

ITER Forum – News Log September (Add) – November 2009

1. Government commits to nuclear power
2. UK to embrace nuclear - Miliband
3. Mining boss lashes Rudd over ETS
4. No need to rush as Rudd goes global
5. Stifling debate
6. Seeing through hoax of the century
7. Sceptics create a climate of fear
8. Mired in climate of confusion
9. Science is in on climate change sea-level rise: 1.7mm
10. The unreasoning fearmongers
11. Technology fuels great debate
12. From The Times Nuclear alone won't keep the power flowing
13. METRICS

1. Government commits to nuclear power

18 September, 2008

<http://www.bsdlive.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=3122951>

John Hutton, Secretary of State for the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR), has pledged the Government's support to build new nuclear power stations in the UK.

Hutton said that energy from new nuclear generators were "absolutely indispensable" for the UK's energy requirements, reducing out dependency on foreign oil and gas and cutting carbon emissions.

At the first meeting of the Government's new Nuclear Development Forum Mr Hutton said: "I'm determined to press all the buttons to get nuclear built in this country at the earliest opportunity - not only because it's a no-brainer for our energy security, but also because it's good for jobs and our economy.

"Insecure international sources of energy underline the case for a diverse mix. We are determined to get new nuclear up and running as soon as possible - securing clean low carbon energy and helping to keep the UK's lights on."

Hutton also predicted that the new power stations could mean £20bn in private sector investment and 100,000 new jobs.

2. UK to embrace nuclear - Miliband

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/8349715.stm

BBC World News

Ed Miliband has said the UK cannot afford to "say no" to nuclear power as he prepares to announce plans to fast-track a new generation of reactors.

The energy secretary will give details of a list of sites judged suitable for new developments and say how planning reforms will speed up the process.

Nuclear is a safe, low-carbon option to help tackle climate change, he said.

The Conservatives warned people would not be consulted while pressure groups said nuclear was "not the answer".

In a series of statements on energy policy, Mr Miliband will outline proposed sites for new plants, the bulk of which are expected to be near to existing sites.

He will also explain how changes to planning laws will let the new Infrastructure Planning Commission - which will have the final say over where the plants are located - hurry through schemes which comply.

'Low-carbon mix'

Last year the government decided to go ahead with a new generation of nuclear plants to replace the UK's ageing nuclear infrastructure - most of which will be decommissioned by 2023.

They hope the first of a new generation of stations can come on stream as early as 2017.

We don't need coal or nuclear, because proven green technologies such as wind and combined heat and power stations can secure Britain's energy needs

Robin Oakley, Greenpeace

Ministers hope the planning reforms, which will mean future schemes will not be subject to a public inquiry, will avoid battles such as the six-year struggle to get the Sizewell B power station approved.

Mr Miliband said the UK needed to get a "move on" with putting in place its future energy infrastructure, which he says must include nuclear alongside renewables, clean coal and gas.

"When you look at the challenge of climate change, it is right to consider all the low-carbon alternatives. Nuclear is a low-carbon alternative which, in my view, is safe and secure," he told the BBC.

He said he understood people were "historically suspicious" of nuclear power but said: "There is no evidence that people's fears are grounded."

While backing nuclear expansion, the Conservatives say they are concerned that people will be largely excluded from the decision-making process.

They are calling for a vote in Parliament on the issue to give "legitimacy" and for ministers, not "unelected officials", to make the final decision on where the plants are built.

"It is right to have a streamlined planning process but it should have democratic accountability," shadow energy and climate change secretary Greg Clark said.

"If you take out accountability, then it is going to make people resistant to change."

Mr Miliband rejected this criticism, saying people would have more opportunities to make their views known than under the current system.

Developers will have to consult local residents about their plans and people will be able to lobby the planning Commission before final decisions are made, he said.

Most people living close to power plants were "enthusiastic" about them and the developments would create jobs, Mr Miliband added.

But plans for new plants in Scotland, to replace existing facilities at Torness and Hunterston, are opposed by the SNP government.

While nuclear power remains a reserved issue for Westminster, planning issues are devolved and UK ministers indicated in 2006 that the Scottish government would be able to veto proposed plants.

'Deadly legacy'

But environmentalists argue that the government could be open to legal challenge if its statements do not give enough weight to climate change.

Friends of the Earth executive director Andy Atkins said the fight against climate change should be at the "core" of all government decisions.

But he warned: "Nuclear power leaves a deadly legacy of radioactive waste that remains highly dangerous for tens of thousands of years and costs tens of billions of pounds to manage.

"And building new plants would divert precious resources from developing safe renewable power."

Robin Oakley, head of Greenpeace's climate and energy campaign, said nuclear power was a "dangerous and expensive irrelevance".

He added: "We don't need coal or nuclear, because proven green technologies such as wind and combined heat and power stations can secure Britain's energy needs, create green jobs and slash our emissions."

In his statement, Mr Miliband will also set out a framework for clean coal "carbon capture and storage" technology as well as updates on renewables and fossil fuels.

3. Mining boss lashes Rudd over ETS

SID MAHER

From: The Australian November 09, 2009 12:00AM

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/mining-boss-lashes-rudd-over-ets/story-e6fmg6nf-1225795565585>

AUSTRALIA'S peak mining group has hit back at Kevin Rudd's attack on opponents of his emissions trading scheme and accused the government of "cooking" the numbers in Treasury revenue projections for the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

In a commentary-page article in The Australian today, Minerals Council of Australia chief executive Mitch Hooke says revenue projections in the mid-year economic review released last week, which cut \$12 billion from the expected CPRS revenue take by 2020, "are as rubbery as a week-old calamari ring".

As G20 finance ministers meeting in Scotland failed at the weekend to agree on how to distribute funding to poor countries to tackle climate change, negotiations were set to continue in Canberra on the Coalition's proposed amendments to the CPRS with Climate Change Minister Penny Wong and her opposition counterpart, Ian Macfarlane, scheduled to talk twice this week.

In his article, Mr Hooke hits out at the Prime Minister, who on Friday savaged climate change sceptics and opponents of the CPRS, accusing them of risking the future of the planet.

Mr Hooke also criticises Senator Wong, who said the estimates in the mid-year economic review meant the government could not agree to accept "carte blanche" the opposition's proposed amendments. Mr Hooke says of the \$115bn to be raised, about \$75bn, or two-thirds, goes to households and motorists.

But last night a spokesperson for Senator Wong stood behind the forecasts, saying they were prepared "by highly professional and respected officers in the Treasury", and the government stood by commitments to assist households under the CPRS.

Mr Hooke says Mr Rudd had described as heretics and deniers "anyone who didn't follow his strict recipe for a CPRS".

"I don't particularly appreciate the nuances coming out of that speech," Mr Hooke told The Australian yesterday.

"That those of us who know there must be a carbon price in a carbon-constrained world, have accepted there must be market measures, who know that they have to be efficient and effective, get their criticisms and their contributions dismissed and disregarded in the format of either rent-seekers or climate change deniers and sceptics."

But the government yesterday seized on comments by former Prime Minister John Howard, who told News Limited Sunday newspapers that Labor's emissions trading scheme was similar to the Coalition's policy at the last election.

"What Mr Rudd is proposing is not all that different from what I took to the last election," Mr Howard said.

A spokesperson for Senator Wong said: "All the scaremongers on the conservative side of politics have been seriously exposed by their own hero, John Howard."

But Nationals Senate leader Barnaby Joyce disowned the Howard election policy and said the Nationals would not support an ETS.

"I believe that we (the Howard government) were wrong. I believe that in the light of further information, you know, things have progressed."

Senator Joyce said Labor would reject opposition amendments to its ETS.

Malcolm Turnbull last month flagged a range of proposed changes to Labor's ETS, which would moderate higher electricity price rises for small businesses and give bigger breaks to the coal industry and electricity generators.

Senator Joyce, whose party has refused to vote for an ETS, said he seriously doubted whether the government would accept the Coalition's amendments.

"Therefore we have something that we can clearly take to the Australian people: Kevin Rudd equals

a massive new tax," he told the Nine Network yesterday.

"We are going to protect you from that tax, the decision is yours and your wallets."

The Coalition has previously said that even if Labor agrees to all its proposed changes, it still may not vote for the scheme.

4. No need to rush as Rudd goes global

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/opinion/no-need-to-rush-as-rudd-goes-global/story-e6frg71x-1225795559104>

The Prime Minister's first duty is to Australia

IF Kevin Rudd is trying to win Coalition support for his emissions trading scheme, he has a strange way of going about it. The opposition and government are ploughing on with "good faith" negotiations, but could it be the Prime Minister thinks it's all over bar the shouting? Or was he just keen to push the asylum-seekers off the front page after a bad week? His speech to the Lowy Institute on Friday was marked by hyperbole and carping criticism rather than charm as he dubbed his opponents climate change sceptics and political cowards.

As the chances of an Australian agreement before Christmas recede faster than the evidence of rising sea levels on the eastern seaboard, Mr Rudd's intervention looks to be more about positioning than considered policy-making. With one eye on his multilateral role as a "friend of the chair" in Copenhagen and the other on last week's Newspoll, which recorded some electoral unhappiness, Mr Rudd was clearly keen to win some green approval. Internationally, climate change is his calling card, his best chance of securing the global attention he courts. The speech doubtless went down well with that constituency given the Prime Minister's vigorous denunciation of the "brigade of do-nothing climate change sceptics (who are) dangerous because if they succeed, then it is all of us who suffer. Our children. And our grandchildren."

But the speech failed to divert attention from asylum-seekers; and it insulted many of those arguing against the ETS by labelling them climate deniers just for questioning specific elements of the scheme. This was one of the few occasions the Prime Minister has formally defended his legislation, having often preferred to leave that to Climate Change Minister Penny Wong. He opted to reassert himself with a populist and simplistic attack on his opponents. Once again in his efforts to force his view, Mr Rudd was like a dog with a bone, endlessly repeating his new catchphrase of climate change sceptics. This makes for good news grabs but not for good policy. Then again, the ETS has been a low point in the nation's policy-making efforts with debate marked by poor information, polarisation and exaggeration.

This newspaper has long argued that there is no good reason to rush an ETS through ahead of Copenhagen next month. And nothing that has emerged in recent days has persuaded us otherwise. The Coalition is in a mess -- negotiations on one side and an exodus of support on the other. Yesterday, senator Barnaby Joyce made it clear that, come what may, the Nationals would vote against the legislation, due to come up for a vote in the Senate in the week of November 23. As the Coalition's position collapses, some of its members are scampering away from their decision to take an ETS to the 2007 election, an ETS that former prime minister John Howard is very happy to own. Mr Howard said at the weekend that his scheme was in fact little different from Mr Rudd's ETS. Yet on Four Corners tonight, some in the opposition will suggest it was all heat-of-the-moment stuff, that they were more or less intimidated by green hysteria in 2007 and that they know better now. Senator Joyce told the Nine Network yesterday that the 2007 plan was "little more than a thought bubble".

The only good news in this unedifying performance is that the complexities of local and global climate change proposals are emerging finally. The ETS -- far from being cost-neutral as expected -- is likely to cost money over the next five years. That means not only that it will be much more difficult to fund the compensation the Coalition is pushing for, but that the government needs to be more upfront about the costs at a time of high budget deficits. Enduring electoral support for the cap-and-trade scheme must be based on accurate information about its repercussions, not hectoring of opponents as sceptics. Similarly, the Scotland G20 meeting at the weekend demonstrated the difficulties of setting a figure for paying developing nations to join in emissions reduction. Little by little, we are getting the debate on the detail that so many advocates have skirted for months.

In this context, we need our leaders to show some common sense on some of the claims made about climate change. They might start with the question of rising sea levels. The Weekend Australian revealed that sea levels on the eastern seaboard were rising at less than a third of the rate

that the NSW government is predicting. That's a pretty big gap in the scientific data, especially when the government is about to ban thousands of landowners from coastal sites. Rising sea levels are the new orthodoxy. Mr Rudd argued on Friday that 700,000 homes and businesses valued at up to \$150 billion were at risk from surging tides. Yet, like so much else in this debate, the evidence is at times contradictory.

As Christmas beckons, some are urging Canberra to get on with it, pass the ETS and release the citizenry from yet another explanation of cap-and-trade. But haste would be the worst possible outcome.

There is no reason for Australia to leap ahead of the pack and pass an ETS before Copenhagen. Mr Rudd's involvement at that forum is proof of our nation's good standing in the world. The Prime Minister's first responsibility is to deliver a workable climate framework for Australia, one based on sound science, rather than exaggerated reactions to his opponents. Copenhagen can wait.

5. Stifling debate

From: The Australian November 04, 2009 12:00AM

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/opinion/stifling-debate/story-e6frg71x-1225794078751>

It is not in the CSIRO's interests to censor its scientists

THE CSIRO's website boasts that the organisation "undertakes a wide range of research to inform and improve the health, welfare, sustainability and productivity of people, communities, regions and industries". So it is hard to see how it is helping the CSIRO's cause to censor its scientists. It was never intended to be a mouthpiece pandering to government sensibilities. Yet the agency has gagged publication of a paper by one of its senior environmental economists, Clive Spash, a paper that attacks the Rudd government's proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme as an ineffective way to cut greenhouse emissions.

To point out that climate change is an inexact science is an understatement, given the enormous variation of opinions among scientists about the causes and extent of global warming. But Dr Spash is not a global-warming sceptic. His opposition to an emissions trading scheme stems from his concern that carbon trading and offset schemes "appear ineffective in terms of actually reducing" greenhouse gases. He says there may be more effective ways to reduce CO2 emissions such as a carbon tax.

As supporters of efficient market-based solutions, The Australian has long endorsed the concept of an ETS. But we also recognise the potential directness and simplicity of a carbon tax, the preferred option of some on the Rudd government's front bench.

Climate change is emerging as one of the most pressing economic and scientific challenges of the next few decades, demanding a more sophisticated, informed debate to assist policy makers. It is not in the national interest that the CSIRO should censor the views, whatever they are, of one of its own experts who has studied the subject closely. Blocking publication of Dr Spash's views -- for which we have no particular brief other than defending his right to express them -- is counterproductive by reinforcing the narrowness of the present debate.

So far, the political process has been so fixated on Coalition and government pointscoreing over the government's ETS, which is basically a refinement of the model the Howard government took to the 2007 election, that other means of reducing carbon have been largely overlooked.

Far from censoring its scientists to ensure they toe the government's line, the CSIRO should be helping lead public debate by exploring the cost benefits of various options of reducing carbon, from the application of energy sources such as LNG and nuclear power to sequestration of carbon in soil and the development of biochar. Stifling informed debate increases the likelihood of inferior outcomes.

6. Seeing through hoax of the century

Janet Albrechtsen

From The Australian November 04, 2009 12:00AM

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/seeing-through-hoax-of-the-century/story-e6frg6qx-1225794053555>

INCREASINGLY, the road to Copenhagen resembles a suburban street on Halloween with the

number of climate change freak shows and stunts reaching a nadir in recent weeks. Nicholas Stern says we should turn vegetarian in order to combat climate change. If you must eat meat, eat kangaroos, says Ross Garnaut, because marsupials emit negligible amounts of methane. And that champagne you drank on Melbourne Cup day? Scientists scolded us with a report that a 750ml bottle of bubbly could produce 100 million bubbles, releasing five litres of carbon dioxide.

Yet far from rallying people to the cause of immediate action on climate change, every new *cri de coeur* may be turning people away. Could it be that those derided as the great unwashed are beginning to ask more questions than their smart political leaders or the bastions of intellectual curiosity in the media?

Late last month, activists gathered at Sydney Opera House to listen to Sydney mayor Clover Moore announce that "the time for talk is past".

"Already we know that this building, our Opera House, for decades a symbol of optimism and the human spirit, is under threat from global warming," she says.

The Opera House under threat? That would be from rising sea levels, right? Just like the small island nation of Maldives where, last month, the president conducted a cabinet meeting underwater to remind the world that his country would be rendered uninhabitable by rising sea levels. Kitted out in full scuba-diving outfits, Mohamed Nasheed and his ministers sat at a table underwater off the coast of the capital of Male.

As planned, the president's stunt made headlines across the globe. Send us money - and lots of it - is his message. The media love stunts. They are so easy to report.

Sadly, the media is not inquisitive enough to report those who question the circus acts of climate change. A week after the Maldives underwater show, Nils-Axel Morner - a leading world authority on sea levels - wrote an open letter to the president telling him that his stunt was "not founded in observational facts and true scientific judgments".

Morner is a former professor who headed the department of paleogeophysics and geodynamics at Stockholm University and past president (1999-2003) of the International Union for Quaternary Research commission on sea level changes and coastal evolution. INQUA was founded in 1928 by scientists who aimed to improve the understanding of environmental change during the glacial ages through interdisciplinary research. In other words, the Swedish professor has gravitas when it comes to sea levels.

Alas his letter did not make headlines. That is a shame. Morner says there is "no rational basis" for the hysterical claims that the people of Maldives - or the rest of the world - are threatened by rising sea levels. And he sets out some facts.

Fact number 1: During the past 2000 years, sea levels have fluctuated with 5 peaks reaching 0.6m to 1.2m above present sea level. Fact number 2: From 1790 to 1970 sea levels were about 20cm higher than today. Fact number 3: In the 1970s, the sea level fell by about 20cm to its present level. Fact number 4: Sea levels have remained constant for the past 30 years "implying that there are no traces of any alarming ongoing sea level rise". Fact number 5 (and I am paraphrasing here): The notion presented by the President of the Maldives that his country will be flooded is bunkum.

Yet, last week a federal parliamentary report told Australians to make plans to evacuate if we live on the coast. Warning that the "time to act is now", the bipartisan report said the 711,000 addresses within 3km of the Australian coast - and less than 6m above sea level - face threats from rising sea levels. The report called for an inquiry by the Productivity Commission to examine the need for bans on homes within these areas.

Viewers of the 7pm News on ABC1 were told by a Richard Branson lookalike - complete with longish wavy grey hair, beard and crisp white shirt - that the township of Byron Bay would be completely flooded by rising sea levels. His expertise? He is a resident of Byron Bay.

Despite the headline grabbing rhetoric about climate change calamity, recent polls reveal that more and more people appear to be challenging the orthodoxy. The most recent Lowy Institute poll found that while 48 per cent of Australian believe that global warming is a serious and pressing problem, the numbers are down 12 points since 2008 and 20 points down since 2006. "This is also the first year that it has not had majority support," said the Lowy Institute.

A poll by Ipsos Reid in Canada in September found that global warming has dropped down the list of people's concerns. Indeed, a full 41 per cent now say the threat has been overblown. In the US, Associated Press reported on a poll last month that found 57 per cent of people believe there is clear

evidence that the world is heating up, down 20 points from three years ago. These are some trend lines worth watching.

Perhaps we are wising up to modern day millenarianism where end-of-the-world cults - those who have the most to gain from their fear mongering - preach calamity. Remember Y2K? The cult back then consisted of computer experts. They predicted disaster. Planes would fall from the skies. People would be caught in halting elevators. Chaos would descend on anything that relied on a computer, from financial markets to utilities. Governments duly prepared for disaster with the BBC reporting that global preparations for the millennium bug were estimated to have cost more than \$US300 billion. All for nought. Nothing happened. It was, as James Taranto wrote in *The Wall Street Journal*, the hoax of the century.

Maurice Newman, who was chairman of the federal government's Y2K committee told *The Australian* last week that "in pressing the urgency for compliance, the committee members relied heavily on confirmatory bias. Most of this came from so-called experts who had much to gain from creating a sense of alarm. The consequence of widespread inaction was claimed to result in chaos and systemic failure. As there was no alternative authoritative voice, this became perceived wisdom and was certainly believed by the committee. As such the Y2K phenomenon took on a life of its own."

Deja vu? Preparing for the deluge of rising sea levels, we were treated to footage last week from parliamentary question time starring Julia Gillard and her gumboots. Appropriately she was followed on ABC1 by *Bananas in Pyjamas*. Could man-made climate change turn out to be the greatest hoax of the present century? Certainly, ordinary people are beginning to ask questions.

janeta@bigpond.net.au

7. Sceptics create a climate of fear

Clive Hamilton

From: *The Australian* November 11, 2009 12:00AM

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/opinion/sceptics-create-a-climate-of-fear/story-e6frg6zo-1225796249862>

PROTECTING the world from climate change is a race against time and with each passing month it is clear what we thought was a marathon has become a sprint. Yet, just as the climate scientists are saying we must run much faster, the world's political processes have slowed to a dawdle.

Some world leaders are softening us up for failure at the Copenhagen conference, suggesting we can expect only a non-binding framework to be filled in and made binding at the Mexico conference a year later. The world is waiting for the US to demonstrate its commitment, a reality of power politics that cedes enormous influence to the climate sceptics' hold over the Republican Party.

When, in her address to a joint sitting of the US congress, Angela Merkel called for strong action on global warming, the warmth of the reception of most Democrats was matched by the coolness of the Republicans.

The US is a nation divided. The debate is no longer about the science of climate change; by all the standards of scientific endeavour the scientific debate has been won, again and again.

Yet from the mid-1990s the Republicans launched what has been called a war on science, a determined and sophisticated campaign to undermine the credibility of scientific claims by appealing to deeper fears. They have succeeded spectacularly.

In 1997 there was little difference between Republican and Democratic voters in their views on global warming. But by last year a wide gulf had opened. For example, in 1997 52 per cent of Democrats believed the effects of warming had begun and 48 per cent of Republicans agreed. Reflecting the accumulation of stronger scientific evidence, by last year the proportion of Democrats taking this view had risen from 52 per cent to 76 per cent while the proportion of Republicans agreeing had fallen from 48 per cent to 42 per cent. A 4 per cent gap had become a 34 per cent gap. The neo-conservatives have been spectacularly successful at turning attitudes to global warming into a marker of cultural and political identity. In the process they have jettisoned three centuries of faith in reason and the scientific method.

The Right has jettisoned science in favour of deeper beliefs. One can only hope Kevin Rudd backs his strong words with leadership in Copenhagen, although his willingness to emasculate the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme in response to industry lobbying doesn't augur well.

In Australia and the US, climate change is the most important arena for the long-running culture war of the neo-conservatives. In pursuit of their goals they have tapped into primitive fears.

Last week Czech President Vaclav Klaus finally gave in to irresistible pressure and signed the Lisbon Treaty aimed at streamlining the operation of the European Union. Klaus resisted to the end because he believed adopting the treaty meant the Czech Republic would cease to be a sovereign state, despite the fact none of the 26 other EU members or the two houses of the Czech parliament entertained such fears.

This is relevant because Klaus is an anti-warming fanatic, declaring it to be a plot by the UN to achieve world government.

Klaus shares this preposterous fear of the UN with right-wing militias in the US and the membership of our Lavoisier Group of climate sceptics set up by Hugh Morgan, which wrote in all seriousness that the Kyoto protocol represented a threat to our sovereignty comparable to Japan's planned invasion in World War II. The climate debate has shown just how precarious is modern humankind's commitment to scientific evidence and the claims of rationality. It suggests that for many the Enlightenment was never more than a veneer used to cover deeper attachments to a belief in how the world should be, rather than how science and reason say it is.

Unlike elsewhere, climate protection in Australia and the US is seen by conservatives to be an issue of the Left, one that if accepted vindicates the Left's criticisms of an unbridled market.

Opposing the Left has proven more important to conservatives than their commitment to science, and for this betrayal of reason it seems we will all pay dearly.

Clive Hamilton is the Greens candidate for the Higgins by-election.

8. Mired in climate of confusion

Frank Furedi

From: *The Australian* November 13, 2009 12:00AM

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/opinion/mired-in-climateof-confusion/story-e6frg6zo-1225797096948>

FOLLOWING a judge's decision at a British employment tribunal that Tim Nicholson, a sustainability officer who was sacked from a property firm, was entitled to legal protection for his philosophical belief in climate change, scientists have been expressing their shock.

"As a scientist who works on climate change, I find it deeply alarming," said Myles Allen, who heads the Climate Dynamics group at the University of Oxford. Allen's concerns are entirely understandable.

Since the rise of the modern era, science has prided itself on its capacity to explain the world on the basis of experimentation, research and, above all, hard evidence. Science emerged, self-consciously, as an alternative to world views based on faith, moral conviction and other forms of a priori thought. So it is natural that a genuine scientist would feel insulted by judge Michael Burton's ruling that Nicholson's concern with climate change qualified as a philosophical belief under the Religion and Belief Regulations, 2003.

One reason Allen and some of his colleagues are concerned about this decision is that it serves to undermine the pre-eminent authority of science today. In the 21st century, science has a near monopoly on authorising claims about virtually every aspect of human experience. We are far more interested in what "science says" than in what "Godsays".

Consequently, even those who are sceptical about science and the scientific method will nevertheless mobilise these things to support their arguments.

Not long ago, in the 1970s and 80s, leading environmentalists insisted that science was undemocratic, that it was responsible for many of the problems facing the planet. Now, in public at least, their hostility towards science has given way to their embrace and endorsement of science. The global warming lobby depends on the legitimation provided by scientific evidence and expertise.

However, if science is recast by a legal ruling as simply a moral or religious world view, then its pre-eminent authority is likely to be compromised. What is to distinguish science from quacks with strongly held principles?

The erosion of the line between science and moralising has not simply been brought about by one

eccentric judge. In recent times more than a few scientists have found it difficult to resist the temptation to cross the line into domain of public moralising. Take the case of David Nutt, the expert sacked recently from the British Home Office's Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs. As a scientist, he is entitled to point to evidence that unequivocally calls into question the government's policy on drugs.

But Nutt is not prepared to confine his role to that of a disinterested scientist; he also wants to be a moral crusader fighting the scourge of alcohol.

"I want parents to know alcohol will kill your kids, not ecstasy," Nutt said last week, before insisting the minimum drinking age should be increased to 21. Nutt has strong views on the subject of the minimum age of drinking, but these views are based on his personal moral attitude, not on science. The way in which Nutt can quite easily make a conceptual leap from scientific evidence to the domain of moral and political decision-making is symptomatic of a powerful trend: the transformation of science into an ideology, if not a dogma.

Indeed, science often has the quality of a quasi-religious dogma these days, especially in the arena of climate-change alarmism. "The scientists have spoken," says one British-based green campaign group, in an updated version of the religious phrase, "This is the Word of the Lord." "This is what the science says we must do," many greens claim before adding that the debate about global warming is finished.

Campaigners against climate change frequently prefix the term science with the definite article, the. So David Read, a former vice-president of the prestigious scientific institution the Royal Society, stated: "The science very clearly points towards the need for us all -- nations, businesses and individuals -- to do as much as possible, as soon as possible, to avoid the worst consequences of climate change."

Unlike science, this new term, The Science, is a deeply moralised and politicised category. Today, those who claim to wield the authority of The Science are really demanding unquestioning submission.

Although some scientists feel insulted that their views on climate change have been equated with a religion, there are many green activists who are more than happy to recruit the support of God to their cause. One blogger says: "Thinking about environmentalism as if it were a religion is an interesting way to go." Why? Because religion "looks a lot more successful at achieving its aim worldwide than the environmental movement".

Nicholson wants to have both God and Science on his team. After the judgment he noted that "my moral and ethical values are similar to those promoted by many of the world's religions". However, he added that "the difference is, mine are not faith-based or spiritual, but grounded in overwhelming scientific evidence". Whether this philosophy presents itself as science with a bit of religion, or as a religion based on science, appears to be a matter of personal opinion among campaigners, all of whom seem to believe that their cause is far too important for them to worry about opportunistic inconsistencies in argumentation.

Professional environmental protesters assume they have the moral authority to take matters into their own hands, since they are acting on behalf of The People. They believe their unique philosophical insights entitle them to special dispensation. Now, justice Burton has effectively agreed with them, elevating environmentalism over other, inferior, less worthy beliefs, and democracy is all the more impoverished for it.

Frank Furedi's latest book, Wasted: Why Education Isn't Educating, is published by Continuum Press. This article first appeared in Spiked Online.

9. Science is in on climate change sea-level rise: 1.7mm

Drew Warne-Smith and James Madden

From:

The Australian November 07, 2009 12:00AM

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/science-is-in-on-climate-change-sea-level-rise-17mm/story-e6fmg6nf-1225795202916>

SEA levels on Australia's eastern seaboard are rising at less than a third of the rate that the NSW government is predicting as it overhauls the state's planning laws and bans thousands of landowners

from developing coastal sites.

The Rees government this week warned that coastal waters would rise 40cm on 1990 levels by 2050, with potentially disastrous effects. Even yesterday Kevin Rudd warned in a speech to the Lowy Institute that 700,000 homes and businesses, valued at up to \$150 billion, were at risk from the surging tide. However, if current sea-level rises continue, it would not be until about 2200 - another 191 years - before the east coast experienced the kind of increases that have been flagged.

According to the most recent report by the Bureau of Meteorology's National Tidal Centre, issued in June, there has been an average yearly increase of 1.9mm in the combined net rate of relative sea level at Port Kembla, south of Sydney, since the station was installed in 1991.

This is consistent with historical analysis showing that, throughout the 20th century, there was a modest rise in global sea levels of about 20cm, or 1.7mm per year on average.

By comparison, the NSW government's projections - based on global modelling by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as well as CSIRO regional analysis - equate to a future rise of about 6.6mm a year. Such a projection has caused widespread concern for landowners and developers, derision from "climate sceptics" within the scientific community and even some head-scratching from Wollongong locals such as Kevin Court, 80.

"I have swum at this beach every day for the past 50 years, and nothing much changes here," Mr Court said yesterday as he emerged from the surf at Wollongong's North Beach, just a short paddle from the Port Kembla gauging station.

"All this talk about rising sea levels - most of us old-timers haven't seen any change and we've been coming down here for decades.

"A few years ago part of the bank at the back of the beach was eroded. But you look at it now, and all the grass has grown back over it. The water hasn't washed back there for years.

"And that's nature. It's up and down, it comes and goes in cycles - nothing dramatic."

The complex task of tracking sea levels is being performed by the Australian Baseline Sea Level Monitoring Project, which is co-ordinated by the National Tidal Centre.

Body: The project operates 16 gauging stations around the country, with the eastern seaboard monitored by stations at Port Kembla, as well as Rosslyn Bay and Cape Ferguson, in Queensland.

Bob Carter, a geologist and environmental scientist with James Cook University in Queensland, said he was "baffled" as to why states and local councils would develop policy based primarily on global averages and not the records of local tidal gauges.

In the past year, the Port Kembla gauge has recorded a sea-level rise of just 0.1mm

"When you design a house in Sydney, do you entrust the architect and builder to do the heating and air-conditioning based on global average temperature? Of course not," Professor Carter said.

He added that even if seas were rising as much as 3.3mm a year - the CSIRO's current global estimate - they would remain within the bounds of natural and normal variation. "There have been lots of times in our history when sea levels rose as much or more than now," Professor Carter said. "There is nothing unusual in the current situation."

Meteorologist Bill Kininmonth, former head of the National Climate Centre, is another to express concern about the way future sea-level rises have been modelled. Mr Kininmonth believes only a thin layer of the ocean is actually warming - about 200m - making it unlikely the oceans are expanding to any great degree.

He said there was little compelling evidence that the polar caps were melting and causing sea levels to rise.

Computer models also tended to underestimate the way evaporation regulated temperature, thereby exaggerating future temperature predictions, Mr Kininmonth added. "There's little reason to think the little bit of extra heat generated by greenhouse gases will make a dramatic difference," he said.

However, the consensus view of the scientific community remains that sea-levels are rising at an accelerated rate because of human activity that has warmed Earth.

The CSIRO's John Church, considered one of the world's leading authorities on sea-level rise, told The Weekend Australian yesterday he remained convinced waters along the eastern seaboard were rising in line with global averages. He noted that the BOM's gauge results for Port Kembla as

published here did not include the effect of barometric pressure, which, if included, would lift the sea-level increase to 3.1mm, not much less than agreed global estimates.

The Australian continent was also rising slightly - about 0.3-0.4mm a year around Sydney - which had partially offset increases in sea levels, he said. And an analysis of records from a gauge at Fort Denison in Sydney Harbour - not incorporated in the National Tidal Centre report - also revealed that, after 1950, periods of extreme sea-level rises occurred three times as frequently as in the first half of that century.

"There is a clear acceleration in the rate of sea-level rise," Dr Church said. "In the last 20 years, it's almost twice the global average for the 20th century."

Dr Church said the NSW coast was likely to experience sea-level rises greater than global estimates due to changes in the wind stress patterns in the Pacific Ocean, which will strengthen the East Australian Current. And if polar ice caps were indeed melting at a significant rate - which is not yet established - Australia could witness even bigger swells still.

Dr Church challenged Mr Kininmonth's assertion that only a thin surface layer of the ocean was warming, saying recent studies provided evidence of deep ocean warming although it couldn't be quantified as yet.

A spokesperson for the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water said NSW had selected the upper end of the IPCC modelling predictions because both emissions and measured global sea-level rise were now at or above the upper IPCC estimates.

10. The unreasoning fearmongers

Janet Albrechtsen Blog | *November 11, 2009* |

http://blogs.theaustralian.news.com.au/janetalbrechtsen/index.php/theaustralian/comments/the_unreasoning_fearmongers/

And the prize for giving vacuous prizes goes to...the Left.

Last week John Pilger delivered a speech after becoming the 2009 recipient of the Sydney Peace Prize. Predictably, he railed against the war in Afghanistan. There are no terrorist training grounds there, he said. No mention of Al Qaeda from Pilger. He railed against the suffering on the "besieged people of Gaza". No mention of the role of Hamas from Pilger.

And then he railed against Australia's immigration policy and the "concentration camp on Christmas Island." No mention that the 78 Sri Lankans on board the Oceanic Viking are determined to take up residence on Christmas Island.

What Pilger has done for peace is not entirely clear. But the progressive mindset says that if you are expert enough at crafting emotional arguments that's enough to deserve a prize. One need only look at the two big issues of the day – climate change and border protection - to realise the progressive predilection for emotion over reason and stealth over honesty. Some of them – mostly politicians - use emotion for calculated political purposes. Others – commentators and activists - seem to genuinely suffer from arrested development, frozen in perpetual adolescence where emotion trumps reason.

A few months ago, NSW Premier Nathan Rees labelled those sceptical about the climate change science as akin to Nazi appeasers in the 1930s. Last week at the Lowy Institute Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said that those same people are fear mongering, gambling with their children's future. It's a powerful allegation, full of emotion. It is also dishonest.

To be curious about the state of science, to ask questions of the orthodoxy, to suggest that we not rush ahead of other countries in a way that will punish the Australian economy is the antithesis of fear-mongering. It says let's draw breath, put aside the wild hyperbole, ignore the growing group think, the cheap symbolism and think rationally about climate change. Those who predict the end of the world, those such as Al Gore who tell us sea levels will rise by six metres in by 2100, those such as Tim Flannery who say it's now or never, telling us we have about 20 years to act on climate change or else place our future at risk of apocalyptic droughts, floods, war and famine. Here are the fear-mongers.

The emotional claims by Rees and Rudd do nothing to advance debate. That is not their intention. Their aim is to shutdown debate by shaming opponents into agreeing with them, or at the very least, just shutting up. Anyone who disagrees with the Left on a range of issues is invariably labelled as

cold-hearted and lacking basic human compassion.

No issue highlights this more than border protection. Here, once again, the language used by the Left is replete with emotion. On Sunday morning on ABC1's *Insiders*, journalist David Marr ABC1's said that Australians – unlike any other people in the world – fear refugees. Fear is a strong word. It is full of emotion. It is also a dishonest way to describe the attitudes of Australian attitudes border control.

Recent polls movements against the Rudd Government suggest that Australians remain concerned about border protection. But being concerned about border control is not the same as being fearful of refugees.

Those on the left, such as Marr, pepper their language with emotion because their thinking is premised on the same. They cannot fathom that Australians have long expressed a rational preference for an orderly, controlled system of immigration and border protection. It's nothing to do with fear, David. It's to do with facts. And a simple compact.

As former Prime Minister, John Howard, reminded us in his weekend interview, the facts speak for themselves. Under Howard the boats stopped. And, as he said, "the consequence of our policy was that because we stopped the boats public support for a higher immigration rate to Australia rose—and public support for a humanitarian refugee program was maintained and even strengthened.

"The Australian public will always support a reasonably high immigration program if they think it is properly managed and serves the interests of Australia."

Howard was not alone in understanding that and formulating policy to reflect that deal with the Australian people. As my colleague, Paul Kelly, sets out in his book, *The March of Patriots*, the politics of people movement grew from an enduring compact that began with the Chifley Government in 1945 when increased immigration became both a reality and a necessity in a globalised age.

It is, as Kelly writes, "the most powerful political compact in Australia's history. Mass migration was presented to people, business, unions and churches on the condition that government would control who came to Australia in the interests of people." And that policy platform has been maintained by every Prime Minister from Chifley to Rudd.

How easy the Left forgets or deliberately ignores the facts underscoring that compact. Remember in the 1970s it was Gough Whitlam who said: "I'm not having hundreds of f.... Vietnamese Balts coming into this country with their political and religious hatreds." And Bob Hawke in 1990 who said: "Do not let any people... think that all they've got to do is break the rules, jump the queue, lob here and Bob's your uncle. Bob is not your uncle on this issue. We're not going to allow people to jump that queue."

And Paul Keating, who, as Prime Minister in 1992 introduced mandatory detention for unlawful arrivals.

How easily the Left forgets or deliberately ignores the success behind that compact. As Kelly records, from the 1940s Australia became a story of mass migration, accepting about seven million migrants, the highest per capita outside of Israel. By the time Howard left office, one in four Australians have been born overseas. The compact between the Australian people and the government of the day to support and sustain an orderly immigration program has been integral to Australia's success as a country that has accepted millions of people from around the world.

Rudd understands the compact. But in his quest to be all things to all people, he now finds himself and his policy held to ransom by a group of savvy asylum seekers who are highly strategic in their actions and demands. Clearly, Rudd did not count on the resolve of the 78 Sri Lankans on board the *Oceanic Viking*. But as he figures out what to do, he can count on the resolve of the Australian people in expecting - not through fear, but through reason and proven success – that his government will keep his side of the compact on immigration policy. Better Rudd listen to history than the overblown and unthinking emotion of those on the Left.

11. Technology fuels great debate

http://blogs.theaustralian.news.com.au/houserules/index.php/theaustralian/comments/technology_fuels_great_debate/

House Rules Blog | *November 11, 2009*

MARTIN Ferguson isn't the most articulate bloke, but he said something straightforward yesterday. Straightforward and significant.

The Resources Minister was asked about climate change. "Technology created the problem and

technology will solve the problem,” he replied.

It’s a consideration missing from the current climate change debate. It’s missing because it doesn’t particularly suit any side.

It doesn’t fit with the ideology of anti-industrial Greens suspicious of technology, while sceptics won’t admit there is a problem.

But it raises a massive question of its own: which technology?

“Our government is focused on examination of all clean energy options,” Ferguson says. “It does not include nuclear.”

The minister likes natural gas. And he’s optimistic about the future for coal with carbon capture and storage.

He thinks the technology will work - with a carbon price to drive investment. But his opposition counterpart, the former resources minister Ian Macfarlane, isn’t so sure.

“The clean coal option has passed us by,” Macfarlane says. “Twenty years to wait before the technology is available. Thirty years before it is commercial. We will need to move on to other options by then.”

Macfarlane doesn’t mind gas but sees nuclear as unavoidable.

“In the short term, short to medium term, obviously we will use gas ... but in the longer term Australia will, like all our other economic partners, need to consider nuclear.”

As a new generation of power plants appears around the world, nuclear offers proven, off-the-shelf low-emission technology. Macfarlane knows that. So does Ferguson. Technology created the problem of climate change, and technology is available to solve the problem.

12. From The Times Nuclear alone won’t keep the power flowing

November 11, 2009

Britain’s energy policy is an incoherent mess. We need a simple and explicit carbon tax to fund the greenest alternatives

Dieter Helm

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article6911594.ece

Britain faces two urgent energy problems. First, we have simply not invested enough in infrastructure to meet future demand for heat and power. There is a yawning capacity gap that, in the next decade, will force prices up for consumers and industry. The second problem is how to mitigate climate change by cutting carbon emissions. The two problems will need more than £200 billion to fix in the next decade.

This week the Government made one small step in the right direction. It has speeded up the planning process and set out which sites should be considered for new nuclear power stations. However, in 2003 the Government had effectively ruled out nuclear power. The lights would be kept on by wind and gas. But within three years a spectacular U-turn had been made: now nuclear is essential. All the time this prevarication has been going on, existing power stations have been getting older, North Sea gas reserves have been running out, and climate change imperatives have become more pressing.

Luck has been on the Government’s side. But for the economic crisis, the red lights would already be flashing. Ironically, the recession has proved to be our best energy policy, cutting energy demand and, with it, carbon emissions. It has brought us a breathing space.

How did we get to this state? Partly because energy policy has never been taken seriously. Without a crisis, it is always someone else’s problem — and one for the future. Most solutions require customers (and voters) to pay more now — and that is something politicians are loath to admit. But bad news on bills — and an energy crisis — is coming unless radical action is taken soon.

BACKGROUND

Race to build 10 nuclear stations in Britain

Energy shortfalls are a danger in ten years

Going Nuclear

Fuel duty could be bad for the planet

Instead of a coherent, integrated policy, we have piecemeal support for particular technologies. Politicians want to be seen to be “doing something” for the various interested parties — especially for renewables and clean coal. So each gets its own set of supports.

Take wind. Britain has one of the most expensive support packages in the developed world. Customers have to buy a proportion of energy from renewable sources, paying the usual price and a premium that the Government guarantees. And that has been doubled for offshore wind.

The costs are far greater than conventional technologies, and make even nuclear look cheap. If, as a result, overall emissions were cut on a significant scale, it would at least meet the carbon objective. But because the wind does not blow all the time, there has to be back-up — carbon-emitting coal and gas.

Next, take clean coal. It too has its own government support. Carbon sequestration (CCS) — storing carbon in the ground — will be subsidised by a new levy on customers — linked to the price of carbon in the European Emissions Trading Scheme. What the customer gets is not, however, just clean coal technology — they will support several large new coal stations, most of which will not have to store carbon emissions until 2025. We need coal now because otherwise we will be too dependent on gas — and to back up the intermittent wind.

Now take nuclear. Unlike with wind power, customers are not obliged to buy it, and there is no special subsidy or levy. Nuclear is left to the market, but wind and clean coal are not.

The result is a mess, driven by the dangerous combination of the Government choosing the winners and lobbyists trying to capture subsidies. For all the good intentions, the result will be high cost and low impact. Instead of starting with the cheapest ways of reducing carbon emissions, Britain has started with the most expensive. So far success has been limited: We not only pay among the highest bills for wind, but in Europe only Cyprus and Malta generate a lower proportion of their electricity from it. Old nuclear is closing, but new nuclear is unlikely to appear much before 2020, and coal will not come to the rescue any time soon. The result is more gas, and, but for the recession, real risks to the security of supply.

There is a better way. Good energy policy is not rocket science. Instead of the piecemeal approach, coherence and integration are needed. Start with carbon. We must put a long-term price on it. This way the market can sort out the best way to reduce emissions and the financial costs that go with them. It was intended that the EU Emissions Trading System would do this, but it has proved short term, volatile and the prices are very low. A simple carbon tax would immediately create a uniform price; and if politicians commit to never lowering it, investors would have the confidence to put money into schemes and technologies that have a low carbon count.

No one likes new taxes, but a carbon tax would be a lot cheaper than the implicit taxes already in the pipeline for wind and clean coal. It could either be levied “upstream” on the carbon going into energy supplied to factories and households and the carbon content of manufacturing, or “downstream” on goods and services bought in the shops. Either way it will go on bills, and is better explicitly stated. It could also go on the carbon content of imports too, so British manufacturing is not disadvantaged.

The carbon tax is on its way. France has adopted such a proposal, and the Scandinavian countries are already there. Soon most countries in Europe will go down this route. Even the Conservatives suggest something similar. The trick will be not just to introduce a carbon tax, but to get rid of other levies as well. Simplification should be a core objective.

The second step is to sort out how to ensure that investments are made into a diversity of fuel supplies. Governments want large-scale, long-term, capital-intensive power stations. Investors have to know that there is a good chance customers will pay. They need commitment, and creating long-term contracts is the obvious way forward. To do this, the energy markets must be reformed so that they deliver security of supply, not just short-term energy. What is needed is a longer-term market in energy contracts — in effect a market in the capacity to produce the energy when needed. Markets are means to ends: government must specify the ends.

The bad news comes if we carry on as we are. Present energy policy will be very expensive, especially later in the next decade. As capacity margins tighten, long before the lights go out, prices will rise. Higher prices are the real consequence of inadequate investment.

Britain now needs an energy policy — before, not after, a crisis.

Dieter Helm is Professor of Energy Policy at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of New College

13. METRICS

The Nuclear Wait

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/11/01/business/metrics.html?scp=5&sq=Nuclear%20Power&st=cse>

With climate talks starting in Copenhagen next month, many countries are eager to report advancements in nuclear power.

The United States now has new applications for 26 nuclear power reactors — impressive at first glance because the industry has been at a near-standstill for 30 years. But the government approval process is lengthy, and no new building has begun.

Companies that design reactors, like General Electric and Westinghouse, and construction firms that build them, have experienced swift growth as countries in Europe and Asia clamor for their business.

But the companies are concerned that the credit crisis has dealt a critical blow to nuclear power in the United States, which had been perceived as undergoing a renaissance starting in 2004.

“If the U.S. is going to be able to compete in the world economy in the future, we have to expand nuclear at the pace of other countries,” said Aris Candris, chief executive of Westinghouse. “Energy is behind every source of wealth generation.”

Not everyone embraces expansion. Some countries are proceeding cautiously, concerned that the climate advantages may not outweigh the financial costs and environmental risks of nuclear waste.

Nevertheless, more than 70 new plants are under construction around the world as the demand for energy — and the aversion to carbon emissions — continues to rise.