent in climatic shifts*". Any remaining doubt that the science was "already settled" was removed by the briefing paper distributed to participants before the conference. This stated that "*The policy debate can start from the general proposition that human activity, particularly in the post-industrial era, has changed the composition of the planet's atmosphere to the point where more serious consequences have become probable, and possibly inevitable*"⁴.

Conclusion - It is self-evident that the organizers of the *Climate Change and Governance Conference* proceeded from a preconceived belief that dangerous, human-caused climate change is already proven. As we shall see further below, their interest in learning about the science of climate change was restricted to only that science which provided succour for their belief.

3.3.2. Conference sponsors and supporters

Organisations which sponsored or supported the conference were²¹: eight separate New Zealand government departments, the British High Commission, the Royal Netherlands Embassy, The Royal Society of New Zealand, the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, the Greater Wellington Regional Council, Wellington Regional Chamber of Commerce, Victoria University, the NZ Business Council for Sustainable Development, the Climate Defence Network (an alliance of environmental lobby groups), IAG New Zealand, Shell NZ, Honda NZ, Comalco, Tindall Foundation, and the bus company Stagecoach. With the exceptions of the Royal Society and Victoria University, these organizations can scarcely claim to be disinterested in matters of climate change. Rather, all have substantial commercial or political interests at stake.

For example, Stagecoach²² was formerly Wellington City Transport Limited, until its sale to private interests in 1992. The company rationalised its participation in promoting the conference with the comment that "*people who take the bus instead of their car are helping to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases going into the air, and doing the whole world a favour ...*". They also provided a low-emission diesel bus covered with World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) advertising for use in the WWF Nature's School Holiday Programme. In another example of pre-conference publicity, Stagecoach provided ten Platinum bus passes (worth NZ\$149 each)

as prizes in a lottery for their passengers, which was drawn at the conference. Posters displayed in the buses before the conference showed pictures of six "eminent and unusual Wellingtonians", namely university Vice-Chancellor Professor Pat Walsh, distinguished Antarctic scientist Professor Peter Barrett, writer Elizabeth Knox, British diplomat Paul Noon, cyclist Gary Short and actress Bridie Knot (Fig. 2). What relevance an actress had to a climate conference remains unexplained. These persons travelled to work by bus in the days prior to the conference, and passengers who recognized them and requested it were given an entry form into the Platinum Pass draw.

Strong informal support for the conference was also provided by the Wellington newspaper, *The Dominion Post*, which ran a snappily badged (Fig. 3) section daily, from just before to just after the conference, that featured some of the distinguished participants and major policy topics of the conference. On March 29, the *Dominion* also published a picture of guest speaker Lord Ron Oxburgh at the wheel of one of Stagecoach's iconic trolley buses. Throughout the week, there was regular coverage of the conference on New Zealand daily current affairs and news programs on radio and television.

Conclusion - During the week of March 27-31, the *Climate Change and Governance Conference* became a media "event" in New Zealand. This would be unusual for a strictly scientific meeting, however meritorious, and it is unlikely that the happening was accidental.

3.3.3. *Persons invited to the conference*

The list of speakers for the conference included many scientists from government or international science agencies that are identified with the alarmist global warming cause, together with senior environmental bureaucrats and environmental activists. The high profile scientists and activists who attended received much media coverage, and some also gave talks outside the conference venue, including in Christchurch and Auckland. They included *Dr Kevin Trenberth*, head of climate analysis at the U.S. National Center for Atmospheric Research, *Professor David Vaughan*, from the British Antarctic Survey, *Lord Ron Oxburgh*, a geologist and former Chairman of Shell UK, and *Ms Kirsty Hamilton*, formerly of Greenpeace.

There are at least four well qualified New Zealand climate rationalists who are known worldwide for their constructive critical analyses of the complex issues of climate change. *Dr Vince Gray* is an expert reviewer for the IPCC and author of a well-regarded analysis of the deficiencies of that same organisation²³. *Dr Gerrit van der Lingen* is a sedimentary geologist with direct experience of studying ancient climate change, and author of many published papers and commentaries²⁴. *Dr Chris de Freitas* is a university climatologist who acts as an Editor for the international journal *Climate Research*, and is author, amongst many other papers, of a widely read review on atmospheric carbon dioxide²⁵. And *Dr Augie Auer* is a former Professor of Atmospheric Science and former New Zealand Chief Meteorologist. None of these persons, nor any of their Australian or international counterparts, was invited to contribute to the *Climate Change and Governance Conference*. The single act of "balance" of which I am aware is that Dr van der Lingen was invited to address an informal meeting of journalists on climate change in the week before the conference.

Anticipating that he would be criticized for his narrow choice of speakers, organizer Ken Piddington addressed the issue in his pre-conference circular, saying: "*Let it be clear, we have selected climate scientists to speak at the conference based on their international reputation for knowledge of their subject matter, not on what they "believe" or "disbelieve". We expect they will provide an up to date overview of knowledge, rather than a selective list of "facts" to support a particular a priori belief*"⁴. Such expectations, of course, apply to any scientist who gets up to speak at a technical conference, whatever public comments they may or may not have made on a related political issue. These motherhood rules of selection were, in any case, not followed, as indicated by Dr Piddington going on to say that "*Most of the speakers are already involved to some degree in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*". Anyone with even the slightest knowledge of climate change science will understand that such a selection criterion is no recipe for assembling a group of speakers who are disinterested and dispassionate about anthropogenic climate change^{23, 26}.

Conclusion - Box 1 contains matched quotations from the writings of the four climate rationalists named above, matched with quotations of four of the distinguished invited speakers to the conference. Comparison amongst these statements makes it clear that - given the absence of any authoritative climate rationalists - it was predetermined that the conference outcome would be one of environmental alarmism.

3.3.4. The conference itself

Smooth preparation for the climate conference in the government bureaucracy were thrown awry when a few days beforehand the Minister for the Environment, David Parker, had to resign his portfolio. His responsibilities were assumed by the previous Minister, Pete Hodgson - appropriately enough, as he was the main architect of New Zealand signing the Kyoto Protocol. In opening the conference, Acting Minister Hodgson commented that the government was currently reviewing climate policy with especial regard to providing alternative ways to carbon tax to influence capital investment in carbon-friendly directions.

Because I did not attend the conference, my remarks about it will be brief. Perusal of the speakers' list and abstracts²⁷, makes it plain that many excellent scientists were in attendance, as were a number of senior climate change bureaucrats. These persons will no doubt have covered their professional reputations with a liberal sprinkling of caveats and cautions. Words and phrases in the ascendancy will have included: "could", "might", "may", "modelled", "scenario" and "predicted"; certainly, some of these words figured prominently in press reports of the meeting.

British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, spoke to conference participants by video-link from Auckland on March 29th. His participation emphasizes the political nature of the event. As reported in the newspapers, and as might have been expected, Mr Blair's input provided no new scientific insight but merely provided a re-statement of the British government's well known policy of supporting the Kyoto Protocol. He also adroitly passed the ball by observing in response to a question that "*There's a lot that can be done from countries like New Zealand to give a signal to the rest of the world*"²⁸, thus encouraging the already strong local vanity that New Zealand policy choices on climate change have a worldwide significance.

Conclusion - Speaking to a person who attended, I was provided with the following as their perception of the conference:

"Though individual speakers gave caveats about the science uncertainties, that became totally irrelevant to the take-home message that emerged. Which was that climate change is here, is caused by human greenhouse gas emissions, and is changing faster than anyone had previously thought it would. So the need for action is urgent".

3.3.5. Co-ordination of media publicity and policy launches with the conference

Starting on February 27 with the MOE's public engagement meetings, there was increasing coverage of the climate change issue in the New Zealand media. This coverage was stimulated by press releases from various other interest groups, and peaked over the conference week of March 26 to April 1. The press statements released by special interest groups were clearly orchestrated to integrate with the conference, and their launch was accompanied by misleading or alarmist statements about climate change. The word "pollution" was consistently misused in description of carbon dioxide emissions, for this gas occurs naturally at trace levels as part of earth's normal atmosphere.

On March 27, the Green Party issued a set of climate change policy proposals²⁹ under the title "Turn Down the Heat", its co-leader, Jeanette Fitzsimons, commenting that the *"since the proposed carbon tax was axed in December, NZ is in a policy vacuum, yet we have less than two years before our Kyoto obligations begin"*. Key Green policy objectives included (i) that by 2027, only renewable energy should be available in New Zealand, (ii) that the government pay foresters for their carbon storage, and impose penalties for deforesting, and (iii) that the government set carbon caps for methane emissions from livestock and air traffic, with offsets required for increases.

On March 28th and 29th, Greenpeace³⁰ and the Climate Defence Network¹⁸ - an assembly of environmental lobby groups which includes Greenpeace, WWF, the New Zealand Forest and Bird Society and the Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand - issued press releases on climate change. Comments included that if New Zealand is going to tackle climate change and meet its Kyoto target then we *"need to get a price on carbon and greenhouse pollution in our economy, through either a carbon charge or an emissions trading scheme"*.

The main major newspaper coverage of the conference began with the March 26th edition of the national Sunday Star Times³¹, which announced the same predicted climate changes for a warming New Zealand that had already been promulgated nationwide at the MOE meetings. A summary pseudo-meteorological chart and text (Fig. 4) which accompanied this article used several stratagems to give readers a sense of danger. The article failed to point out that all the changes it presented, and more, might very well happen as part of normal climate variation, and thus completely confused hypothetical human-caused climate change with natural change. Many of the predicted changes have a significant chance of happening naturally anyway, and some (such as a slowly increasing sea-level) are certain to occur naturally unless a reversal

occurs in long-established, stable trends. This partial piece was not a good start to media coverage of the conference.

Matters improved between March 27 and April 1, when Wellington newspaper *The Dominion Post* ran a coordinated series of conference articles under an eye-catching logo which, by omitting the word "governance" from the title, reinforced the public impression that the conference was primarily scientific (Fig. 3). These articles were carefully and skillfully designed, each comprising a half page made up of 3 or 4 separate articles regarding the conference (Fig. 5). A short biography of the attainments of a different expatriate New Zealand scientist was included each day, and the focus of the matters presented was in most cases carefully tailored to correspond to local New Zealand sensitivities.

Appendix 1 contains a summary of the five major alarmist scenarios that stemmed from conference papers, as they were communicated to the New Zealand public through the *Dominion Post* and the *NZ Herald*. These scenarios are then subjected to critical analysis.

3.3.6. Press coverage of other related matters

Three other press items of interest were published during the conference. First, Simon Upton - a former New Zealand Environment and Science Minister who is now head of the OECD's sustainable development work unit - was reported as telling participants that it was still "*important to get a price for carbon emissions into the economy and a well-designed carbon tax would be the least-costly way to do that*"⁵⁶. That Mr. Upton was brought from Paris to deliver this message on the first day of the conference represented obvious stage management, and was a clear indication of where the agenda lay.

Second, Acting Minister Hodgson was reported as complaining that the area of climate change policy is bedevilled by free-rider problems: "*Everyone has a reason not to do anything. New Zealanders say we don't need to do anything because we are so small. The United States says it doesn't need to do anything because it is so big. India because it is so poor. Russia because it is so cold*"³². But what Mr Hodgson completely failed to address - in common with Professor Prinn in his conference presentation (see Appendix 1) - is the prior issue of why it is necessary to do anything about climate change, other than adapt to it, in the first place.

Third, the employment contract of government scientist Dr Kevin Patterson, who modelled energy needs for the Ministry of Economic Development, was alleged to have been allowed to lapse because of critical comments that he made regarding mistakes in New Zealand's Kyoto projections⁵⁷. Dr Patterson is also reported as saying that New Zealand's strongly contestable research funding system makes it almost impossible to obtain money for new projects, encourages the use of political buzzwords to achieve funding success, and has had a strongly deleterious effect on professional scientists' morale and careers. Opposition climate change spokesman Dr Nick Smith commented that the failure to reappoint Dr Patterson was "*typical of Government bullying. There is a very high level of frustration across the board in the public service about climate change policy, which is in a diabolical mess*".

3.3.7. Newspaper coverage immediately after the conference

The final report on the *Climate Change and Governance Conference* in the *Dominion Post* was published on April 1⁵⁸. In it, reporter Michelle Quirke summarised, this time without even a semblance of balance, the alarmist warnings that had been issued during the conference week by scientists and by Green Party co-leader Jeanette Fitzsimons. The article also cited some brief opinions from members of the public as to what should be done about the climate change issue. All but one of the six persons consulted seemed unconcerned about dangerous climate change, but at the same time all were also prepared to support measures to protect the environment from any proven threat.

Shortly after the conference, on April 4, a group of 18 New Zealand and Pacific Island Anglican bishops issued a statement that "*climate change is a real and present danger to the future of this planet and the survival of the species*", and urged that politicians should develop policies to limit climate change⁵⁹. Bishop of Waikato, David Moxham, acknowledging that some people might question whether Christian leaders should involve themselves in such political issues, commented that "*God's world needs God's people to act for the redeeming of God's creation*". A better statement would have been that "*God's world needs scientists to work out how it functions so that mankind can better nurture our precious environment*".

Conclusion - Despite their sometimes uncritical airing of interest-group spin, it would be wrong to give the impression that press reporting on the *Climate Change and Governance Conference* was exclusively alarmist. Rather, the *Dominion Post* coverage not infrequently presented alternative, non-alarmist interpretations - though, of course, the reporters had no control over the Sub-editors whose day-job is precisely to coin eye-catching, sensationalist headlines. As examples, the *Dominion's* reporting of Georgina Griffiths' work on rainfall trends mentioned specifically both environmental pluses (faster-growing crops and grass) and minuses (increase in invasive pest species); Blair Fitzharris was described as acknowledging that given a warming there would be both pros (more rain, fuller rivers and more hydroelectric power) and cons (more introduced pests, and disease and new threats to some native species); and Fatu Lefale was reported as saying that "*the difficulty of us in the scientific community is whether those (warming) changes are due to human-induced climate change, or are due to natural variability of the region*"³⁴. The integrity of these scientists (and doubtless others who weren't quoted in the newspaper), and perhaps also the talk that Dr van der Lingen gave to reporters on March 24, did in the end have some effect.

4.1. Discussion

4.1.1. The media

In a technical sense, the main conference newspaper, the Wellington *Dominion Post*, generally provided balanced information about the conference and some of the key issues of climate change science. "Balanced" in the sense that it was often acknowledged that more than one interpretation was possible for a given set of facts. The reporting that I observed in other newspapers and on radio and television was couched in similar terms, and similarly reflected the shallow way in which our modern media seek to attain technical "balance" in their reporting.

For there is much more to balance than simply acknowledging that an alternative point of view exists, and behind this apparently even-handed approach in fact lay the assumptions that had been so assiduously propagated by those who planned the conference. Which were that human-caused global warming is a proven fact, that the science of climate change is settled (after all, the Acting Minister says so), and that the time has come for action (code for the introduction of a carbon tax or its equivalent) not more words. These covert attitudes manifested themselves in several non-covert ways.

First, there was a strong, alarm-based selection of the topics that were reported on from the many presentations given at the conference and in other related public talks. For example, Lord Oxburgh gave an excellent and informative lecture in Christchurch on alternative energy sources, a topic on which, as a former Chairman of Shell UK, he is well versed. All too typically, however, the report on the talk which appeared in Christchurch newspaper *The Press* concentrated on some brief remarks that he made about the dire threat of human-caused global warming, and ignored his important and in-depth discussion of alternative energy sources (Gerrit van der Lingen, *pers. comm.*).

Second, there was the skilful fashioning of internationally-used scarefiers into alarmist threats specific to New Zealand. Thus "increased storminess" and "sea-level rise" became "threat to coastal baches", "increasing temperatures" became "kiwifruit will replace sheep farming at Gore", "more rainfall locally" can become more Hutt Valley floods, and "less rainfall locally" can become droughts in Hawkes Bay. If there had been a way to link either pavlova or the All Blacks to global warming, you can be sure that the conference publicists would have found it.

Third, there was the use of leading questions in media interviews, often involving unspoken assumptions or conspiratorial agreement between the host and the interviewee. For example, Radio New Zealand's Chris Laidlaw asked Lord Oxburgh in an interview about the motives of scientists who argue that human-caused global warming has not yet been established. Oxburgh's reply was: "*I don't know of any cluster of opinion that I respect within the scientific community that resist what I have said so far*", adding that "*that isn't to say there isn't someone in a cave somewhere who thinks differently, who has been isolated from the rest of the world, but I honestly don't think so*"⁶⁰. In similar fashion, Kevin Trenberth was reported in the *Dominion Post* as saying: "*The arguments of global warming disbelievers are often coloured by politics and vested interests*"³³. *Ad hominem* disparagements like these invariably indicate that the person being questioned has no convincing answer for a point that has been put. But in any case, such comments serve only to cheapen the debate and the person who asserts them.

Fourth, and only partly a media issue, was the promulgation of the views of persons or groups who claim moral authority, such as the widely reported statement by New Zealand and Pacific bishops on climate change just after the Wellington conference⁵⁷. Such statements, including this one, serve mainly to demonstrate a lack of understanding of the complex scientific issues involved in global change science. Before church leaders start acting as moral lobby groups on science-based matters, they need to ensure that they have a rigorous intellectual grasp of the relevant scientific facts and principles. And the same comment applies with equal force to the

leaders of other groupings, for example business leaders⁶¹, who presume to give the public and politicians advice on science-related issues like climate change.

Conclusion - Science operates neither by authority nor consensus, and claims that "the science of climate change is settled", or that people who question the magnitude of human influence on climate "live in caves", are simply silly. In actuality, and in general healthily, a vigorous scientific debate continues regarding all the substantial and some of the insubstantial mechanisms of climate change, and especially so regarding the matter of human causation. That deep divisions exist amongst expert and qualified scientists regarding our knowledge of the climate system is well exemplified by recent public letters written to the Prime Minister of Canada by two groups of experienced professional scientists, and by editorial comment thereafter⁶².

4.1.2. *An aside on Hansenism*

Proselytisation in the cause of anthropogenic global warming has been termed Hansenism, after American scientist Dr Jim Hansen, whose appearance before a U.S. Senate committee in 1988 marks the generally accepted starting point of the global warming scare⁶³. Enthusiastically promulgated by environmental NGOs and others, during the 1990s the warming scare came under the corrupting influences of zeal for a cause, large sums of money for research, large national bureaucracies to administer public policy, and two humdingers of international bureaucracy, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol. Within a short time, some industry groups (notably the alternative energy sector) came into play, adding a fifth cause of self-interest to the mix.

A key attribute of Hansenism is a moral superiority assumed by those who espouse the cause, and whose mission is "to save the planet". This often engenders in turn the pathological behaviour of noble cause corruption⁶⁴ - a phenomenon that is neatly encapsulated in the title of Ian Plimer's critique of creationism, "Telling Lies for God". Three, now infamous, comments made by persons who have had great influence in the global warming debate serve to make the point:

"On the other hand, we are not just scientists but human beings as well. And like most people we'd like to see the world a better place, which in this context translates into our working to reduce the risk of potentially disastrous climatic change. To do that we need to get some broad-based support, to capture the public's imagination. That, of course, entails getting loads of media coverage. So we have to offer up scary scenarios, make simplified, dramatic statements, and make little mention of any doubts we might have. This 'double ethical bind' we frequently find ourselves in cannot be solved by any formula. Each of us has to decide what the right balance is between being effective and being honest. I hope that means being both"⁶⁵.

"No matter if the science is all phony, there are collateral environmental benefits climate change (provides) the greatest chance to bring about justice and equality in the world"⁶⁶.

*"Emphasis on extreme scenarios may have been appropriate at one time, when the public and decision-makers were relatively unaware of the global warming issue. Now, however, the need is for demonstrably objective climate ... scenarios consistent with what is realistic"*⁶⁷.

Such opinions sit uncomfortably alongside the accurate and succinct advice of Sir Charles Fleming, one of New Zealand's greatest conservationists and natural scientists:

*"Any body of scientists that adopts pressure group tactics is endangering its status as the guardian of principles of scientific philosophy that are worth conserving"*⁶⁸.

A parallel has been drawn between the damage done to contemporary science by Hansenism and the damage inflicted on Soviet biology during the early to middle 20th century by Lysenkoism⁶⁹. Though the parallel may be apt, Hansenism is arguably the more scientifically damaging because of the truly worldwide nature of its suffocating tactics of political correctness and intimidation⁷⁰, and because of the damage it is wreaking to public perceptions of science as a disinterested process. On the other hand - and this is not intended flippantly - at least Hansenism has so far exhibited only a minor use of macarthyst political tactics^{40, 71}, and has resorted not at all to the types of outrageous crime that were perpetrated against unconformist soviet biologists during the Lysenko era⁷².

Conclusion - It requires a broad grasp of climate science, an un beholden career or post-career position and a dogged character to stand out against the attribution of human guilt to climate change that is preached by the evangelists of the global warming movement. Those scientists who do attempt to inject rationality into the debate are strongly attacked and marginalized as "contrarians" or "skeptics", and accused of being in the pay of commercial interests⁷³. By the turn of the 20th century, a stifling conformity that human-caused global warming was a huge and dangerous problem had emerged within the climate research community and their nurturing bureaucracies. Woe betide to any individual who challenges it.

4.1.3. The conference organizers

It will surely surprise no-one that commercial interests, environmental NGOs and government departments generally act in a self-interested fashion, as is exemplified in some ways by the history detailed in this paper. It may, however, still surprise many - to the point of denial - that leading scientists and scholarly institutions, such as Victoria University and the Royal Society of New Zealand - who were primary sponsors for the *Climate Change and Governance Conference* - are now providing sustenance for phantom environmental scares, presumably in the name of an assumed greater moral good.

The Royal Society of New Zealand is a peak science body that has a long and distinguished record of serving the New Zealand public, and it encourages high standards and impartiality of investigation into scientific matters⁷⁴. But in recent years it has become an increasing concern that - in its relatively new role of giving government policy advice in return for assured funding - the Society may have compromised its independence from political matters and fashions.

Similar conflicts of interest plague all Australasian universities, especially in research matters. This raises an irresolvable conundrum. Which is that good science is the antithesis of authority. Yet in giving "best advice" to a government, a national science academy is claiming the very authority that science must deny it.

The Royal Society and Victoria University, as sponsors of the Wellington climate conference, failed to ensure that proper standards of scientific balance and impartiality were met. These organisations, of course, employ many well qualified persons of great professional commitment and integrity, and their conference sponsorship was beyond doubt well-intentioned. However, whatever the good intentions, in the event they were overtaken and subverted within the mainly propaganda role that the conference proved to serve. Prior to the conference, in letters to the paper, two New Zealand climate rationalists predicted that the event would be a "jamboree of climate activists" and a "revivalist global warming fest", and judging from the conference press coverage these colourful descriptions were close to the mark. Is it really the role of a national science body or a university to encourage revivalist jamborees?

Less easy to judge is the social responsibility of the eight government departments that were involved in the Wellington climate conference, and especially the Department of the Environment. Clearly, the primary function of a government department is to give independent advice to, and carry out the instructions of, the government of the day within the law. But more and more, as governments seek to impose "spin control" on the public image that they project, government departments are being asked to participate in the presentation of partisan political viewpoints. Is it then possible for them to refuse to carry out a government request that they know to be based on factually incorrect information? Perhaps occasionally behind the scenes, but surely never in public? So if and when government ministers encouraged the DOE to conduct public engagement seminars on climate change in major New Zealand cities, was the duty of the department to present these in a scientifically balanced way, or in a way which best fitted with government's current policy thoughts? In such cases, is it the role of a policy department to act as a proselytizer for the government's chosen political position (which, of course, may not at the time have been declared publically)? Should the department have presented future climate "scenarios" as firm "predictions" in the public discussion that they led? Should expert civil servants with strong convictions be free to sign open letters in the newspaper which contain public advice to their own prime minister - whether that advice is consistent with planned government policy or otherwise - as has occurred recently in Canada⁵⁹? Should persons invited to sit on a high-level Climate Change Advisory Council, whether civil servants or otherwise, accept appointment if one of the rules is that they "*will not discuss or debate the science of climate change*", as happened in the US state of Montana recently⁷⁵.

None of these questions has an easy answer. But they nonetheless need to be asked, and solutions provided for the manifest conflicts of responsibility and interest that exist. For our societies will be much the poorer if we do not protect the key principles of (i) fearless, independent and impartial advice from civil servants and expert committees to their political masters; (ii) the scrupulously disinterested pursuit of research by scientists; and (iii) the even-handed reporting of scientific results to the public. Bias-proofing the assessment of complex scientific and technological issues requires that routine use of counterweight and audit panels for rigorous verification of policy recommendations made to government⁷⁶.

Conclusion - Universities, professional scientific societies and individual scientists have a duty of care to encourage public discourse on matters of the day in a disinterested, dispassionate and equal-handed way. This is not just a duty but their most sacred duty. In the way in which they planned and executed the *Climate Change and Governance Conference*, these three groups all let New Zealand, and science, down. A good way to redress the balance would be for them to now devote similar effort and expenditure to convening a parallel, international-standard *Climate Rationalism Conference* in Wellington.

The Wellington climate conference shows that the Royal Society of New Zealand and Victoria University, and perhaps also the Department of the Environment, need to examine most carefully the conditions under which they lend their names to such ventures such as the *Climate Change and Governance Conference*. Additionally, they need to develop formal policies about sponsorship that will better protect their valuable brand images of impartial scholarly authority and balanced public service, respectively.

*"Science is based upon empiricism - the objective observation of natural phenomena, and the attempt to encompass them in classifications, models and theories of ever-expanding scope. This enormously important principle of the Enlightenment still needs affirming. The principle is under threat, from those of every religious and political persuasion and from those of none, who seek to impose their world view upon scientific enquiry. Science is not more important than morality. But without empiricism, there can be no science"*⁷⁷.

5.1. Conclusions

Was the Wellington *Climate Change and Governance Conference* a success?

Strangely, given the criticisms that I have levelled in this paper, one answer is "yes". The organizers set out to reinforce a public perception that human-caused climate change is a dangerous environmental problem, and to a degree - perhaps to a very large degree - they succeeded.

The second answer is "no". Prior to the conference, Greenpeace expressed the hope that the public would "*become more informed about the latest climate science*", and this hope was most certainly not met in any balanced way. However, despite the public expectation that may have been built up otherwise, it should be understood that the main aim of the conference organizers was always political rather than scientific.

Six points can be made in conclusion:

- The Wellington *Climate Change and Governance Conference* succeeded in reinforcing a public impression that dangerous human-caused climate change is occurring, and that this change can be prevented by limiting human emissions of greenhouse gas. Neither of these assertions is proven, nor is either likely.

- To the degree that the conference was intended to contribute to a balanced public debate on human-caused global warming, it failed.
- The major sponsors of the conference included organisations whose charter includes the disinterested presentation of high-quality science, and civil social responsibility; these organisations failed in their duty of public care.
- Media coverage of the conference was "balanced" in only the most superficial way; news reports concentrated heavily on climate alarmism, and failed to follow up on the caveats which were expressed by the more responsible speakers at the conference.
- These major conclusions about the Wellington climate conference apply also to many other similar climate meetings around the world, including those that were held in Melbourne in October, 2005, and Adelaide in January, 2006.
- Future natural climate change is inevitable. Public hysteria over hypothetical human-caused global warming is extremely damaging because it diverts attention from the need to develop responsive plans to manage future natural climate events, both warmings and the more dangerous coolings.

End note

"The greatest challenge facing mankind is the challenge of distinguishing reality from fantasy, truth from propaganda. ... We must daily decide whether the threats we face are real, whether the solutions we are offered will do any good, whether the problems we're told exist are in fact real problems, or non-problems"

Michael Crichton, Remarks to the Commonwealth Club, San Francisco, September 13, 2003.

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Eight Published Opinions on Global Warming

Four Persons invited to the Wellington conference

Professor Peter Barrett (Director, Antarctic Research Centre, Victoria University, NZ)

"After 40 years, I'm part of a huge community of scientists who have become alarmed with our discovery, that we know from our knowledge of the ancient past, that if we continue our present growth path, we are facing extinction. Not in millions of years, or even millennia, but by the end of this century".

(In response to public reaction, Dr Barrett changed the word "extinction" in his pre-released speech notes to "the end of civilisation as we know it" in his delivered speech.)

*Acceptance Speech Notes
Marsden Medal award ceremony
November 17, 2004*

Lord Ron Oxburgh (formerly Chairman, UK Shell)

"What we don't want to see is in two years' time the government simply becoming bored with climate change after we've invested a lot of our shareholders' money. Remember, those shareholders are pension funds and other similar organisations."

*South East Climate Change Partnership website
<http://www.climatesoutheast.org.uk/viewquotes.php>*

Dr Kevin Trenberth (Head, Climate Analysis Section, National Center for Atmospheric Research, USA)

Ten of the past 11 years have been the warmest on record. Global ocean temperatures are rising and ocean expansion, melting glaciers and land ice have helped raise sea levels by 37 mm in the past 13 years. Rainfall, drought and hurricanes have increased in intensity.

The Dominion Post, Wellington, March 28, 2006

Dr David Vaughan (Principle Investigator, GRADES program, British Antarctic Survey, UK)

About 87 per cent of Antarctica's glaciers have retreated since the 1950s and an ice area the size of Wellington and Taranaki has melted. There has been no similar climate change for at least 10,000 years.

The Dominion Post, Wellington, March 29, 2006

Four independent New Zealand climate rationalists

Dr Augie Auer (formerly Professor of Atmospheric Science, University of Wyoming)

“Of all the greenhouse gases trapping the sun’s warmth within the atmosphere, 95% is water vapour. Are we going to start taxing people who take steamy showers? Of the remaining 5%, 3.6% is carbon dioxide, of which 96% is naturally-occurring. So the contribution of manmade CO₂ to all greenhouse gases is about 0.12%”.

“The next five to 10 years will show the Kyoto Protocol to be a classic example of rash political decision being made on popular but unfortunately weak and incomplete science. It will cost us heaps, and the global warming zealots will be running for cover.”

*National Business Review, July 13, 2005, p. 6; and
NZ Herald, 2005, Letter to the Editor*

Dr Vincent Gray (Chemist, expert reviewer for IPCC Assessment Reports)

Now Thorne et al. (2005) have carried out a comprehensive compilation of a large number of radiosonde (weather balloon) data and subjected them to numerous checks and corrections; to come up with a truly reliable global temperature record for the lower atmosphere from 1958 to 2002...

Features are as follows:

- The temperature in 2002 was the same as in 1958. There was no overall "global warming" over this period;
- Temperatures fell from 1962 to 1978 and then jumped back up again, with a large peak (El Niño) in 1998. This jump has never been explained;
- The part from 1978 to 2002 agrees closely with the MSU (independent satellite temperature) record, as agreed by Christy and Spencer.

It seems clear from these latest results that there has been no global warming since 1958, that the record since 1978 is confirmed by the MSU but not by the surface measurements, and that carbon dioxide cannot be responsible for most of the effects claimed for it,

*NZ Climate & Enviro Truth No. 86, December 1st, 2005.
<http://www.warwickhughes.com/gray04/nzct86.htm>*

For references - Thorne et al., JOURNAL OF GEOPHYSICAL RESEARCH, 110, D18105, doi:1029/2004JD005753)

Dr Chris de Freitas (Associate Professor of Climatology, Auckland University)

“It is a common perception that there is a trend toward an increasing frequency and severity of extreme climatic events. It is also common to see media reports attributing the occurrence of extreme climate events to global warming. The problem is that these are simply perceptions, not facts. ... For example, in the Atlantic region, the number of intense hurricanes declined during the 1970s and 1980s, and the period 1991-1994 experienced the smallest number of hurricanes of any four years over the last half-century.”

National Business Review, June 24, 2005, p. 37

Dr Gerrit van der Lingen (Sedimentologist, formerly with New Zealand Geological Survey)

“The global warming debate has left the realm of science a long time ago. It has become totally politicised. Any scientific criticism is not met with a scientific response, but with name-calling and a stepping up of the scare tactics. Some sceptics have even lost their jobs or are told to shut up or else.”

“... some politicians are waking up. Just before the G8 conference, on July 6, the Select Committee on Economics of the House of Lords in Britain released a report titled "The Economics of Climate Change." The report is highly critical of the British Government for not having carried out a proper costing of the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. It is also highly critical of the policies and actions of the IPCC. It urges the government to take a different approach to climate change in the future than the one followed for the Kyoto Protocol and to emphasise adaptation to climate change rather than dubious emission controls.”

*The Anthropogenic Global Warming debate
Newsletter, Geological Society of New Zealand, 2005
<http://www.sepp.org/NewSEPP/GW-vdLingen.htm>*

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Press reporting of conference issues

Those who did not attend the Climate Change and Governance Conference in Wellington, March 28-29, 2006, saw it through the eyes of the New Zealand media, and especially the *Dominion Post* newspaper. This Appendix summarises, first, five climate alarmist themes reported by the media. Second, these alarms are rebutted, based upon established scientific evidence.

A.1. Promulgation of public alarmism

A1.1. Dangerous increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide

Professor Peter Barrett reported to the conference that "*if present trends in greenhouse gas emissions continued unchecked to 2100, carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere would be double pre-industrial levels and the average global temperature was likely to rise by 3^o C*", adding ominously that "*we should not expect there to be no consequences*"³².

A1.2. Drought in the east: floods in the west

Georgina Griffiths from the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) was reported as saying that the evidence is growing that New Zealand's climate is changing in line with global warming predictions. Her studies of rainfall gauge data showed that between 1930 and 2004 western areas in both North and South Island became wetter, whereas the east became drier and more fire prone. If it continued, this trend "*would mean agriculture in the east ... would suffer from more frequent severe droughts. In the west, erosion and flooding would become more frequent, affecting farming and expensive infrastructure such as roads and bridges*"³¹.

A1.3. Storm increases, sea-level rise, and greater coastal erosion

In recent years, two *leit motifs* of global warming alarmism have been that warming would result in an increase in destructive storms and also a dangerously rising sea-level. These two themes were interwoven at the Wellington conference to produce an additional scare specially tailored to the local love of beachfront cottages (termed cribs, or baches), namely that such properties are under direct and increasing threat because of global warming.

The theme seems to have been introduced by Dr Kevin Trenberth, Head of the Climate Analysis section of the U.S. National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) and a lead author for IPCC Assessment Reports. Dr Trenberth alleged that ten of the past 11 years have been the warmest on record³³. Global temperatures are rising and ocean expansion, melting glaciers and land ice have helped raise sea levels by 37 mm in the last 13 years. Global warming, and increasing water vapour, is resulting in hurricanes now attaining a higher intensity, though "*this is not to say Katrina was due to global warming*". Finally, he added that "*there is an influence of global*

warming , something like an 8% influence. So if about 305 mm of rain falls in New Orleans that means about an extra 25.4 mm of rainfall more than might have occurred anyway. Often it's the straw that broke the camel's back. Was 25.4 mm of extra rainfall enough to cause the levees to break?"

The storm-threat theme taken up also by Penehuro Fatu Lefale, from the World Meteorological Office in Geneva. Mr Lefale was reported as saying that air temperatures could rise in the Pacific by up to 0.82⁰ C between 2010 and 2039, and that such global warming "*could lead to Pacific nations being battered by more frequent and extreme tropical cyclones*"³⁴. Two further reports, based on conference papers by Doug Ramsay³⁵ (NIWA) and Professor Blair Fitzharris³⁶ (Otago University), built further on the argument. Ramsay argued that the storms could cause bigger sea surges which will lead to more coastal erosion, and alleged this to be a serious issue because 80% of the New Zealand population lives within 50 km of the coast. Fitzharris commented that New Zealanders' love affair with coastal property was making them more vulnerable to these effects of climate change.

Finally, Professor David Vaughan (BAS) reported that about 87% of West Antarctica's glaciers have retreated since the 1950s. The land-based part of this melting has contributed to sea-level rise, and some scientists fear that the West Antarctic ice sheet will collapse and raise sea levels by more than a metre. Vaughan was reported as saying that "*Developed nations would have to spend more on coastal protection and sea defences*"³⁷.

A1.4. Expansion of kiwifruit farming, ecological adjustment

Professor Fitzharris from Otago University commented that "*increasing temperatures could enable future farmers to grow kiwifruit as far south as Gore*"³⁸, though whether the soil and rainfall would be adequate he viewed as a more questionable matter. This conference item was to a degree presented neutrally, though as Fitzharris went on to caution that as New Zealand warmed "*it would have impacts on ecosystems in alpine and snow and ice areas, eastern native forests, and national parks. As animals and plants in coastal areas moved to flee rising water levels, existing park boundaries might need to be redrawn*".

A1.5. Economic development

Professor Ronald Prinn is an atmospheric chemist who specialises in greenhouse gas measurements at MIT's Center for Global Change Science. Professor Prinn's current research involves using an earth systems model to assess climate change predictions, and to develop policies that might reduce the impact of change and are appropriate for different economies. Prinn was quoted as advocating that countries "*try to look at future development as a partnership between economic development - getting better off - and at the same time ensuring the environment is protected to the extent that it can be. They should go hand in hand and inform each other*"³⁹.

A2. Rebuttal of alarmism

The majority, though not quite all, of the matters listed above were presented in the press in an intentionally alarmist way. That the flimsy circumstantial or model-based arguments that lie behind these scenarios were not rebutted, or at least subjected to searching critical analysis, is alarming, and especially so because it suggests that the arguments went unrebutted at the conference also. The lack of "corrective" letters to the Editor from any of the numerous New Zealand scientists who privately recognize global warming alarmism for what it is, reflects an intense professional pressure that prevents them from speaking out in public⁴⁰.

As well as the obvious general comment that the computer-foreshadowed global warming that lies at the root of all these scares may not eventuate, straightforward rebuttals exist for all of them, as discussed below.

A2.1. Ten of the past 11 years have been the warmest on record

This much-repeated claim, and variants on it, have no necessary relevance at all to human-caused warming. Given that the late 20th century warming trend marks the culmination of a long temperature recovery from the Little Ice Age⁴¹, of course most of the warmest years will cluster around the turnaround point. For the moment, that appears to be 1998, as global average temperature has not risen since then⁴².

A2.2. By 2100 atmospheric carbon dioxide will have doubled and 3⁰ C of warming will have occurred

The 3⁰ C prediction for climate sensitivity is based on deterministic computer models that have no demonstrated skill⁴⁰. Though it is beyond doubt that human emissions are increasing the trace levels of CO₂ in the atmosphere, which are currently about 100 ppm above their presumed "typical" 280 ppm interglacial value; (i) indications (other than loaded computer models) are that the warming produced by a doubling is unlikely to exceed 1⁰ C⁴³, of which about three-quarters is presumed to have already occurred; (ii) evidence from fossil plant stomata indicate that levels of atmospheric CO₂ between 350 and almost 400 ppm occurred quite naturally earlier in our present interglacial⁴⁴; and (iii) a 3⁰ C warming could equally well be natural, because it would lie within the range of temperature variations inferred for the last several hundred thousand years⁴⁵; and (iv) earlier geological atmospheres are known to have sustained carbon dioxide contents of 1000 ppm and higher⁴⁶, without known deleterious effect.

Barrett's arguments rest on the assumption that higher levels of CO₂ are, of themselves, harmful. This is most unlikely to be true. First, because the mild warming that enhanced CO₂ produces is likely to be of net benefit⁴⁷, and specifically so because higher atmospheric carbon dioxide enhances plant growth⁴⁸.

A2.3. Global warming is producing an 8% increase in the intensity of storm events, and caused an extra 25.4 mm of rainfall during hurricane Katrina

These numbers must represent computer model predictions, on which I have already commented in the main text. Except in the imaginary world of virtual reality, the specified increases are fanciful even as to their sign, let alone in their implied precision.

A2.3. Global sea-level has increased by 37 mm in the last 13 years (2.9 m/century)

The best and longest tide gauge records show that sea-level has been rising at a steady rate between 10-20 cm/century for at least the last 100 years⁴⁹. The precise balance of mechanisms which caused this rise remains uncertain, but the thermal expansion of sea-water and the addition of land-derived fresh water from melting ice are both significant. As a result of melting ice-sheets, sea-level has also risen about 130 m since 18,000 years ago; during that general melting, there were natural fluctuations in both rate and direction of sea-level change. The possible slightly increased rate of rise of 29 cm/century reported by Trenberth (which was not referenced) lies well within previous natural rate fluctuations, and anyway 13 years is in general too short a period over which to confirm that this is a real trend, or due to human influence, for it is well established that short-term sea-level trends correspond closely with interannual variations in phenomena such as the North Atlantic Oscillation, El Nino and Pacific Decadal Oscillation⁵⁰. Finally, global average (eustatic) sea-level has almost no direct meaning in the New Zealand context, because local relative sea-level - which is what controls coastal erosion and aggradation - depends mostly upon tectonic movement and varies regionally from place to place around the coast⁵¹.

A2.4. Warming will result in droughts in the east, floods in the west

When Dr David Wratt, head of NIWA's National Climate Centre, was asked whether the described changes could be part of normal climate variability, he replied "*We can't be absolutely sure, because the climate does vary for various reasons. While it's reasonably straightforward to attribute changes at the global level or over large regions to climate change, it does get more difficult when you get down to small areas like New Zealand*"³¹. The first sentence is accurate. The second - and claims that predicting climatic change at global level is "reasonably straightforward", whilst at local level it is possible but just a bit "more difficult" - is breathtaking. These claims are simply wrong, because neither global nor regional GCMs have been validated.

A2.5. Warming will result in increased storminess, and storm intensity, and therefore in increased coastal erosion and flooding.

That warming will result in increased numbers, or increased intensity, of storms is based upon a fundamental physical misconception. In a warmer world, the temperature gradient between high and low latitudes will decrease, and it is this gradient that causes the birth of large mid-latitude storms. Empirically, there is agreement among meteorologists that no evidence exists for an unusual increase in storm numbers during the late 20th century warming⁵². The similar claims of increased hurricane intensity are based on an extremely short time series and are anyway in strong dispute⁵³. The view of the IPCC is that "*changes globally in tropical and extra-tropical storm intensity and frequency are dominated by inter-decadal to multi-decadal variations, with no significant trends evident over the 20th century*"^{49, p.5}.

As it happens, the frequency of storm surges specifically in New Zealand has been studied directly by de Lange & Gibb (2000)⁵⁴. Using sea-level data from the port of Tauranga between 1960 and 1998, these authors reported a considerable decline in the both the number and the magnitude of annual storm surge events over the last two decades of the record..

In any case, even if storms did increase (perhaps naturally), little thought is needed to dismiss Ramsay's specific, alarmist, coastal scenarios. First, a large proportion of New Zealand people who live near the sea do so around the harbours of three of New Zealand's largest cities, where they are protected from open coast storms and surges. Second, except around coastal plains and estuaries, which are really restricted, most parts of New Zealand that lie 50 km from the coast are situated at heights of at least tens, often hundreds and sometimes thousands of metres, and flooding them is fanciful. And third, more coastal erosion, should it in fact occur, will be concentrated upon coasts which are already cliffed and uninhabitable, and will concomitantly lead to more aggradation in nearby low lying coastal areas.

A2.6. Kiwifruit farming to spread southwards; ecosystem migration

Of all the types of agriculture in New Zealand that might be translocatable under climate change, why was "kiwifruit farming" singled out? The answer is: the development of that particular fruit and industry in New Zealand has iconic status. And any change to an icon can be seen as a threat, and, perversely, even so despite the real message being "we can grow more of them". Another obvious point is that persons living in Gore might prefer a slightly warmer climate, should it eventuate, and that hectare for hectare kiwifruit farming might be more profitable than the sheep farming that it would replace, but these options were not discussed, at least in the press report.

Regarding the migration of individual organisms and ecosystems consequent upon climate change, this process has been going on since cellular life evolved on our planet. Habitat creation and translocation caused by climate change are in fact major sources of new ecosystem niches, and therefore a fundamental driver of the process of evolution. In essence, those who would try to stop climate change are trying to stop evolution as well.

Finally, the gentle warming to which New Zealand was subjected in the 20th century has not been demonstrated as deleterious to either native organisms or to agriculture. There is therefore no particular reason to get excited about further mild warming should it eventuate. The natural world is, and always has been, a dynamic one; and man's best response is, and always has been, to adapt to the changes.

A2.7. Future development should be undertaken in partnership with environmental protection

This seems to be excellent, if rather obvious, advice. But Prinn provides no explanation as to how - for example - implementing the Kyoto Protocol or introducing a carbon tax will protect the environment. Rather, both these measures will involve large expenditures for effectively no environmental return, thus making a great deal less money available for practical solutions to real environmental problems⁵⁵.

Figure 1

Measured global average temperatures 1900-2002, with projected temperatures to 2100 according to two different scenarios of CO₂ increase (N.Z. Ministry of Environment, 2005).

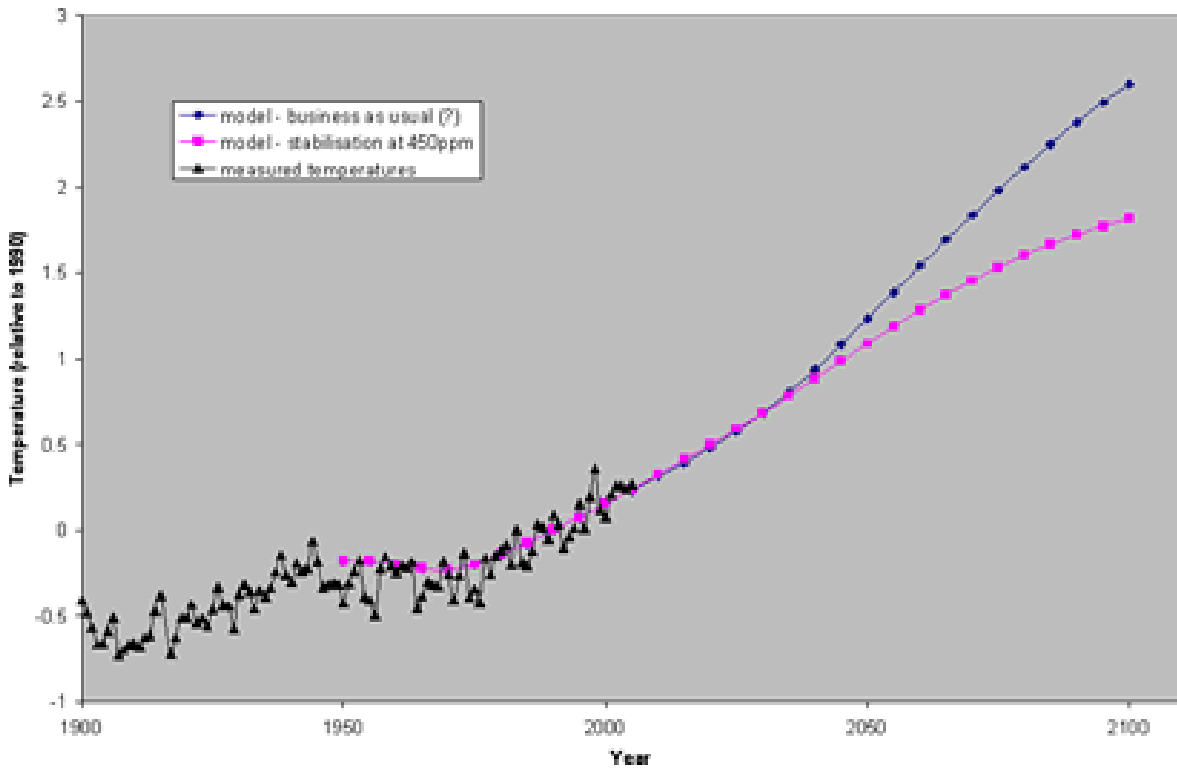


Figure 2

Stagecoach poster, advertising Platinum bus pass competition, as part of the sponsorship for the Climate Change and Governance Conference, Wellington, 2006.

These people aren't taking a back seat on climate change

Spot them on a Stagecoach bus in the week of the 20th March and win
one of 10 Platinum Passes for unlimited travel in Wellington valued at \$149*



Paul Noon, UK Diplomat

Cary Short

Professor Peter Simell,
Antarctic Research Centre,
Victoria University of Wellington

Elizabeth Knox, Writer

Pat Walsh, Vice Chancellor,
Victoria University of Wellington

Briska Knot

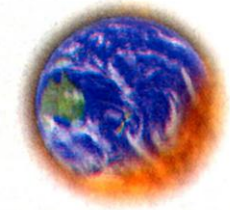
By catching the bus instead of taking the car you are helping reduce the amount of carbon dioxide (a greenhouse gas) that goes into the air. Trolley buses emit NO carbon dioxide or other pollutants.

New Zealanders interested in the issues surrounding climate change, and the likely impacts of global warming on New Zealand and the Pacific, should be at the Climate Change and Governance Conference, on 28-29 March at Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington. The Conference, organised by Victoria University of Wellington, will be addressed by leading international experts including the British Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Tony Blair, and Lord Ron Oxburgh (a distinguished geologist and former Chair of Shell). For more information see www.vuw.ac.nz/climatechange



* To enter the draw, get a form off the person you have spotted on the bus. Entries must be received by 28th March and will be drawn by Lord Oxburgh at the conference. Winners will be notified by post. Platinum Passes will be for April 2006 and can be used on all Stagecoach Wellington, Cityline Hutt Valley, Mana Coach Services and Newlands Coach Services (except the Kapiti Commuter Service).

Figure 3
Printed logo used for the climate conference by the Wellington Dominion Post during its printed coverage of the conference.



**CONFERENCE ON
CLIMATE CHANGE**

Figure 4

Graphic panel used in illustration of the pre-publicity article for the Climate Change and Governance Conference in the Sunday Post³¹. Note the presentation of computer scenarios (with no proven skill) as if they were firm predictions. Note also the red headline background, intended to impart danger, and the pseudo-meteorological way that the map is presented, as if it were an actual chart. These devices impart both an authoritarian and a deliberately alarmist overtone to the material.



Coastal love affair threatens Kiwis



MICHELLE QUIRKE

NEW ZEALANDERS' love affair with coastal property is making it more vulnerable to the effects of climate change, an expert says. Predictions to show shore coastal settlements are likely to be at least 10 metres from the sea by 2050, says the report, which also says that the Bay of Plenty and Northland communities are most likely to be among the worst affected.

Extreme weather — heat waves, floods or drought — could also take a toll on some regions. New Zealand's infrastructure may not be able to cope, he told a climate change conference in Wellington yesterday.

Water woes would probably worsen in dry eastern areas, while western areas would be affected as snow and ice melted, Professor Fitzharris said.

Climate change could bring more frequent storms and droughts, but also take a toll on some regions. New Zealand's infrastructure may not be able to cope, he told a climate change conference in Wellington yesterday.

Water woes would probably worsen in dry eastern areas, while western areas would be affected as snow and ice melted, Professor Fitzharris said.

CONFERENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

"We could sweat all our Kyoto targets and cut our emissions by 50 per cent. It's still not going to stop climate change from happening."

Opening the conference at Te Papa yesterday, Prime Minister John Key said the Government's intention was to "rethink climate policy".

The carbon tax, scrapped last year, was one way to influence capital decisions but there were other options, he said.

New Zealand had ratified the Kyoto protocol but the agreement's future beyond 2012 was uncertain.

Mr Hodgson's speech was interrupted by a man who walked on to the stage and had to be dragged away by security.

The Green Party has unveiled its plan to deal with climate change which includes a provision to amend the Resource Management Act to allow regional councils to take emissions into account when considering water resources, as well as plans to halt deforestation and support fuel efficiency and public transport.



Ice sheet collapse warning

SCIENTISTS FROM THE WEST ANTARCTIC ICE SHEET WILL collapse and raise sea levels by more than a metre, Professor David Vaughan, of the British Antarctic Survey, said New Zealand's proximity to the ice continent did not make it more vulnerable than other countries to the sea level rise which would occur over several centuries.

The ice sheet is expected to melt, but global warming has been blamed for vast chunks of ice breaking off and floating away.

About 87 per cent of Antarctica's glaciers have retreated since the 1960s and on ice across the whole of Wellington and Taranaki has melted. There has been no similar climate change for at least 16,000 years.

Even if the world reduced greenhouse gas emissions, countries would have to spend more on coastal protection and sea defences, Professor Vaughan told the Climate Change and Governance Conference at Te Papa yesterday.

"Obviously the developing countries don't have that option, and they're going to have to really worry about where the population lives in certain areas and how they've going to deal with that."

Damage due to increased tropical cyclones, he says, is starting to invest there.

Then the worst case scenario is that a lot of them are. "We want to move to New Zealand or Australia or other countries and then you've created a whole lot more social problems."

New Zealand should be adopting "no regrets" policies, Mr Letalle said.

"We should really be supportive of those activities undertaken in Europe in terms of coming up with alternative technologies to oil, for example."

"It may well turn out to be that water is the most biggest problem in the Middle East, not oil. People can live without oil but they cannot live without water."

Mr Letalle has studied scenarios for small islands in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, Mediterranean and Caribbean.

Pacific cyclones may increase and worsen

MICHELLE QUIRKE

GLOBAL warming could lead to Pacific nations being battered by more frequent and extreme tropical cyclones.

Sarasin-born New Zealander Pennehuo Fatu Lefale, a speaker at this week's Climate Change and Governance Conference in Wellington, said air temperatures in the Pacific could rise by up to 0.6C degrees Celsius from 2010 to 2050.

The category was in keeping with the point of no return was.

"What is the threshold for a coral reef? They're already under a lot of stress from man-made pollution and so forth and they can only cope with sea temperature of up to 28.5C, so as a result, 0.4 makes all the difference."

Environmental changes would have economic and social consequences.

"If you take away [people's] livelihood, if you don't have the coral, there and you don't have insurance because of



► PENEHUO FATU LEFALE

Age: 41
Education: Sarasin College in Fiji
Work: Director of the South Pacific in Fiji University of Auckland.

Honour: Member of the Royal Society of New Zealand, awarded the first British Council of New Zealand, Fulbright and Fulbright awards.

Work: Member of the Royal Society of New Zealand, awarded the first British Council of New Zealand, Fulbright and Fulbright awards.

Work: Member of the Royal Society of New Zealand, awarded the first British Council of New Zealand, Fulbright and Fulbright awards.

Figure 5
Typical style of the daily coverage provided of the climate conference by the Wellington Dominion Post, in this case on March 29, 2006.