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NEW ZEALAND CENTRE FOR POLITICAL RESEARCH

A ROYAL COMMISSION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

By Muriel Newman

This year will see more of the government's expensive initiatives to combat the so-called threat of anthropogenic (man-made) global warming passing into law. The bill to introduce the carbon trading scheme which exposes New Zealand to the volatile international price of carbon, and the energy strategy bill designed to increase our reliance on expensive renewable energy sources, are now in front of Select Committees.

Both of these pieces of legislation will significantly increase the cost of living as the escalating price of power is passed on to householders. The Kyoto Protocol debt, estimated to be as much as \$2 billion, also hangs over our heads.

These financial liabilities are being imposed on New Zealanders because of the blind adherence of the government to the theory that man-made greenhouse gas emissions will have a calamitous effect on our climate, and that policies to reduce emissions must be implemented – no matter what the cost. No-one really knows what the economic consequences of these policy decisions will be as a comprehensive cost benefit analysis has not been carried out. Worse, all of this comes at a time when the whole scientific basis for man-made global warming is increasingly under dispute.

What isn't disputed is that over the history of our planet, there have been times when the earth has been far hotter than it is today and far colder, and when the atmosphere has contained far greater concentrations of carbon dioxide and far less.

Formed some 4.5 billion years ago, the earth is constantly changing. We are now on our third atmosphere, which was formed around 3.3 billion years ago when the first living organisms used photosynthesis to convert the sun's energy into food, producing oxygen as a by-product. Over time this led to the formation of an atmosphere that could block out harmful radiation and sustain life on earth.

The earth's atmosphere extends for around 100 km upwards into outer space. The first 11km is the troposphere, which contains three-quarters of all the mass of our atmosphere. The all-important ozone layer, which partially shields the earth from damaging ultraviolet light, is found in the stratosphere, the next layer up.

Atmospheric gases are made up of 77 percent nitrogen, 21 percent oxygen and 2 percent greenhouse gases. Greenhouse gases consist largely of water vapour, with 0.038 percent of carbon dioxide, 0.00015 percent of methane, and traces of other minor gases. They play a key role in the "greenhouse effect", which helps to keep the earth at an average temperature of 15 degrees Celsius rather than minus 18 degrees Celsius, if the greenhouse gases were absent.

As the sun's energy passes through the atmosphere, much of it is reflected or absorbed by the clouds and other atmospheric particles. Only around a half reaches the ground where it heats the earth. A portion is then radiated back into the atmosphere where it is largely absorbed by greenhouse gases, creating an insulation layer around the earth.

Seventy-one percent of the earth's surface is covered by oceans. The land floats on huge tectonic plates, which collide and separate over time, uplifting and eroding mountains as well as opening and closing ocean basins.

There have been times throughout our history when the earth has been so warm that it has been completely ice free. During those periods, which last many millions of years, the oceans are higher, covering around a third of the earth's present land surface. Eventually, however, the earth starts to cool, snow falls on mountains and reflects the heat from the sun, the poles begin to freeze over, glacial ice starts to cover the land, sea levels fall, and an ice age begins. Within an ice age there are cycles of warmer weather called interglacial periods, where the earth's temperature increases but permanent snow and ice remain present. These are followed by colder glacial periods where the temperature cools and glacial ice sheets advance.

At the present time, the earth is in an interglacial period within an ice age. Interglacial periods last for around 10,000 years, to be followed by glacial periods of around 100,000 years. With the present interglacial period having already lasted for some 10,500 years, we are now overdue for a new glacial period.

We are reminded of the power of nature on a regular basis - there are a dozen lightning strikes every second, giant cyclones wreak havoc every four days, major earthquakes occur every ten days, volcanic eruptions every two weeks, and tsunamis every two months. Those who think they can influence nature – like the global warming scaremongers - are surely misguided.

Just before Christmas the United Nations held a global warming conference in Bali to develop a 'roadmap' for a future international agreement based on the predictions of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). One hundred prominent scientists from around the world used the Conference as an opportunity to present their objection to the IPCC's conclusions in an open letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations:

"It is not possible to stop climate change, a natural phenomenon that has affected humanity through the ages. Geological, archaeological, oral and written histories all attest to the dramatic challenges posed to past societies from unanticipated changes in temperature, precipitation, winds

and other climatic variables. We therefore need to equip nations to become resilient to the full range of these natural phenomena by promoting economic growth and wealth generation.”

The scientists believe that “it is not established that it is possible to significantly alter global climate through cuts in human greenhouse gas emissions” and that attempts to control the climate are futile and represent “a tragic misallocation of resources” that would be better spent on adapting to the earth’s changing climate and dealing with humanity’s real and pressing problems.

This week’s NZCPR Guest Commentator is British conservationist Professor David Bellamy, who decries the global warming propaganda: “In a recent survey 41% of children questioned said they were losing sleep due to the man-made global warming scare. Is that acceptable given the entire scare is based solely on politically funded computer models which can be programmed to suggest whatever politicians require? Mind you those same politicians are so worried that the truth will out that they are doing everything in their power and a lot that isn’t, to erode the roots and the routes of democracy before their term of office comes to an end”.

He goes on to say, “Many genuine climate scientists who do their best to enlighten the world that our climate is governed by solar variation and orbital changes - the well known Milankovitch Cycles - are vilified as “deniers” and “flat-earthists”. This is surely the conduct of gutter politics not scientific debate”

Dr Zbigniew Jaworowski, a senior advisor at the Warsaw Central Laboratory for Radiological Protection, calls what is going on the greatest scientific scandal of our time: “We find ourselves in the situation that the entire history of man-made global warming – with its repercussions for science, and its important consequences for politics and the global economy – is based on ice core studies that provided a false picture of atmospheric CO2 levels. Meanwhile, more than 90,000 *direct* measurements of CO2 in the atmosphere... made by top scientists, including two Nobel Prize winners, were completely ignored by [IPCC] climatologists - and not because they

were wrong. The only reason for rejection was that these measurements did not fit the hypothesis of anthropogenic climate warming. I regard this as perhaps the greatest scientific scandal of our time.”

Anyone who claims that the science on global warming is settled is wrong. There is now growing evidence that the earth is not warming but cooling: since the 1970s the glaciers of the Arctic, Greenland, and the Antarctic have been growing, and since 1998 average world temperatures have been falling with 2006 cooler than 2005 and 2007 cooler still.

This uncertainty means that governments like our own, that are making significantly costly policy decisions based on the existence of man-made global warming, are acting recklessly. Surely, rather than adopting costly “remedies” like the Kyoto Protocol, carbon trading, and an over-reliance on expensive renewable energy, a more reasoned approach is needed.

Often, when governments are faced with major controversial decisions, a Royal Commission of Inquiry is established to thoroughly investigate the issue and make a series of recommendations. If a Royal Commission into man-made global warming was to be held, it could determine firstly, whether the threat is in fact real, and secondly, whether the cost of taking a proactive approach justifies the potential benefits. This would need to be carried out in conjunction with a moratorium on all global warming policy initiatives.

The fact that these matters were not properly addressed before we signed Kyoto, and before the dubious energy strategy and emissions trading scheme were introduced, is surely a grave indictment of the Labour Government.

The poll this week asks: Do you believe that a Royal Commission should be established to investigate whether anthropogenic (man-made) global warming is a real threat and to quantify the benefits and costs to New Zealand of actively pursuing global warming reduction policies?

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