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Is it for Real?

Peter Burgess, Former President AISF

(Ed Note: This article was first published in Surface Finishing Magazine Dec 2009)

At the turn of the first millennium there was a king in southern England who, flattered by his courtiers as a man of great power, set his throne up on the sea shore and commanded the tide not to come in. His power was not as great as his ego and his feet and throne were wet by the incoming tide. Clearly, his earthly power was no match for far greater forces than he understood, and they were not at his discretion to command.

A thousand years on, and I believe that we find ourselves in a similar position with those who hold the opinion that carbon is the cause for climate change. Let's just stop the increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide and we can stop the changing climate. Attempting to stop massive natural phenomenon was nonsense a thousand years ago and remains so today.

WAY BACK WHEN:

During the past million years or so, the earth has been a warm place with regular periods of cold - *Ice Ages* - in between. During two of the past six Ice Ages, there was ice at sea level at the equator and five of these Ice Ages occurred when the carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere was up to 1,000 times greater than now. During the last "warm period between Ice Ages" some 125,000 years ago, sea level was 7 metres higher than at present and atmospheric temperature was some 5 degrees warmer.

So, from ice bergs at the equator to grass fields in the arctic regions, this planet has seen it all before. It is also a fact that permanent ice as the polar cap in the northern hemisphere is, geologically speaking, a fairly recent phenomenon. In fact, the planet is "warm" about 80% of the time, and this we know as fact from a great body of geological evidence. So let's acknowledge that these extremes of climate are a feature of life on this third rock from the sun. Based on hard evidence from the past, the proposition that climate should not change is absurd.

MY GREAT GREAT GREAT GRANDAD TOLD ME...

In more recent times – on the geological scale – where historical evidence exists from people, not from ice and rocks, dramatic changes in climate have been witnessed and written about.



About the turn of the first millennium and for about three hundred years to the end of the 1200s, the earth enjoyed a period of significant warming. Norsemen sailed across to North America and established settlements along the way – grapes were grown in Newfoundland and England enjoyed a sub-tropical climate. How else would Greenland, now a frozen wasteland, get its name? Atmospheric temperature was at least 5 degrees warmer than at present.

All this changed dramatically in the late 1200s. It took just 23 years to change from the Mediæval Warming to the Little Ice Age. There were glaciers in Germany and the grain fields of Mediterranean France could not be tilled because of perma-frost even in mid-summer. In his book, *“A Short History of The World”*, written before “climate change” was the buzz phrase, Australian historian, Geoffrey Blainey, claimed that this period of great cold was the last brake on the ever-increasing population growth of mankind, with starvation and disease great causes of death. His book is worth a read, as he lists in just a few pages, the effects of the several massive climate changes that took place from the warming to the sudden cooling to the warming again, and all written as historical fact, backed by historical research.

Both of these events – significant warming and significant cooling beyond what is forecast for the next hundred years – were undoubtedly events of climate change on a significant scale, but no one at the time had the arrogance to assume that they could stop it, let alone claim that they had a complete understanding of the cause of these purely natural occurrences. And man-made carbon dioxide was not even a twinkle in its granddaddy’s eye!

If these massive climate change events took place in the historical past before industrialisation, why is the most recent warming now due to human activity?

Just as an aside and while addressing the current “climate modelling”, since the last Ice Age the ocean levels have risen by about 130 metres, which dwarfs the projections seen in current forecasts of the dire consequences to occur in the next 100 years, even if they are right. And records show that some 6,000 years ago the sea level was 2 metres higher than at present and it was at least 3 degrees warmer than now. Man-made?

These “real world” events make reliance on models a very

Australia consumer law update

(Excerpts from this email has been sent by NSW Fair Trading on behalf of all Commonwealth, State and Territory consumer affairs agencies)

WHAT IS THE AUSTRALIAN CONSUMER LAW (ACL)?

The ACL is a single, national law concerning consumer protection and fair trading, which applies in the same way nationally and in each State and Territory.

For the first time, consumers have the same protections and expectations about business conduct wherever they are in Australia. Similarly, businesses will have the same obligations and responsibilities wherever they operate in Australia.

The Productivity Commission estimated that this reform could provide benefits to the Australian community of between \$1.5 billion and \$4.5 billion a year.

DOES IT REPLACE ANY EXISTING LAWS?

The Australian Consumer Law replaces previous Commonwealth, state and territory consumer protection legislation in fair trading acts and the Trade Practices Act 1974. The Competition and Consumer Act 2010 is the new name for the Trade Practices Act 1974. The Australian Consumer Law is a schedule to the Competition and Consumer Act.

Aspects of the law are also reflected in the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) Act 2001 to protect consumers of financial products and services.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR CHANGES?

Changes will vary depending on the trading practices that have previously existed in states and territories. The biggest change is the introduction of a single national set of consumer definitions and provisions, some of which differ from those currently used in the Trade Practices Act 1974.

Other key changes affect:

- consumer guarantees (replacing statutory conditions and warranties)

- unsolicited consumer agreements (replacing door-to-door sales and other direct marketing)
- product safety
- lay-bys
- information standards which now apply for goods and services
- unfair contract terms (introduced 1 July 2010).

There will be increased penalties for non-compliance.

WHO REGULATES THE NEW LAW?

Australian courts and tribunals can enforce the law, including those of the states and territories. The regulators of this law include:

- the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC)
- the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC)
- each state and territory consumer protection agency.

Australia’s consumer protection agencies will have more enforcement powers under the new law.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR BUSINESS?

As a business, you are responsible for understanding your legal obligations. You may wish to seek legal advice of the impact of the new law on your business practices.

Smaller businesses will find that there are increased penalties under the new law. Corporations which were previously operating under the Trade Practices Act 1974 will find the penalties similar.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR CONSUMERS?

Under the new law, consumers will have the same protection, rights and responsibilities across Australia.

dubious enterprise.

IN LIVING MEMORY:

As the earth now works its way out of this Little Ice Age, there are claims that we are on course for the most dramatic climate change and it is all caused by human activity. Just look, say the proponents, at the rising temperature over the past thirty/fifty/one hundred years, peaking in 1998. And it is all related to atmospheric carbon dioxide! The alarm bells are ringing louder and louder and, from a rigorous scientific point of view, must rank right up there with Chicken Little's "The sky is falling. The sky is falling."

Lets see....,

1. The Barrier Reef will disappear, even though it is made of carbonates (from carbon dioxide) and was formed when atmospheric carbon dioxide levels were many times their current levels.
2. Climate change will bring dengue fever as far south as Brisbane, even though it was a feature of life in Brisbane until the early 1900s.

Give me a break!

Carbon dioxide levels have risen by nearly 4% since the global temperature peak in 1998, but global temperatures have stabilised, if not started to decrease. The recent Aussie Rules Grand Final was played on the coldest October day in Melbourne for nearly 40 years and Sydney has just experienced its coldest October average temperature for 30 years. Must be global warming! And it was only as recently as the 70s that the alarmists were trying to convince us that their best theories on climate indicated that we were heading for another ice age!

There are many disappointing things in the current rush to address climate change:

- Scientific debate is stifled. Adelaide-based Professor Ian Plimer, a well known climate change sceptic and world-famous geologist could not get his publisher to print his book which rebuts many of the climate change "theories", and was forced to go to a little-known publisher in Bendigo to have his work printed. It has sold out its first two runs. Be afraid, be very afraid, when voices of dissent are actively stifled!
- It is claimed that climate-change models, when fed actual

historical data cannot replicate the past with any accuracy. If they can't "predict" a factual past using real data, why should we be putting our faith in their predictions of doom and gloom for the future?

- Have you noticed over the past two to three years as the global temperatures "refused" to rise above their 1998 peak despite rising atmospheric carbon dioxide levels, that the advocates had to change their song from "global warming" to "dangerous climate change". And "carbon dioxide" had to be referred to as "carbon pollution". If you didn't think you were being given a spiel like that of a travelling snake-oil salesman, think again.
- If the mainstream theory is challenged, the opponents are vilified with terms like "dinosaur", "sceptic" etc and there is little or no funding for researching the counter-argument. The debate has taken on the religious overtones of the Middle Ages when "heretics" and "witches" were burned at the stake. This is a well-worn path when your argument is on shaky ground – play the man not the ball!
- Apart from carbon dioxide being a "green-house" gas – yes it actually is just that and life on earth is desperately dependent on it for survival – one other substantial contributor to global warming is water vapour. It outweighs carbon dioxide by several orders of magnitude in its volume, but it would be impossible for mankind to affect in any great way, so the advocates just ignore it and move the focus back to something they think they can "manage".
- Carbon dioxide is a plant food. More of it in the atmosphere would probably be beneficial to plant life on earth and especially so in Australia where our flora is almost always stressed by drought.

None of the above in any way detracts from the sound argument that as the current occupiers of planet Earth, we should do everything in our power to minimise the environmental impact of mankind and attempt to reduce the pressures we place on air, land and water. After all, we are only custodians for future generations, and we must attempt to hand it over in as good a condition as we would expect to receive it.

But if we want to constrain those same future generations to an energy-poor future, a lesser future, because we priced the cheapest abundant source out of sight, future

generations will be that much poorer for our actions.

And just in case you thought this was merely a theoretical debate, try seeing the CPRS (Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme – there's that snake-oil salesman again) and the ETS as being only an environmental thing, when you see the billions upon billions of dollars it pours into government coffers from 2012 and beyond – a tax is a tax is a tax. Look no further than your electricity or gas bill! To quote Ian Plimer: "No civilisation has ever been saved by a new tax."

I DON'T BELIEVE A WORD OF IT.

Two things to finish up with.

1. Don't take any of the above as fact; challenge it all. But do read up on some of the counter arguments – read Blainey's book, read Ian Plimer's book, or download his piece from Ockham's Razor on Radio National, Sunday October 18th. Please do not placidly accept what is being fed through the press is fact – bad news sells and what bigger bad news than the end of life on earth!
2. Even if you believe that action on a grand scale should be taken, if the entire Australian carbon dioxide contribution was wiped out tomorrow because we ceased to exist, it wouldn't make the slightest bit of difference.

Anyone for a chair by the seaside to watch the tide coming in?

More information request Burgess 0411 to progbus@pbinsitute.net

Hi Mario

It's taken me a while, but I finally got a chance to sit and read this newsletter over a cup of tea. I just wanted to let you know how impressed I was at the quality, variety and relevance of the articles. Thanks for including me on the mail-out.

cheers
Kerri



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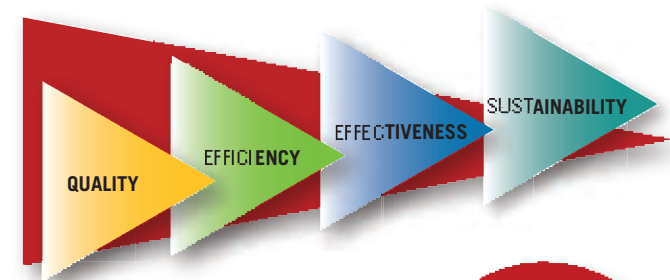
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