

## Doomed Planet

*“Today’s debate about global warming is essentially a debate about freedom. The environmentalists would like to mastermind each and every possible (and impossible) aspect of our lives.”*

*Vaclav Klaus  
Blue Planet in Green Shackles*

## ETS Forum - The Climate Craze

*by Walter Starck*  
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### Global Warming, a Mass Mania

Throughout history episodic eruptions of mass manias have swept societies. These outbreaks embody the dissatisfactions, fears and hopes of their times while offering a shining path to a bright new future. They are characterised by a millenarian nature, wherein threat of punishment for past sins is accompanied by promise of salvation through a new faith.

The power of mass manias is reinforced by severe disapproval of any questioning of their certain truth. Any doubt is seen not just as error needing correction but as conscious deliberate evil deserving expulsion or extermination. With adherents permitted only to support the established dogma, these movements tend to gather followers rapidly. But they also soon become afflicted with a growing disconnect from reality which they can neither acknowledge nor adjust for.



As no believer dares express anything other than certainty, social manias tend to persist for some time after their disconnect with reality has become obvious to all. In the face of such recalcitrant reality, leaders are forced to become ever more extreme in their proclamations. This then often leads to a zenith of zealotry and disconnect just before increasingly obvious reality finally forces them to make some small admission of error. The spell is then broken and the faith collapses.

Global Warming is the mania of our times. While there is good scientific evidence that atmospheric carbon dioxide is increasing from the burning of fossil fuels, and that carbon dioxide does indeed absorb infra-red heat radiation of certain frequencies, it is purely speculation that this will cause a climate catastrophe.

As Mark Twain wrote over a century ago: “There is something fascinating about science. One gets such wholesale returns of conjecture out of such a trifling investment of fact.”

In the current instance there is also abundant scientific evidence to indicate that:

- The amount of warming from increased carbon dioxide emissions has been greatly overestimated.
- Most of the uncertain fraction of a degree of warming that has occurred over the past century is attributable to measurement bias and natural variability.
- Predictions of catastrophic consequences are entirely speculative and unlikely.
- The net result of a projected doubling of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> is most likely to be positive.
- Fossil fuels will run out well before any drastic effects on climate are possible.
- If man made global warming is indeed real, and it helps to prevent another ice age, this would be the most fortunate thing that has happened to our species since we barely escaped extinction from an especially cold period during the last ice age some 75,000 years ago.

The ongoing political waffle over setting targets for differing percentages of emission reductions at various points decades in the future is about as useful as debating over how many angels can dance on the head of a pin.

The biggest problem we face in the foreseeable future is not some unquantifiable risk of climate change at some unknown future time. It is the real and immanent one of producing enough fossil fuel to maintain the healthy economy necessary for the long costly process of developing energy alternatives and implementing them on an adequate scale. At best this will take decades and will require abundant supplies of fossil fuels to achieve.

The entire Global Warming scenario is predicated on continued undiminished consumption of fossil fuel. However, the inability of conventional energy supplies to meet increasing global demand is already confronting us. No matter how much oil may still exist somewhere underground, new discoveries are not keeping pace with depletion of known reserves and current demand is pushing the limits of production capacity. New discoveries are also increasingly found in deep water or remote locations where costs are high.

With or without GW, alternative sources of energy must ultimately be developed. How successful this will be is far from certain. Renewable energy is diffuse. The notion of a future economy powered by sunbeams and summer breezes is a happy fantasy. The future offered by renewable energy alone is one of considerable energy constraint and decreased affluence.

Cheap abundant energy from fossil fuels is a vital element in virtually every product and service in our current economy. Without adequate supplies of affordable liquid hydrocarbon fuels for transportation and mobile machinery our existing economy cannot continue to function, nor will be able to even feed the population.

Our society doesn't run on hypotheticals. Aircraft, ships, trucks and heavy machinery are not going to be powered by batteries. Premature attempts to adopt immature, unproven technology fostered by ill-conceived subsidies and regulations entails a high risk of shortages and costly mistakes. The emerging bio-fuels and wind energy fiascos are already an example.

The economics of current renewable energy technologies is only even marginally viable because of subsidies and the availability of cheap abundant fossil fuel energy to implement and maintain them. Imagine the cost of metals, concrete, machinery, manufacturing transport and farming if all these things were also dependant on renewable energy.

Unfortunately, the academics, activists, politicians and bureaucrats leading the push for carbon dioxide taxation and use of renewable energy are non-producers who are woefully ignorant of both the economic reality of productive activity and the practical limits of technology. They are techno-economic-illiterates with a cargo cult understanding of production. Their prescriptions amount to a ritualistic belief that admitting sin (GW) and making an appropriate sacrifice (carbon dioxide taxes) will in some undefined (magical) way bring forth all the right changes, discoveries and implementations that are needed to effect a bright new world of clean endlessly renewable energy with minimal inconvenience to anyone.

The leading scientific prophets of this cult are overwhelmingly comprised of young researchers whose entire careers are based on climate alarmism. In contrast, the middleground, balanced (“sceptical”) scientists are overwhelmingly researchers with well established expertise in other fields. The alarmists repeatedly refer to a catechism of highly selective evidence to support their claims. The sceptics cite voluminous other evidence from their own varied fields which contradicts the alarmist's claims.

Even when alarmist evidence is conclusively discredited (*e.g.* the hockey stick graph), the climate alarmists continue to use it, and to dismiss all conflicting evidence no matter how sound or voluminous it may be. When their own claims fail, they revise the evidence, not their hypothesis. Recent examples of this have involved the current global cooling trend, the absence of a signature tropical tropospheric hot spot, Antarctic cooling, oceanic cooling, unchanged rates of sea level rise, etc. All these phenomena have been subjected to dubious data manipulation trying to make a silk purse to suit GW out of a sow's ear of empirical data which refuses to conform to their hopes.

GW has become just another faith based belief, immune to all conflicting reason and evidence. Although it maintains a claim to being based on science, it's relation to genuine, evidence based, logically consistent, refutable science is not unlike that of Scientology, with which it shares a number of commonalities.

The amazing thing about all this is that people who claim to be scientists are so willing to become so profoundly and righteously committed to a belief in something that, at best, is highly uncertain, and the reality of which will inevitably become apparent in the not too

distant future. It appears that such persons somehow think that their own unshakable faith will determine that reality. It also seems clear that what they claim to fear so greatly is, perversely, what they actually so desperately hope for.

Where GW departs from ordinary academic disputes and becomes a dangerous fundamentalist mania is in the righteous and fervency of its proselytizers. This is apparent in the anger and abuse directed at any who dare question their pronouncements. It has gone so far as leading warmers comparing scepticism of GW with holocaust denial, suggesting that GW dissent be made a criminal offence and even advocating Nuremburg style public trials for offenders.

Recently Jonathan Manthorpe, a writer for the Vancouver Sun newspaper, wrote an article expressing qualified agreement with some of the arguments against GW raised by Ian Plimer in his book *Heaven and Earth*. In a follow up article, on 5 August 2009, Manthorpe reported that he had received around 100 e-mails about his Plimer piece. About two-thirds were from ordinary people who agreed with Plimer. Another healthy portion was from scientists who agreed with Plimer's overall contention about natural variabilities in climate on which humans have little or no influence. However, they disputed various specific claims and details made by him.

Manthorpe also noted that, "...the disturbing letters were from the scientist believers in man-man global warming."

He then went on to say, "I have met a lot of unpleasant people in the course of my life, but I have never seen such a torrent of nasty, arrogant and downright stupid abuse as has been aimed at me this week by people who aggressively sign themselves "PhD" as though it were a mark of divine right that is beyond challenge or question."

The recent but largely unreported trend of global cooling has become increasingly hard for warmers to deny or explain away, and there is increasing evidence that various other core elements of the GW hypothesis are incorrect. In the face of failing claims and prophesies, the prophets of GW are becoming more and more strident and apocalyptic. The cooler it gets the shriller their cries of warning about warming become.

In addition to the true believers, GW has attracted a large contingent of self-interested fellow travellers. Politicians, bureaucrats, political activists and manifold financial interest have perceived advantages to be gained from climbing aboard the GW bandwagon. Large vested interests are now involved, and there is great pressure to lock in emission controls and subsidies before popular support weakens.

Despite all this, in the end the entire matter is only an empty irrelevant charade. The developing nations will not cease their development even if developed ones do. A modest increase in energy prices will not result in decreased emissions and large cost increases that will do so will result in recession and severe economic disruptions. This is not speculation. We have already had two clear instances. Any government which does not understand this will be replaced.

Australia's annual carbon dioxide emissions are only about 1.5 percent of the global total. This is barely equal to China's *increase* in emissions over 6 months. Whatever we do or don't do to reduce emissions will have negligible effect on the global total. In any event,

estimates of natural uptake of CO<sub>2</sub> over our land and EEZ area are greater than our emissions. By any reasonable accounting, we as a nation should be receiving carbon credits, not being forced to buy them.

The prospective Emissions Trading Scheme is set to become just another layer of bureaucracy loaded onto an already staggering productive sector, with negligible effect on emissions other than that resulting from economic decline. To verify the ineffectiveness of emissions trading one need only look at the result where it has been implemented in the EU or the global result of the Kyoto agreement. Since it was ratified global emissions have increased 18%. Those of signatory nations increased 21%. Those who did not sign up increased 10% and those for the U.S. grew by 6.6%.

Over the next few years economic recession will result in a much greater reduction in emissions than anything achievable from regulatory measures over the same period. Meanwhile, evidence is steadily accumulating that the amount and impacts of greenhouse warming have been greatly overestimated, and that a natural cooling cycle is now overriding any small increase in GH effect attributable to human emissions. There is no overwhelming urgency to hastily impose yet another ill conceived regulatory burden on the Australian economy, especially when it can least be afforded and any benefit is distant and uncertain.

In terms of climate, resources, geography population, politics, and development, Australia is better situated than any other nation to adapt to the difficult times ahead. This will, however, require making full and effective use of our natural advantages.

The most important thing government can do is not to deliver bailouts or handouts, but rather to get out of the way. Two highly effective things are eminently doable in this respect. The proliferation of unnecessary bureaucracy has become a major drain on, and impediment to, all productive activity. It requires serious pruning, and that which is retained must be made accountable for positive results. When management fails to perform it should be replaced.

The other is an initiative to ensure the reliability of ongoing energy supplies. The most certain and cost effective way of achieving this would be the implementation of an extended corporate tax exemption for earnings from energy production, and full immediate deduction against other income for investment in the sector.

The result would be an unprecedented boom in creative effort and investment in Australian energy. This would include an influx of foreign investment and skills. It is not unrealistic to expect that Australia could soon become the global leader in new energy, the Saudi Arabia of a post-petroleum world. Any loss to government revenue from such tax largesse could be expected to be made up many times over in increased revenues from payroll taxes and GST, plus the flow-on effect throughout the remainder of the economy.

The only real obstacle to success is our own ability to envision the potential and grasp the opportunity. This way forward presents a clear route down Easy Street. The route we are now taking involves a detour through Jonestown. Only experts using computer models could confuse these options and we have just seen what they did with the global economy. The choice is a no brainer.

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