

CLIMATE CHANGE

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This submission on Climate Change (CC) is made by a non-scientific lay person who has been seriously concerned for more than 20 years with the direction in which the world is travelling.

The issue today is *survival* not *development*, and the strategies required to enable us to survive in the ever less propitious climate conditions are the *exact opposite* of those required to promote development. (1)

If worldwide emissions of greenhouse gases are allowed to double every 30 years, as astrophysicist Alberto di Fazio reports is now happening, 1,000 parts per million by volume (ppmv) of CO₂ in the atmosphere will be exceeded by the end of the century – nearly four times pre-industrial levels, and nearly three times higher than levels are today. (2)

As Bert Metz, co-chairman of the mitigation group of the International Panel on Climate Change, puts it: “Five to 20 years’ delay in cutting greenhouse gas emissions could put the job of stabilizing the atmosphere beyond reach.” (3)

A State of Denial

I am reminded of a 1999 statement by Arundhati Roy: “We are trapped in an asylum and the doctors are all dangerously deranged.” (4) Roy was referring to India’s advent as a nuclear weapons power, but her comment applies across the board.

We are all entitled to our own thoughts, although in many parts of the world – developed and developing – to express them can lead to ostracism, prison, torture and death. The fact that government ministries in New Zealand call for public submissions on major issues is one mark of a true democracy.

I therefore ask the readers most seriously to consider Roy’s words. If they agree with them, then I suggest that at least they are not in a state of denial, although it may be that they can accept the deep truth without accepting the implications.

If they do not agree with Roy – and obviously there are many, from George W Bush and his whole oil-soaked/mining entourage of a government on down, who still believe that CC is not a serious threat or that the factors leading to CC must not be allowed to interfere with the sacred cows of business growth and profits before people’s long-term welfare – then these many people are in a desperate state of denial and cannot, will not, face the truth.

Unless we are able to overcome on a huge scale our persistent denial of the truth of what we are doing to ourselves and to our one and only home, and take appropriate action, the future for my grandchildren, and of course for millions of other children, is extremely bleak.

Stanley Cohen, in his 2001 book *States of Denial, Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering*, argues that this capacity to deny a level of awareness is the normal state of affairs for people in an information-saturated society. (5)

The problem of CC is now well established (in America 68 percent call it a serious problem), yet in general we, and here I’m referring especially to the large conglomerates and special interest groups, refuse to recognize the full implications of

that knowledge. The nature and enormity of this problem are so unprecedented that we have no mechanisms for dealing with them. For the first time in our civilization the issue for all of us is indeed *survival*. And yet organizations such as the World Bank (WB), World Trade Organization (WTO) and trans-national corporations (TNCs) are fiercely promoting more and still more unsustainable growth. The WB, for example, has financed \$13.6 billion worth of energy projects in developing countries since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, including 51 coal, oil and gas-fired power plants and 26 coal mines. These projects will emit 38 billion tonnes of CO₂ over their lifetimes, nearly double what was emitted in 1996 by all countries combined. Instead of jump-starting the global market for clean and renewable energy, WB loans are lining the pockets of undemocratic Third World regimes and the richest and most powerful corporations and creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of rising greenhouse gas emissions, dirty profits and rapid climate change. (6)

These organizations, and many others, seem not to have grasped the implications of the fact that on a finite Earth with finite resources:

On average, the additional economic output in each of the last four decades has matched that added from the beginning of civilization until 1950. (7)

While this phenomenal growth has taken place, i.e. between 1950 and 1990 – over 40 years:

- The world's population doubled.
- The number of people living in absolute poverty doubled.
- The gap between rich and poor increased six-fold. (8)

Most economists consider that a growth rate in excess of two percent is necessary to keep the world economy going. But if we take a two percent growth rate in gross national product this would lead to roughly an eight-fold increase in the size and impact of our economic activities on the natural world and on its atmospheric environment. This is not even remotely tolerable. (9)

On 16 November 2001 it was reported that Mike Moore, head of the WTO, had plans for this powerful body to produce increased growth equivalent to adding two Chinas to the world's economy. (10) God help us. Not one whisper of sustainability or the long-term effects of such preposterous growth. And a week later, Simon Carlaw, chief executive of Business New Zealand, told the Mt Victoria Rotary Club that New Zealand should double its growth rate. (11)

This was followed on 24 December by Craig Norgate, chief executive of Fonterra, New Zealand's largest company which runs our dairy industry (a sector which produces much of the country's greenhouse gas emissions), pleading with the government to cool its stance on the Kyoto Protocol (KP). Federated Farmers also complained that implementing the KP would cost them an arm and a leg.

The market seems not to recognise basic ecological principles on which it depends for its welfare, nor does it respect the balance of Nature. Nor is it realised that our dysfunctional economic system is pushing us into ever greater inequality and ecological meltdown.

Again, we're inside the asylum with all these "dangerously deranged" doctors.

China's population is now just over one billion. Its vital grain producing land and its water supply are rapidly diminishing. By 1996 China had shifted from a net grain exporter to a net grain importer of 16 million tonnes. (12) The Soviet Union is in a similar situation. The consequences of not slowing greenhouse gas emissions as efficiently and as rapidly as possible are truly frightening.

Climate Change

The issue of CC has been around for about a century when we were first told by the Swedish chemist and Nobel Laureate, Svante Arrhenis, that the accumulation of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere, as a result of industrialisation, would give rise to global warming.

In the 1970s scientific speculation turned slowly into consensus as actual increases began to be measured.

In 1979 the World Meteorological Organization brought scientists together for the *First World Climate Conference* in Geneva. A call was then issued to governments to “prevent and prepare for the negative impacts of human induced climate change.” (13)

In 1985 another conference in Villach, Austria, led to the inclusion of greenhouse gases in assessments of global warming. This produced an estimated doubling of CO₂ equivalents as early as 2030. There were fresh calls for international cooperation. What finally spurred the United Nations to action was a searching talk in Washington on 23 June 1988 by James Hansen, a climate scientist with NASA’s Goddard Institute. He made his speech on the hottest day of the year in the US, at a time when the Midwest was having one of its worst droughts. The UN set up the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a body with input from about 2000 scientists from around the world.

In 1990 IPCC produced its *First Assessment Report* which linked CO₂ emissions to increases in the planet’s temperature in the future. The IPCC warned that Earth could warm by as much as 8.1degrees F (4.5 degrees C) with a doubling of CO₂ levels by around 2050. Later their upper estimate was reduced by 1.8 degrees F (1 degree C).

In order to stabilize atmospheric concentrations of CO₂, a 50-70 percent cut in emissions from human activities was required. (14) Some authorities suggest 80-90 percent. This really upset the fossil fuel energy lobby which gathered its local forces to do overt and covert battle against what it saw as an intolerable threat to its way of life. (15) Contrary to this lobby’s actions, Margaret Thatcher at a press conference called the report “an authoritative early-warning system,” and predicted some of the consequences: “There would surely be a great migration of population away from the areas of the world liable to flooding, and from areas of declining rainfall and therefore of spreading desert. Those people will be crying out not for oil but for water.” (16) This immediately emphasised a problem, for as Vandana Shiva put it:

Thermometers registering a few degrees more in the United States suddenly turned climate change into a ‘global’ issue. The entire scientific community was immediately mobilized. Contrast this with three years earlier when thousands of famine victims in Ethiopia and Sudan weren’t enough to move governments in the North to respond to desertification and drought as global environmental emergencies. True, they sent food aid, but the climate problem remained a local difficulty. These deaths, after all, took place in Africa – they are still ‘out there’. (17)

In 1992 at the UN’s Rio de Janeiro conference on Environment and Development more than 160 countries signed the *Framework Convention on Climate Change*. This was designed to set industrial countries on the path to emission reductions. Its ultimate objective was to achieve “stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human induced) interference with the climate system.” That was barely 10 years ago. The

Carbon Club, which set out to see to it that everything possible was done to hamper and delay any progress towards this end, seems to have been fairly successful! Typical was Republican Dana Rohrabacher's comment to the House Science Committee: "I think that money that goes into global warming research is really money right down a rat hole." (18)

In late 1995 the IPCC completed its *Second Assessment Report*. Its most quoted line is "the balance of evidence suggests there is a discernible human influence on global climate." The original wording – "the changes point towards a human influence on climate" – was too direct for the coal and oil lobby and led to quite a bit of spin doctoring. (19)

In May 2000, at the Inter-Academy Panel (IAP) meeting in Tokyo, 63 academics of science from all parts of the world issued a statement on sustainability in which they noted that "global trends in climate change ... are growing concerns" and pledged themselves to work for sustainability – meeting current human needs while preserving the environment and natural resources needed for future generations. (20) This all goes back to the 1983 United Nations *World Commission on Environment and Development*, set up under the chairmanship of Mrs Gro Brundtland. Its well-known dictum, still largely ignored in official and business circles, challenged our present way of operating:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (21)

An important corollary was added by the working group "the South and UNCED" which met in Geneva in 1991:

Sustainable development also means that the needs of the North should be met in ways that do not compromise the satisfaction of the present and future needs of the South. (21)

Final and full confirmation of Arrhenis statement came with the IPCC's *Third Assessment Report* of 2001 which declared not just that global warming is occurring, but that it is largely man-made, has begun to accelerate and will increase far faster than previously thought.

Kyoto Protocol (KP)

When the world's leaders met in Kyoto in 1997 to debate emission curbs on greenhouse gases, the insurance industry voiced grave doubts about its ability to cope with the changes which CC might bring about. In the US, catastrophe-related losses had grown from about \$100 million a year in the 1950s to \$6 billion a year in the 1990s. Hurricane Andrew drove 11 insurance companies bankrupt. The industry estimates that the bill for severe weather in the 1990s worldwide was \$480 billion, with economic and insured losses over that period increasing by a factor of 8 and 15 respectively. If these rates are projected into the future in comparison to a standard growth of GDP of three percent a year, by 2065 the world would become bankrupt as damages would outstrip global earnings.

The original KP as conceived in 1997 (signed by 81 countries) was never going to solve CC, but it did require industrialised countries to accept legally-binding targets to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. The total reduction required was of only 5.2 percent below 1990 levels by 2012 – far less than the immediate cut of between 50 and 70 percent, already mentioned, that climatologists say would be necessary to keep

greenhouses gases at safe levels. (22) In fact the present targets are only tinkering with the real situation.

The Bonn Convention July 2001

Following the statements by some of the delegates to this UN round of climate negotiations on the KP, one would think we had got the better of CC.

The euphoric reactions, after years of frustrating negotiations, are understandable, but provide a deceptive air of well-being and anticipation. If governments are going to change anything for the betterment of humankind they must provide an infinitely more meaningful and truthful level of public communication.

Michael Meacher, British Environment Minister:

It's a brilliant day for the environment. It's a huge leap to have achieved a result on this, very complex international negotiation. It's a huge relief. (23)

Jennifer Morgan, Director of WWF's Climate Change Campaign:

... a geopolitical earthquake ... a giant leap for humanity. (24)

Margot Wallstrom, EU Environment Commissioner:

We can go home and look our grandchildren in the eye and feel proud of what we have done. (25)

Peter Hodgson, convenor of the New Zealand Ministerial Group on CC:

We have delivered probably the most comprehensive and difficult agreement in human history. (26)

Perhaps the statement by Oliver Deleuze, the EU's chief negotiator at the talks and Belgium's Energy Minister, is more to the point:

We know it is not enough. It is a very prudent first step. I prefer an imperfect agreement than none at all. (27)

Kate Hampton, of Friends of the Earth, concurs:

This, obviously, is totally inadequate. However, given the political realities, I think it is probably all that we could have achieved. (28)

Yes, it is a first and inadequate step, but for these very reasons must be ratified, developed and implemented as expeditiously as possible.

As the NZ Government's National Interest Analysis of February 2002, rightly says: "... any alternative would likely involve many more years of delay in reducing greenhouse gas emissions."

Prior to this meeting, the US, acting unilaterally, had withdrawn from the KP because, as George W Bush put it, it was not in his country's "economic best interests." Bush's statement is nonsense for as the German Environment Minister, Juergen Tritten, says:

In the US, it is not an economic problem because they know energy efficiency is an economic advantage in competition. It is more the political price in changing their style of consumption and style of living. (29)

When it is realised that with just five percent of the world's population, the US produces a quarter of the world's carbon emissions, more than any other country: 11 times more per head of population than China, 20 times more than India and 300 times more than Mozambique, (30) then the present stand-off could not be more selfish. It is most important that the strongest political pressure be applied to the Bush administration.

In a recent article – America the Difficult (31) – Daniel Benjamin, senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, asks, "Did George W Bush and his Foreign Policy team come into office determined to drive America's

allies crazy, or could they just not help themselves?” With regard “to the new Administration’s cannonade of decisions, declarations and denunciations” Benjamin declares that “America has become as a nation as Lord Byron was described by a lover: ‘Mad, bad, and dangerous to know’.” (32)

What makes our situation really dangerous is that if we were to stop burning fossil fuels tomorrow and did all those other things essential to reduce CO₂, Earth would go on heating up for possibly another 150 years and the oceans for maybe a thousand or more years. Like a giant supertanker at sea beginning to slow down, climate control may or may not occur a long way in our future

Missing Information

The NZ Climate Change Programme with its beautifully produced pack of information does not, I believe, inform a concerned public about the root causes of our CC problem. Without this basic knowledge and hence understanding I feel we do not have the essentials with which to tackle it.

One would at least expect some warning of the exceptionally powerful and persistent forces arrayed against any effort to reduce global emissions and thus CC, and to protect the environment. Repeatedly the argument surfaces that economic growth must not in any way be compromised.

Daphne Wysham, a researcher with the Washington-based Institute for Policy Studies, captures some of the essence of this opposition:

Climate change is like the new Communism. I’ve been told by people in the Treasury Department that we cannot mention the world’s climate change in our language [to Congress] in our appropriations for the World Bank; if we do it will be struck off the record. (33)

Hidden Emissions

At any given moment there are about 10,000 airplanes flying. Numbers of both commercial and freight flights are increasing at about 6-7 percent per year. The world’s 16,000 commercial jet aircraft generate more than 600 million tonnes of CO₂ per year. Put into perspective, aviation generates nearly as much CO₂ as from all human activities in the continent of Africa each year.

World air cargo traffic grew by 280 percent between 1985 and 1997 and Boeing forecasts a further tripling in air cargo traffic by 2017. (34)

Shipping is projected to increase by about 85 percent between 1997 and 2010. (35)

Trans-border truck traffic has trebled from 400 billion tonne-km in 1970 to 1,200 billion tonne-km in 1997. Consequently, trade transportation is now responsible for the consumption of over one-eighth of world oil production. (36)

After the opening of markets to foreign imports, South Korea and Thailand, for example, witnessed annual car growth rates of 25 and 40 percent respectively in the early 1990s. (37)

General Motors has recently signed a \$1 billion contract to produce 100,000 mid-sized cars annually in China, and has also set up production in Russia. (38)

Then there is HAARP, the United States High-frequency Active Aural Research Program which puts us all right inside Roy’s asylum.

Tucked away at Gokoma in Alaska, HAARP is part of the US Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

Recent scientific evidence suggests that HAARP is fully operational and has the ability of potentially triggering floods, droughts, hurricanes and earthquakes. From a military standpoint, HAARP is a weapon of mass destruction. Potentially, it constitutes an instrument of conquest capable of selectively destabilising agriculture and ecological systems of entire regions. (39)

Russia is reported to have developed a similar system. These deliberately fly in the face of the *Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) signed at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio which informs us that states have the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction of control do not cause damage to the environment of other states or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. (40)

Likewise, an International Convention ratified by the UN General Assembly in 1997, bans “military or other hostile use of environmental modification techniques having widespread, long-lasting or severe effects. (41)

Well before this, in his 1970 book *Between Two Ages*, former US National Security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski had foretold that:

Technology will make available, to the leaders of major nations, techniques for conducting secret warfare, of which only a bare minimum of security forces need be appraised... (42)

Scientist Dr Nicholas Begich, who is actively campaigning against HAARP, describes this sophisticated weaponry as:

A super-powerful radiowave-bearing technology that lifts areas of the ionosphere [upper layer of the atmosphere] by focusing a beam and heating those areas. Electromagnetic waves then bounce back onto earth and penetrate everything – living and dead. (43)

World renowned scientist Dr Rosalie Bertell depicts HAARP as a gigantic heater that can cause major disruption in the ionosphere, creating not just holes, but long incisions in the protective layer that keeps deadly radiation from bombarding the planet. (44)

Michel Chossudovsky, Professor of Economics, University of Ottawa, calls our attention to the wider scene:

It is important to understand the linkage between the economic, strategic and military processes of the New World Order. In the above context, climate manipulations under the HAARP program (whether accidental or deliberate) would inevitably exacerbate these changes by weakening national economies, destroying infrastructure and potentially triggering the bankruptcy of farmers over vast areas. Surely national governments and the United Nations should address the possible consequences of HAARP and other “non-lethal weapons” on climate change. (45)

And what has been the effect on CC of the combined nuclear testing, power generation, accidents and waste disposal over more than 50 years?

The enormous climatic consequences of these global changes appear to be ignored in the KP. This means that CC resulting from these factors is not compensated for.

Loopholes in the KP

The US was instrumental in establishing an Article at Kyoto that allows it and other industrialized countries that are sure to have difficulties meeting their targets to do some horse trading with those countries which have generous targets. Since the

emissions allowance was a theoretical increase, such trading translates into an actual increase in emissions whilst letting the purchaser claim they are meeting their targets. (46) So business as usual.

Then there are the proposed substantial use of 'sinks'. (47) This issue is hugely problematic, for carbon sequestration by trees, plants and soil is still a very uncertain and unreliable science. The use of sinks could actually encourage cutting down old growth forests in order to gain carbon credits from ecologically disastrous fast-growing monoculture plantations or genetically engineered tree species. (48)

In June 2000 a global coalition of environmental organizations voiced concern that the five percent promised reduction below 1990 levels was in danger of being twisted to a 15 to 20 percent increase, the main culprits being the US, Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. (49) Is something 'rotten in the State of Denmark'? (50)

Summary

In addition to the steps already listed, namely to

- Overcome denial
- Examine the whole basis of our economy and its consumer society
- Exert political pressure on the 'bad boys'
- Re-examine the KP and ensure that all CC issues are factored in
- Ratify, develop and implement the KP

The following should be undertaken

- This is a life and death struggle, therefore place CC on a war footing
- Organize a programme of public education right across the full spectrum of society
- Promote full understanding of the meaning of sustainability and the precautionary principle
- Move as rapidly as possible, globally, away from the use of fossil fuels and replace them with clean renewable energy – why isn't there subsidized solar and/or wind-generated power in every house in New Zealand?
- Invest in efficient public transport and deter the use of the private motor car
- Make the United Nations the world's governing body, not the WB, IMF, WTO and GATTs which have become more powerful than most governments
- And what about mounting an international political campaign to prevent the criminal waste of money on weapons, particularly the Bush administration's plans to spend at least \$US60 billion over 15 years on the anti-missile defence system (Star Wars).

If this sum was diverted to support renewable energy

- The electricity needs of 40 million average US households could be supplied with wind energy, displacing 350 million metric tonnes of CO₂ annually, and offsetting about a third of US residential sector emissions
- 1.5 billion families in the developing world could receive solar cookers, dramatically reducing the use of wood as a cooking fuel. (51)

That our civilisation and its one and only habitat – Earth - are in a very precarious situation still seems to be denied by many people in all walks of life. It is now being argued by a growing body of people that not only are we very stupid but that our civilisation is terminal.

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