

Newman Weekly

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18 February 2007



The New Zealand Centre for Political Debate

Priorities for our Future

The Prime Minister's Statement to Parliament at the beginning of a new Parliamentary year is traditionally the time for the government to outline its priorities for the next twelve months. In her address, Helen Clark stated: "Meeting the challenges our country faces in the 21st century requires substance, not slogans". (To read the full speech see www.nzcpd.com).

Her speech used the terms "sustain", "sustainable" and "sustainability" 42 times. The Prime Minister essentially presented the picture that unless we urgently reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, mankind is doomed. She said, "Now the quest for sustainability has taken on a new urgency because of the scale of the environmental challenge the world faces. Traditional patterns of development and fast growing populations have put an intolerable strain on the planet. The future economic costs of doing nothing are dire".

She went on, "Two decades ago it was the threat of nuclear war destroying the world as we knew it which galvanised New Zealand to become nuclear free and to work for a more peaceful world... And so it must be with this century's environmental sustainability challenge. We have to make a stand - for our world, and for our own sake. Without a commitment to greater sustainability in our resource use and way of life, we risk not only damaging our own environment, but also exposing our economy to significant risk".

So there we have it. The Prime Minister appears to believe that the world is on the cusp of yet another major catastrophe, caused, not by the threat of nuclear war, but by the affects of global warming.

The implication from that speech is that global warming is the most critical problem New Zealand faces. It appears to eclipse patients dying on hospital waiting lists, kids failing to learn, the rise in violent crime: "My annual statement to Parliament this year is a call to action on sustainability. Complacency will not do... I believe New Zealand can aim to be the first nation to be truly sustainable... I believe we can aspire to be carbon neutral in our economy and way of life. I believe that in the years to come, the pride we take in our quest for sustainability and carbon neutrality will define our nation".

According to the Prime Minister, the responsibility

for sustainability rests with all of us. The government and public service are adopting measures to reduce their carbon "footprints" and we have a responsibility to reduce ours.

An article in the Australian puts it this way: "Carbon credits, carbon certificates and carbon offsets are serious currency, generating a worldwide income thought to exceed \$300 million a year as Westerners panic, not about the spread of consumption across the globe, but about their carbon footprints - the impact of their lives on the planet".

A growing number of 'carbon offset' organisations are springing up to take advantage of the new opportunity that is being created by this politically generated public panic. Typically they would value a family's carbon "footprint" at, say \$600 a year for a one car, two child family. The family would then be encouraged to buy a \$600 carbon credit gift certificate in order to do their bit to save the planet. This would not only help them to 'feel good' about themselves, but in return, the company would help them to cut their emissions by such things as composting and recycling as well as using energy-efficient lightbulbs and showerheads. If they are already doing this, then the products and advice are apparently given to other families to help reduce overall emissions.

By buying into the carbon phobia and supporting the new international carbon-trading regimes that have been created, governments have allowed new forms of international trade protectionism - namely tariffs based on the carbon expended on getting products to market - to emerge. This promises to be a disastrous setback for New Zealand exporters.

In her speech Helen Clark predicted: "In the future, business overall will need to be sustainable to make money, and there will be money to be made from being sustainable". She also had some advice for farmers: "In agriculture part of the answer lies in changing farming practice now, while longer term answers are also sought on how to reduce animal methane emissions. We should aim for world leadership in this area of science".

Local authorities have already embraced global warming. A 140-page government report "Climate Change Effects and Impact Assessment" produced in 2004 ([link to article >>>>](#)) describes the effects of global warming: "Average global temperatures are projected to increase by

between 1.4 and 5.8 degree Celsius by 2100... Sea levels are most likely to rise 30-50 cm by 2100... Extreme weather events are likely to become more frequent and intense..."

It states: "Local authorities in New Zealand can play an important leadership role in helping communities adapt to climate change. By integrating future climate projections into regular planning processes, your council can save time and money and help contribute to a more sustainable future". As an example, a council wastewater system upgrade, expected to cost \$260 million was estimated to cost an additional \$100 million if the costs of climate change projections over the next 50 years were taken into account. Unsurprisingly, the council opted to disregard the climate change affect and chose the cheaper option.

Not only will councils waste hundreds of millions of ratepayer dollars on trying to mitigate the 'predicted' damage of global warming – in the same way that hundreds of millions of dollars was wasted on Y2K predictions of catastrophe and world economic collapse - but their own greenhouse gas emissions inventory will invariably justify the purchase of new cars, new technology, and probably involvement in experimental sustainability initiatives.

As a result of widespread political scaremongering, New Zealand is on the brink of committing massive resources of time, energy and money to an agenda, that appears to be long on hype and short on facts: two years ago the vice president of the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – the body that is driving the global warming frenzy - Yuri Izrael, stated "There is no proven link between human activity and global warming."

The Czech President Vaclav Klaus put it this way: "Global warming is a false myth and every serious person and scientist says so. It is not fair to refer to the

U.N. panel. IPCC is not a scientific institution: it's a political body, a sort of non-government organization of green flavour. It's neither a forum of neutral scientists nor a balanced group of scientists. These people are politicised scientists who arrive there with a one-sided opinion and a one-sided assignment. Also, it's an undignified slapstick that people don't wait for the full report in May 2007 but instead respond, in such a serious way, to the summary for policymakers where all the "but's" are scratched, removed, and replaced by oversimplified theses. This is clearly such an incredible failure of so many people, from journalists to politicians."

I invited respected weather expert Augie Auer , New Zealand 's former Met Service Chief Meteorologist and Professor of Atmospheric Science at the University of Wyoming , to be our NZCPD guest commentator this week. In his thought-provoking opinion piece on climate change, Augie states: "Since carbon dioxide is not the problem, there is no need for any mandatory reduction of planetary CO2 or punitive taxations to prevent its use" (to read the full article see www.nzcpd.com).

Don't we deserve to know that government policy decisions are based on facts? If the jury is still out on not only whether global warming is actually occurring, but even if it is whether or not we can do anything about it, wouldn't it be prudent for the government to take a cautious approach instead of trying to force New Zealand to lead?

The poll this week asks: Do you support the Prime Minister's goal of making New Zealand "the first nation to be truly sustainable" as a priority for this country? If not, what do you believe our priority should be?

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