

# Newman Weekly

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The New Zealand Centre for Political Debate

## Climate Change - Fact or Fear?

It is an indisputable fact that the earth's climate is constantly changing. Scientific data shows that the earth's temperature has been several degrees warmer - and colder - than it is today. What the future holds is difficult to predict in detail, but there will be cooler periods and warmer period, as well as the inevitable floods, droughts and storms. While humans have survived ice ages, there is no doubt that warmer periods are easier.

There are many theories as to why the climate changes, but most agree that solar effects, such as sunspot activity and the Sun's magnetic fields, are major factors. In that context, the influence of carbon dioxide and other so-called greenhouse gases, is regarded as minor.

Data from Britain's Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research shows that over the last 100 years, there was an increase in the earth's temperature of around 0.4 degrees centigrade from 1920 to 1940, from 1940 to 1975 there was a cooling of about 0.2 degrees, and from 1975 to 1998 there was an increase of about 0.5 degrees. This makes a total increase over the whole 20<sup>th</sup> century of 0.7 degrees.

From 1998 to the present time there has been no evidence of further warming, which makes the recent plunge into the global warming debate of our Prime Minister difficult to comprehend - unless of course it is a calculated strategy to divert attention away from other controversial domestic matters as well as to boost popular support by jumping on the fashionable environmental bandwagon.

Earlier this month, Lord Nigel Lawson, a member of the House of Lords and a former British Chancellor of the Exchequer, addressed the issue of Climate Change in a lecture to the Centre for Policy Studies entitled "The Economics and Politics of Climate Change - An Appeal to Reason". Lord Lawson is delighted that his speech is being featured as the

NZCPD guest commentary this week and as it provides an excellent analysis of this complex issue, I would urge you to read the full text.

In his speech, Lord Lawson asks whether global warming is actually occurring, if it is, why, and finally what should be done about it?

It is clear from the evidence that some modest warming of the climate (0.7 degrees) has taken place over the last hundred years, but whether it is a man-made as a result of carbon emissions is debatable.

According to Prof. Bob Carter of the James Cook University of Queensland, in his article [The Global Warming Emperor Has No Clothes](#), The first period of warming between 1918 and 1940 took place "well prior to the greatest phase of world industrialisation, and cooling occurred between 1940 and 1965 at precisely the time that human emissions were increasing at their greatest rate" (to view the article and graphs of the earth's temperatures over the last 6 million years.

The cases often cited as evidence of global warming, including extreme weather events such as Hurricane Katrina, the melting of the Greenland ice cap, and rising sea levels, all have alternative explanations: there were worse hurricanes than Katrina back in 1900 well before industrialisation caused increases in greenhouse gas emissions; while the edges of the Greenland ice cap are melting, the centre is thickening; and, although sea levels have been gradually rising with no sign of acceleration, the total increase would be less than a quarter of an inch per century.

The real issue however is, if the climate is changing as the scaremongers are claiming, what should we be doing about it?

The Labour Government's answer was to be at the front of the queue to sign us up to the Kyoto Protocol, a complex carbon credit trading mechanism

which was supposed to force countries to reduce their emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. But many countries have refused to sign up to Kyoto: the USA will not sign because China, India and Brazil have refused, and they have refused because they are not prepared to turn their back on inexpensive carbon-based energy, which has traditionally been used by developing countries to achieve prosperity.

A further flaw in the Kyoto approach is that as the price of carbon-based energy rises in countries that have signed up to the Protocol, energy-intensive industries will seek to relocate to those countries which are not signatories where energy is still cheap. The end result will be a global shift in carbon emissions rather than a reduction.

One of the consequences, of course, of this drive away from plentiful, cheap energy sources like coal, is that nuclear energy suddenly becomes more of an option since wind and solar power are neither reliable nor efficient enough, and with the Green movement blocking the construction of new hydro-generation facilities, there are few options left.

In his speech, Lord Lawson refers to the damage being inflicted by 'eco-fundamentalists' who have embraced climate change as a new religion, but in their fervor, care little about the adverse impact of escalating energy costs on economies – and citizens who may well find themselves priced out of energy intensive life-saving technological advancements.

The question of what we should do if the earth moves into a warmer cycle remains. Surely the

sensible answer is to adapt: sell the holiday home on the Gold Coast in favour of one in the Bay of Islands, and start planting coconuts, bananas and pineapples! In other words, take advantage of the situation because it may not last.

In August, the United Press International reported that the Head of Space Research at the Russian Academy of Sciences Astronomical Observatory is predicting a period of global cooling in coming decades similar to a period known as the 'Little Ice Age'. During the last Little Ice Age in the 16th century, the Baltic Sea froze so hard that hotels were built on the ice for people crossing the sea in coaches. The Little Ice Age is believed to have contributed to the end of the Norse colony in Greenland, which was founded during an interval of much warmer weather.

These predictions, which are based on the measurement of solar emissions, indicate that the cooling will begin within a few years and reach its peak between 2055 and 2060.

Asked about the Kyoto Protocol and global warming, the scientist Khabibullo Abdusamatov had this to say: "The Kyoto initiatives to save the planet from the greenhouse effect should be put off until better times. The global temperature maximum has been reached on Earth, and Earth's global temperature will decline to a climatic minimum even without the Kyoto protocol."

**The poll this week** asks: Do you believe there is sufficient scientific evidence to justify New Zealand's support for the Kyoto Protocol?

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