

SPPI News Search 10-03-08



Global warming: why cut one 3,000th of a degree?

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article4849167.ece

Britain's efforts to reduce the speed of global warming will cost huge sums of money and have a pitifully tiny effect

Bjørn Lomborg

Global warming is seen everywhere as one of the most important issues. From the EU to the G8, leaders trip over one another to affirm their commitment to cutting CO₂ to heal the world. What they do not often acknowledge - in part because it would lose them support - is that the solutions proffered are incredibly costly and will end up doing amazingly little good, even in a century's time. This is the truly inconvenient truth of the politics of global warming.

Let's be clear. I'm not contesting the existence of global warming. Doing so is silly, given the clear and strong results from the UN climate panel. Global warming will most probably warm the planet by between 1.6 and 3.8C above current temperatures by the end of the century. The total cost of the consequences of this warming is estimated by William Nordhaus, of Yale University, to be \$15 trillion.

However, we need to keep our cool: global warming's total cost will be only about one half of 1 per cent of the net worth of the 21st century; that is the current worth of all the wealth projected to be generated in this century. Panicking is unlikely to lead to sensible policies. It could lead to exorbitantly expensive policies, which will do great harm.

Many of the proffered global warming policies are designed to help politicians bathe in the warm glow of good intentions, with little or no regard to the mounting costs and infinitesimal benefits.

It is a well-rehearsed point that the Kyoto Protocol was a terribly inefficient, hugely costly way to do virtually no good. Even if every industrialised country, including the United States, had accepted the protocol, and everyone had lived up to its requirements for the entire century, it would have had virtually no impact, even a hundred years from now. It would reduce the global temperature increase by an immeasurable 0.15C by the year 2100. The cost of implementing Kyoto, taking the average figure from the various top macroeconomic models, would have been almost £100 billion annually for the rest of the century.

The US declined to sign up to Kyoto and many countries, including Spain, Japan, Canada, and Greece, have had a hard time living up to their pledges. It is likely that the total reduction in carbon emissions will be less than 5 per cent of what Kyoto promised.

Yet the EU and others advocate that Kyoto-style policies are still right, only that much more than Kyoto is needed. The EU has promised to cut its emissions by 20 per cent by 2020, through a 20 per cent increase in renewables. There seems to be no better reason for this decision than that 20 and 20 in 2020 sounds good. Gordon Brown has wholeheartedly backed the plan, which includes making a dramatic increase in renewables - mainly 3,500 wind turbines in the North Sea.

The British Government estimates the cumulative carbon saving from all its plans at somewhere between 950 and 1,100 million tonnes of CO₂ by 2030. The Department for Business will not give

a figure beyond that timeframe but, given that wind turbines have a lifetime of about two decades, this seems the relevant cumulative reduction given the investment. The department confirms that the total investment from public and private sources into renewables will be about £100 billion.

Computer modelling - using DICE (dynamic integrated model of climate and the economy) - shows that the net effect of the UK renewables effort is impossibly tiny. The temperature increase by 2100 without Mr Brown's plan would have been 2.4536181C. With the best-case scenario the huge UK effort means that the temperature at the end of the century would be 2.4532342C. The effect is a difference of about 0.00038C - or about one three-thousandth of a degree in a hundred years. This is the equivalent of delaying the temperature increase by the end of the century by a little less than a week.

Of course, these numbers are way too precise: different models and assumptions would give somewhat different results. Yet because we are talking about relative change, the absolute climate sensitivity of the particular model matters very little. Thus the order of magnitude is robust and indicates an astonishingly small effect for a very large cost.

If one imagines that the reductions could be sustained across the century (which presumably would also call for five repeated investments of hundreds of billions of pounds), the effect is still very small - a temperature reduction of about one six-hundredth of a degree.

Using the latest academic meta-study by Professor Richard Tol we can calculate that cutting 1,100 million tonnes of CO₂ would create benefits worth £4 billion in terms of the impact on agriculture, forestry, preventing deaths from heat and cold, disease and unmanaged eco-systems. At a cost of £100 billion, the investment involves paying £1 to do less than 4p worth of good.

The UK emits about 2 per cent of global CO₂. Thus we could imagine the world as composed of 50 UKs, each emitting one fiftieth of the carbon. If all 50 of our "UKs" paid a £100 billion to reduce temperatures by one three-thousandth of a degree in 100 years, the result would be still be trivial: one sixtieth of a degree by the end of the century. Costs would most probably increase similarly, fiftyfold to £5,000 billion. This amazing sum would simply postpone global warming and its problems by a mere 11 months by the end of the century.

The cost of £5,000 billion is equivalent to a hundredfold increase in global donations to developing countries. To make a simple comparison, the UN estimates that for about £40 billion annually, we could solve all major basic problems in the world - we could give clean drinking water, sanitation, basic education and healthcare to every person in the world. But instead we are spending a fortune achieving almost nothing.

Of course, we shouldn't ignore global warming. But instead of trying to cut CO₂ emissions, we should focus on dramatically increasing the funding into energy research and development. What matters is getting low-cost low-carbon technology available faster. If the price of renewable energy dropped below the cost of fossil fuels by mid-century, everyone - including China and India - would switch to the greener alternatives. Work done by the Copenhagen Consensus suggests that such a policy could be 300 times better for the world than the UK approach. We could end up doing more than £11 worth of good for each £1 invested. While we would do much more good in total terms, the cost would also be much lower, and hence much more likely to be implemented.

When it comes to climate, we have to come to our senses. Yes, global warming is real and caused by human beings, but it doesn't mean we should panic in our policy decisions. We need to do the right thing - and invest in discovering and developing new low-carbon technology.

Bjørn Lomborg is adjunct professor at the Copenhagen Business School and the author of *Cool It: The Sceptical Environmentalist's Guide to Global Warming*



The Cuban Diet

<http://www.ibdeditorials.com/IBDArticles.aspx?id=307754036977947#>

By INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY

Wednesday, October 01, 2008 4:20 PM PT

Food Rationing: The global warming scare isn't about the environment as much as it is about smothering capitalism and forcing Americans to change their lifestyles. A report out of Great Britain confirms this.

Basing its recommendation on the theory that the greenhouse gases emitted by meat and dairy production are principal contributors to global warming, the Food Climate Research Network, operating out of the University of Surrey, strongly suggests that meat and milk consumption in developed countries be rationed.

This nonsense emanating from an institute of supposedly higher learning is alarmingly similar to the madness spouted by Rajendra Pachauri, the vegetarian chair of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, who wants people to "give up meat for one day (a week) initially, and decrease it from there."

The limit prescribed by the British group is four ounces of meat every other day and one liter of milk, "just about enough for cereal in the morning" — or 100 grams of cheese — each week.

Americans currently consume roughly 10 ounces of meat a day and drink a little more than 1.5 liters of milk per week. Each of us eats more than 270 grams of cheese on a weekly basis.

Fearmongers who want to ration meat and milk would force the world to eat like residents of communist Cuba, where food is rationed by a malevolent regime that has institutionalized scarcity. In that workers' paradise, the average ration of meat — if available and including fish — is two ounces per day. Milk is distributed only to children under 7, and each Cuban gets 12 eggs per month.

"Limited in what they can eat, Cubans spend much time thinking about their next meal," AP reporter Anita Snow, who lived on a Cuban diet for 30 days, wrote last year. "I found myself obsessing about food as well."

When man reaches the point where his mental resources have to be directed toward obtaining his next meal, he has taken a step backward.

Tara Garnett, author of the Surrey report, reportedly believes that simply encouraging voluntary changes in habits doesn't work and supports government restrictions on greenhouse gas emissions. It's reasonable to assume that she would embrace state-mandated food rationing, using her group's guidelines, as well.

It wasn't hard to see this coming. The forces that want to scare the world about global warming wish to dictate how the rest of us live, from the homes we live in to the automobiles we drive and, now, to the food we eat. They want people to believe that they have only the public interest at heart, but in reality their goal is to set themselves up as autocrats who can shape the world so that it suits their tastes.



Global Warming Alarmism is Unacceptable and Should be Confronted

<http://www.hawaiireporter.com/story.aspx?ff0796e1-e571-4b15-9d0a-1d53dff2a6bc>

By Vaclav Klaus, 10/1/2008 9:15:22 AM

Many thanks for the invitation and for the opportunity to be here with all of you. I have visited the U.S. many times since the fall of communism in November 1989 when – after almost half a century – traveling to the free world became for people like me possible again, but I've never been to this beautiful city and to the state of Oregon before. Once again, thank you very much.

I am expected to talk here about global warming today (even though I don't really feel it, especially not in this room) and my address will be devoted mostly to this issue. As you may expect Oregon is – for me – in this respect connected with the well-known Oregon petition which warned and keeps warning against the irrationality and one-sidedness of the global warming campaign. Rational people know that the warming we experience is well within the range of what seems to have been a natural fluctuation over the last ten thousand years. We should keep saying this very loudly.

Before I start talking about this issue, I would like to put the topic of my today's speech into the broader perspective. During my visits in the U.S. in the last 19 years, I made speeches on a wide range of topics. There has, however, always been a connection between them. They were all about freedom and about threats endangering it. My today's speech will not be different. I will try to argue and to convince you that even the global warming issue is about freedom. It is not about temperature or CO₂. It is, therefore, not necessary to discuss either climatology, or any other related natural science but the implications of the global warming panic upon us, upon our freedom, our prosperity, our institutions and our legislation. It is part of a bigger story.

At the time that followed immediately after the fall of communism, I spoke here about my (and our) experience with the dismantling of this tragic, irrational, repressive and inefficient system, about the experience with the rather complicated transition from one social system to a radically different one and with the intricacies of building a free society and market economy. We had learnt some useful lessons and they should not be forgotten. This is not an issue in my country anymore now, it is all over there, even though it continues to be relevant in other places of the world.

There are other phenomena that should be discussed and warned against now. I very carefully watch and study the situation on the European continent. Applauding the end of communism is not sufficient. I am more and more nervous about the developments that followed. I have always tried to explain to the Americans the meaning and substance of the European integration process and especially the undergoing shift from evolutionary and more or less natural (or genuine) integration, based on opening up, on liberalization, on elimination of various protectionist barriers, towards politically and bureaucratically organized unification. We are close to the formation of a supranational entity called the European Union, resulting in the weakening of democracy and free markets in Europe.

To be correctly understood, I am not against my country's EU membership (by the way, it was me who handed in the formal application to enter the EU in 1996 when I was prime minister of the Czech Republic), because regretfully there is no other way to go in Europe these days. The recent developments in the EU are, however, very problematic: we see and feel less freedom, less democracy, less sovereignty, more of regulation, and more of extensive government intervention than we had expected when communism collapsed.

As if this wasn't enough, in the recent years we came to witness yet another major attack on freedom and free markets, an attack based on environmentalism and – in particular – its global warming variant. The explicitly stated intentions of global warming activists are frightening. They want to change us, to change the whole mankind, to change human behavior, to change the structure and functioning of society, to change the whole system of values which has been gradually established during centuries. These intentions are dangerous and their consequences far-reaching. These people want to restrict our freedom. It is our duty to say NO.

As I said at the beginning, the current world-wide panic as regards dramatic, in the past allegedly unknown global climate changes and their supposedly catastrophic consequences for the future of human civilization must not remain without a resolute answer of the more or less silent majority of rationally thinking people.

After having studied this issue for a couple of years, I am convinced that this panic doesn't have a solid ground and that it demonstrates an apparent disregard for the past experience of mankind. I know that its propagandists have been using all possible obstructions to avoid exposure to rational arguments and I know that the substance of their arguments is not science. It represents, on the contrary, an abuse of science by a non-liberal, extremely authoritarian, freedom and prosperity endangering ideology of environmentalism.

It is important to demonstrate that the global warming story is not an issue belonging to the field of natural sciences only or mostly, even though Al Gore and his fellow-travelers pretend it is the case. It is again, as always in the past, the old, for many of us well-known debate: freedom and free markets vs. dirigism, political control and expansive and unstoppable government regulation of human behavior. In the past, the market was undermined mostly by means of socialist arguments with slogans like: "stop the immiseration of the masses". Now, the attack is led under the slogan: stop the immiseration (or perhaps destruction) of the Planet.

This shift seems to me dangerous. The new ambitions look more noble, more attractive and more appealing. They are also very shrewdly shifted towards the future and thus practically "immunized" from reality, from existing evidence, from available observations, and from standard testing of scientific hypotheses. That is the reason why they are loved by the politicians, the media and all their friends among public intellectuals. For the same reason I consider environmentalism to be the most effective and, therefore, the most dangerous vehicle for advocating large scale government intervention and unprecedented suppression of human freedom at this very moment.

Feeling very strongly about this danger and trying to oppose it was the main reason for my writing the book "Blue Planet in Green Shackles" (2) with its hopefully sufficiently understandable subtitle "What is endangered: Climate or Freedom?". It has also been the driving force behind my active involvement in the current Climate Change Debate and behind my being the only head of state who openly and explicitly challenged the undergoing global warming hysteria at the UN Climate Change Conference in New York City in September 2007. (3)

I am frustrated by the fact that many people, including some leading politicians, who privately express similar views, are more or less publicly silent. We keep hearing one-sided propaganda regarding the greenhouse hypothesis, but we are not introduced to serious counter-arguments, both inside climatology, and in the field of social sciences.

We, economists, owe the society a lot. We did not succeed in explaining the practical inexhaustibility of resources, including energy resources (on condition they are rationally used, which means with the help of undistorted prices and well-defined property rights). We did not come up with simple, well-argued and convincing studies about the costs and benefits of the currently proposed “green” measures and policies and about many other things.

I feel very strongly about it. I used to live in a world where prices and property rights were made meaningless. It gave me the opportunity to see how irrationally the economy was organized and how damaged the environment was as a result. This experience tells me that we should not let anyone play the market again and dictate what to produce, how to produce it, what inputs to use, what technologies to implement. This would result in another disaster and in the true “immiseration of the masses”, especially in developing countries. We already see some evidence for this now.

We should also speak about the convincing human experience with technological progress and give reasons for our justified belief not only in its continuation but very probable acceleration in the future. It is rational to expect that technological changes will be more important than any potential climate changes. There is no need for technologic skepticism and no reason to expect that we will enter a stationary world – unless the environmentalists win the debate and stop human progress. (4)

The economists should also discuss very relevant future shift in the structure of demand which will be based on the so called income or wealth effect. With higher income and wealth, people demand more of environmental protection which is a classic luxury good. It is, therefore, not necessary to radically decrease today’s consumption by coercion, because the much more affluent people in the future will have enough time to make rational consumption and investment decisions without our today’s “quasi-help”. Economic growth and the accumulation of wealth do not lead to deterioration of the environment. The empirical work in the field of the environmental Kuznets curves gives us reassuring arguments about it.

We should also explain to the non-experts the idea of discounting as the only rational basis for intergenerational comparisons, and for our today’s decisions about the future. Everyone who wants to protect future generations should express his or her presumptions about this intergenerational relationship and to clarify how he or she sees the future and what weight and importance he or she attaches to it. The environmentalists assume that no matter how distant the future is, it is of equal importance as the present, which is against human nature and experience. The objectively existing preference of rational human beings of the present over the future is traditionally discussed by means of the term discount rate. To defend this position is neither shortsightedness nor ignorance on our side. The models of the environmentalists produce strange results mainly because they consider the “social discount rate” to be zero or close to zero.

Another issue is the rational or irrational risk aversion. Every rational human being minimizes risks – but not at all costs. The precautionary principle, this dogma of environmentalists, leads to an unjustifiable maximization of risk aversion, which can in the end succeed in blocking and prohibiting almost everything. The environmentalists systematically overestimate the negative impacts of human activities and forget the positive ones. Such approach cannot bring good outcomes. We should offer standard cost-benefit analysis instead.

Even more frustrating is the fact that the economists do not pay sufficient attention to the abuse of the words “market” and “price” by the global warming alarmists. They want nothing else than to tax us, but instead speak about market-friendly “emissions trading schemes”. We have to tell them that the emissions licenses are implicit taxes and that playing the market is impossible. The economists convincingly argue that tax changes have very large effects. Recent U.S. study (5) shows that “an exogenous tax increase of GDP lowers real GDP by roughly 2 to 3 per cent.” It

works mostly through the strong response of investment to tax changes. And the environmentalists keep advocating large tax increases under the disguise of the “price of carbon”.

The global warming alarmists succeeded also in creating incentives which led to the rise of a very powerful rent-seeking group. These rent-seekers profit

- from trading the licenses to emit carbon dioxide;
- from constructing unproductive wind, sun and other equipments able to produce only highly subsidized electric energy;
- from growing non-food crops which produce non-carbon fuels at the expense of producing food (with well-known side effects);
- from doing research, writing and speaking about global warming.

These people represent a strong voice in the global warming debate. They are not interested in CO₂, freedom or markets, they are interested in their businesses and their profits – “produced” with the help of politicians.

With all my criticism, I hope it is evident that I am not speaking against paying due attention to the environment and to environmental protection, because that’s another story. I would also like to stress that I don’t oppose the claim that the climate-anthropogenic carbon dioxide nexus justifies watching and research, but I am convinced that the existing evidence does not justify the currently proposed expensive, economy and society disrupting and probably useless and ineffective measures.

As I said many times before: the current world-wide dispute is not about environment, it is about freedom. And I would add “about prosperity and living conditions of billions of people.” To avoid a disaster, “we should trust in the rationality of man and in the outcome of spontaneous evolution of human society, not in the virtues of political activism.”

Vaclav Klaus is the current President of the Czech Republic. He gave this speech at the Hilton Hotel in Portland, Oregon in September 2008.



FINANCIAL CRISIS MAKING CLIMATE PACT 'DIFFICULT

Bloomberg, 1 October 2008

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601100&sid=aE8jnmp659is&refer=germany>

By Jeremy van Loon

Sept. 30 (Bloomberg) -- The financial turmoil that led to the collapse of Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. and Fortis's bailout by three governments is making talks on a new climate change accord "more difficult," Germany's foreign minister said.

As the U.S. discusses a \$700 billion rescue package for banks rocked by the credit crisis and European governments step in with financial lifelines for firms such as Fortis, societies will change their ``priorities," Frank-Walter Steinmeier said today in Berlin.

"No one is saying that climate change isn't a serious problem but when a bank goes under, there's an immediate need for a reaction," he said. "That same sense of urgency is not there when you're dealing with a process that happens over a longer period" like reaching an agreement on slowing carbon-dioxide emissions.

Faltering growth and rising unemployment in the U.S. as well as the credit crisis that brought down Lehman and forced the hasty rescue of Merrill Lynch & Co., two of the world's largest investment banks, are coinciding with efforts to reach a global agreement on how to limit CO₂ output. Almost 200 countries have just over a year before a pact must be signed in Copenhagen to replace the Kyoto Protocol.

Europe will maintain its "leadership role" in climate change, Steinmeier said at the briefing. The 27-member European Union plans to reduce CO₂ emissions by 20 percent by 2020, partly through the increased use of renewable energy.

FULL STORY at

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601100&sid=aE8jnm659is&refer=germany>



FINANCIAL STORM DIMS HOPE OF TOUGH U.N. CLIMATE PACT

Reuters, 1 October 2008

<http://www.reuters.com/article/reutersEdge/idUSTRE4904FZ20081001?pageNumber=1&virtualBrandChannel=10112>

By Alister Doyle, Environment Correspondent

OSLO (Reuters) - Global financial mayhem is dimming prospects for a strong new U.N. pact to fight climate change, but it might aid cheap green schemes such as insulating buildings to save energy, analysts said.

The turmoil, straining government coffers with bank bailouts, may sap interest in more costly projects such as burying heat-trapping carbon dioxide from coal-fired power plants, refining biodiesel or some renewable energies.

"There will be a shift in investments" toward energy efficiency, said Nick Mabey, director of E3G think-tank in London. Saving energy, such as by insulating buildings, gives quick returns and can help create jobs.

A year ago, many governments were billing the fight against warming as humanity's top long-term challenge after the U.N. Climate Panel said human use of fossil fuels would bring more floods, heatwaves, droughts and rising seas.

Now, with the United States caught in a financial storm that may cost \$700 billion of taxpayers' money to fix, a plan to agree a new U.N. treaty to fight global warming in Copenhagen in December 2009 is looking ever more ambitious.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said on Tuesday the market difficulties would make it harder to agree a climate deal, while U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama said last week he may be forced to scale back his planned investments in energy.

"It's starting to weigh on peoples' minds that the whole process could go completely wrong," said Mabey. In the worst case, the negotiations could collapse, like U.N. trade talks.

"The problem of climate change is going to stick with us. But the pace and the scale of ambition may be less in the near term," said Elliot Diringer, a director at the Pew Center on Global Climate Change in Washington.

SMARTER

"Hopefully the crisis will make us smarter in spending our money," said Bjorn Lomborg, Danish author of "The Skeptical Environmentalist," who says many governments like Britain focus too much on costly projects such as offshore windmills. More mundane carbon-saving projects may benefit.

FULL STORY at

<http://www.reuters.com/article/reutersEdge/idUSTRE4904FZ20081001?pageNumber=1&virtualBrandChannel=10112>



CHINA CALLS ON RICH NATIONS TO SLASH EMISSIONS BY 95%

Bloomberg, 1 October 2008

http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601080&sid=aX_2o_WCM4uU&refer=asia

By Mathew Carr

Oct. 1 (Bloomberg) -- China, the world's most populous nation, called on wealthier countries to slash production of greenhouse gases as much as 95 percent by mid-century and leave developing economies with a lower pollution-cutting burden.

In a preliminary step to tackle global-warming emissions, the proposal seeks cuts of 25 percent to 40 percent by 2020 from 1990's level, the Chinese government said in a statement on the Web site of a United Nations agency that oversees climate treaties.

China, whose economy expanded 11.9 percent last year and is the fourth-largest in the world, wants slower-growing rich nations such as the U.S., Britain and Japan to set targets because their industries and vehicles have caused most of the historic build-up of polluting gases. Carbon dioxide, the main man-made greenhouse gas, lasts a century or more in the atmosphere, scientists say.

China's demand for 95 percent cuts is ambitious and has "zero" chance of acceptance by developed nations, said Dennis Mignon, an analyst with First Climate in Bad Vilbel, Germany. Industrialized governments "will be focused on maintaining economic growth" as the credit crisis bites, Mignon said.

Kyoto Successor

About 180 nations are locked in a series of eight negotiations to form a climate-protection agreement under supervision by the UN climate agency. They have set a deadline of the end of 2009 to devise a successor to the Kyoto treaty, which is set to expire in 2012.

"Only with such a mid-term target being clearly determined is it meaningful to talk about any long-term goals for emission reductions," China said in its submission to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, based in Bonn.

China warned rich nations not to "twist" the mission to suit their own needs and left the door open for further agreements. Any accord reached at the eighth round of talks, planned for Copenhagen at the end of next year, "shall not be a final result," China said.

Europe, the U.S. and other industrialized countries should contribute 0.5 percent to 1 percent of their national economic output to help developing countries cope with global warming and reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases, China said, repeating a proposal presented at a UN-sponsored climate meeting in Accra, Ghana, in August.

World carbon dioxide emissions from energy use rose 2.8 percent last year as coal consumption outpaced crude oil and clean-burning natural gas, BP Plc data show.

Copyright 2008, Bloomberg



EU DIVISIONS DEEPEN IN RUN-UP TO UN CLIMATE CONFERENCE

Reuters, 1 October 2008

<http://www.planetark.com/dailynewsstory.cfm/newsid/50426/story.htm>

POLAND: October 1, 2008

WARSAW - The European Union must reach a consensus on climate policy if it wants to play a leading role in UN-led talks on a new pact to cut greenhouse gases, a Polish official said on Tuesday.

A package of climate measures proposed by the European Commission -- the EU executive -- aims, among other things, to cut carbon dioxide emissions by a fifth by 2020 compared with 1990 levels. However, it faces opposition from some member states and from the car industry.

France, holder of the rotating EU presidency, hopes to forge a compromise among the 27 member states by December when negotiators meet in Poznan, Poland, to discuss a new global deal on limiting greenhouse gas emissions.

"For Poland, the current proposal is still more a threat than an opportunity, I think. If the EU wants to set an example in Poznan, it has to work out a consensus within the bloc first," Piotr Serafin, a deputy head of the Office of the Committee for European Integration, told a climate change panel organised by a pro EU think-tank on Tuesday.

"Only then will it be able to act as a role model on the world stage. Tension in the global negotiations will be between rich and poor. And you cannot force China or India into a deal. Europe must work out its own consensus in order to exert pressure on the global stage."

Poland fears ambitious EU goals for curbing emissions would result in energy price increases of up to 70 percent. With fellow ex-communist states Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania, it has signed a statement calling for more debate on Brussels' plans.

Some political analysts have seen the declaration of the five ex-communist countries as an attempt to build up a blocking minority in the EU that would force the Commission to seek a compromise on its plans.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said in June Warsaw might try to block the plan if Warsaw's demands were not met.

"It would be hard for me to imagine a situation in which the climate package -- with all its long-term consequences -- would be approved by one group outvoting the other," Serafin said. "Anyway, the target date set by the French presidency may turn out to be a bit too ambitious."

Poland, which derives about 95 percent of its electricity from coal, wants to delay Commission plans for the start of full auctioning of carbon dioxide emission permits in 2013.

At present, companies are granted some emission permits for free but in the future they will have to buy all permits, increasing their costs. (Reporting by Gabriela Baczynska, editing by Andrew Dobbie)



CARBON CAPS ARE CREATING A EUROPEAN ENERGY CRISIS

Planet Gore, 30 September 2008

<http://planetgore.nationalreview.com/post/?q=OTczOWJmZWWE1MWY3MzFmZTJkNzgwNDdlOWY4ODgwMDU=>

Chris Horner

Subscribers to Benny Peiser's CCNet may have noticed in today's digest the growing chasm between Europe and the U.S (Ed notes one entry below). Having for years put other peoples' money where the alarmists' rhetoric was, there is serious momentum on the Continent to curb the Kyoto policies by which they have defined themselves for so long - and a growing reluctance to deepen the (failed) efforts to reduce GHGs in the face of mounting energy and other economic costs. Oh, and they want to drill in the Arctic, recognizing at the highest level that "any realistic energy strategy in the future will have to rely on oil and gas".

Official Europe has reached the point of acknowledging that they created a looming crisis, and are getting their wits about them. This comes just as our own leaders race to replicate their mistakes.

Yes, the latter are the same people who brought us the lovely housing and financial crises by succumbing to noisy pressure-group demands, and whose very similar ostrich routine on energy supply while succumbing to other pressure groups has us on track for a very similar energy crisis - with utility executives increasingly warning that the Lights. Will. Go. Out.

The odd thing about that one is: As the reactive Congress, which loves creating risk for others while avoiding political risk to themselves at all cost (well, at a cost of about \$1 trillion just this year), will find - no doubt to great shock and finger-pointing - the productive sector of the economy can't just build energy capacity as fast as government can bail out the lenders they twisted into a pretzel in the first place.

And until Washington reforms the laws they have written delegating ultimate energy-supply authority to agencies and the courts, there's nothing Congress or the productive sector could do about it even within about a decade, anyway.

What Europe is experiencing explains the open calls on their shores that the climate-change issue is too important to be left to democracy. I tremble when I reflect how we may find ourselves agreeing with that in the fairly near future, if not for quite the same reason.

CANADIAN LIBERALS SPLIT ON CARBON TAX

Canwest News Service, 30 September 2008

<http://www.canada.com/ottawacitizen/news/story.html?id=cc5e82c2-c2b4-4012-a723-4141e0148432>

Liberal leader Stéphane Dion was sideswiped by one of his own yesterday, when Ontario's Liberal finance minister, Dwight Duncan, said it would be "a mistake" to implement a carbon tax in the midst of shaky economic times.

"One of the things that I think would be a mistake right now is massive shifts in tax burden at a time when there's uncertainty," Mr. Duncan told reporters.

When reminded that Mr. Dion and his federal Liberal cousins were attempting to do just that, Mr. Duncan stumbled.

"The federal circumstances are, are, uhh, you know ... I mean listen, all the parties are now advocating fairly dramatic shifts," he said.

Mr. Duncan's remarks were an unhelpful salvo of friendly fire on a day when Mr. Dion was taking aim at the economic credentials of his chief Conservative and NDP rivals. He said Stephen Harper's credentials are those of George W. Bush's Republicans and Jack Layton's belong to a bygone era.

FULL STORY at <http://www.canada.com/ottawacitizen/news/story.html?id=cc5e82c2-c2b4-4012-a723-4141e0148432>



EMISSIONS IMPOSSIBLE: NORWAY TAXES CARBON, EMISSIONS RISE

WSJ Environmental Capital, 30 September 2008

<http://blogs.wsj.com/environmentalcapital/2008/09/30/emissions-impossible-norway-taxes-carbon-emissions-rise/>

Posted by Keith Johnson

The big debate over how to tackle climate change generally boils down to what kind of pain a climate plan will do to the economy; environmental benefits are generally assumed.

But what if the economic pain doesn't even translate into environmental gain? That's what happened in Norway, a pioneer in putting a pricetag on carbon emissions almost twenty years ago. Net result? Carbon emissions have increased 15% since then. Leila Abboud writes today in the WSJ:

It wasn't supposed to be this way. By making it more expensive to pollute, carbon taxes should spur companies and individuals to clean up. Norway's sobering experience shows how difficult it is to cut emissions in the real world, where elegant theoretical solutions are complicated by economic changes, entrenched behaviors and political realities.

For economic changes, read "growth." Norway's growth in emissions has been a lot less than its economic growth over the same period, so the economy is clearly getting cleaner. But not enough to offset the simple math of more economic activity spewing more emissions into the atmosphere. Norway's oil industry became one of the world's cleanest since it started paying to pollute; but it's grown so much in the meantime, oil and gas emissions have quadrupled, the WSJ notes.

People also learn to roll with punches. While \$4 gasoline has changed some driving habits in the U.S., \$10 gasoline hasn't in Norway-car sales surged in the last decade and people still choose expensive commutes. Does that mean expectations that pricey gasoline will end America's car addiction are overblown?

Then there's politics. Norway isn't alone in giving some economic sectors, like fishing, preferential treatment. China and India don't even want to talk about emissions curbs. Germany and Poland are rapidly backpedaling on environmental commitments to save key industries at a time of economic strife. Australia has tied itself in knots trying to figure out how to clean up a coal-fired export economy without killing it.

Which brings us back to one of the bigger questions. If Norway can't slash emissions almost two decades after slapping a hefty pricetag on carbon, what does that say about the belief that "making polluters pay" will automatically transform America's economy?

Copyright 2008, WSJ



CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

24 SEPTEMBER 2008

Colin Robinson

Earlier this year, I was composing a lecture about climate change policy and I looked at a book which I had not read for years (and is hardly one of my favourites). In chapter 2 of my fifty year old copy of John Kenneth Galbraith's 'The Affluent Society' I found his definition of 'the conventional wisdom', a term which he coined. It reminded me what a powerful idea it is.

The conventional wisdom

Galbraith defined the conventional wisdom as 'the name for the ideas which are esteemed at any time for their acceptability'. He went on to point out that since exposition of the conventional wisdom 'has the approval of those to whom it is addressed' it is always in great demand, and 'it follows that a very large part of our social comment -and nearly all that is well regarded - is devoted at any time to articulating the conventional wisdom' which, he said, is regarded as 'more or less identical with sound scholarship.'

What present day idea most closely fits Galbraith's notion of something that is constantly repeated, is what people want to hear, can generally be expounded without fear of contradiction and is regarded as 'sound scholarship'? It is, of course, the damaging climate change hypothesis by which I mean the idea that the world faces damaging changes in climate, as a consequence of human activities, and that the only way to avoid the dire consequences is centralised action by governments and international institutions.

The idea has been firmly implanted and the media constantly reinforce it. Newspapers, radio, TV and blogs (Hayek's second hand dealers in ideas) attribute many of the changes they see in the natural world to 'climate change' and they urge responses which involve changes in lifestyles, for instance away from activities once thought liberating (such as air and motor travel) to a 'simpler' way of life. They tend to use weather events to spread the message about climate change, pointing out that it is drier, wetter, warmer or colder than it was in the recent past. Since

recent weather must always fall into one of those categories (unless it stays exactly the same), there is no weather-related event that can refute the hypothesis that the climate is changing. The more specific hypothesis - that the climate is warming - might seem easier to refute. But I note that even a soggy summer, which has left my drought-resistant plants looking distinctly worse for wear, is still being attributed in some way to global warming.

The damaging climate change hypothesis has acquired many of the trappings of a religion. It has priests who proclaim its main message - 'the science is settled', a dismissive phrase intended to reinforce the position of the hypothesis as a principal element in the conventional wisdom of the day. And august bodies, such as the Royal Society, condemn heretics - that means anyone who raises any questions about the validity of the hypothesis. Its constant repetition makes its status appear, in Galbraith's word, 'virtually impregnable'.

FULL TEXT at <http://www.staff.livjm.ac.uk/spsbpeis/Robinson-2008.htm>



SPOTLESS SUN: BLANKEST YEAR OF THE SPACE AGE

http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2008/30sep_blankyear.htm?list181784

Sept. 30, 2008: Astronomers who count sunspots have announced that 2008 is now the "blankest year" of the Space Age.

As of Sept. 27, 2008, the sun had been blank, *i.e.*, had no visible sunspots, on 200 days of the year. To find a year with more blank suns, you have to go back to 1954, three years before the launch of Sputnik, when the sun was blank 241 times.

"Sunspot counts are at a 50-year low," says solar physicist David Hathaway of the NASA Marshall Space Flight Center. "We're experiencing a deep minimum of the solar cycle."

A spotless day looks like this:



The image, taken by the Solar and Heliospheric Observatory (SOHO) on Sept. 27, 2008, shows a solar disk completely unmarked by sunspots.

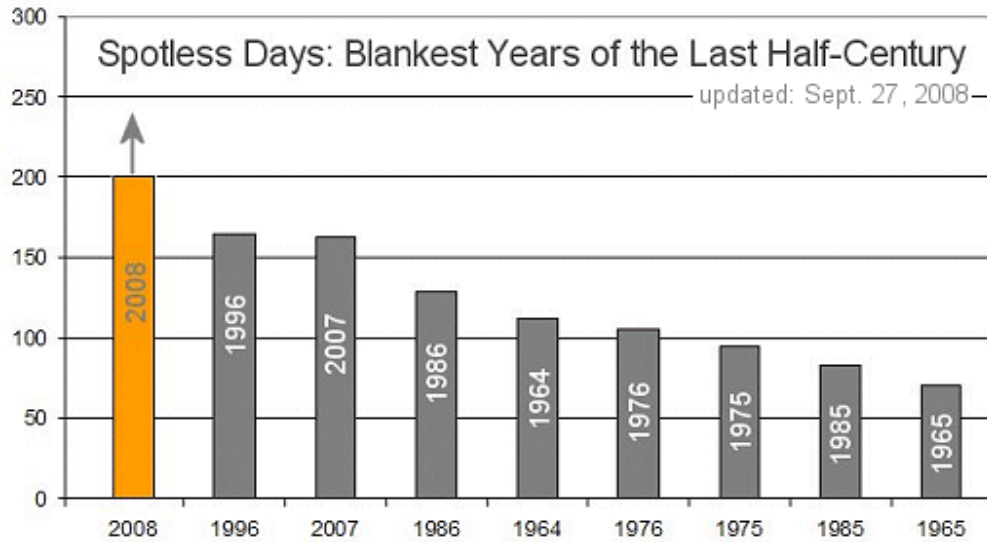
For comparison, a SOHO image taken seven years earlier on Sept. 27, 2001, is peppered with colossal sunspots, all crackling with solar flares: [image](#). The difference is the phase of the 11-year solar cycle. 2001 was a year of solar maximum, with lots of sunspots, solar flares and geomagnetic storms. 2008 is at the cycle's opposite extreme, solar minimum, a quiet time



on the sun.

And it is a *very* quiet time. If solar activity continues as low as it has been, 2008 could rack up a whopping 290 spotless days by the end of December, making it a century-level year in terms of spotlessness.

Hathaway cautions that this development may sound more exciting than it actually is: "While the solar minimum of 2008 is shaping up to be the deepest of the Space Age, it is still unremarkable compared to the long and deep solar minima of the late 19th and early 20th centuries." Those earlier minima routinely racked up 200 to 300 spotless days per year.



Above: A histogram showing the blankest years of the last half-century. The vertical axis is a count of spotless days in each year. The bar for 2008, which was updated on Sept. 27th, is still growing. [Larger images: [50 years](#), [100 years](#)]

Some solar physicists are welcoming the lull.

"This gives us a chance to study the sun without the complications of sunspots," says Dean Pesnell of the Goddard Space Flight Center. "Right now we have the best instrumentation in history looking at the sun. There is a whole fleet of spacecraft devoted to solar physics--SOHO, Hinode, ACE, STEREO and others. We're bound to learn new things during this long solar minimum."

As an example he offers helioseismology: "By monitoring the sun's vibrating surface, helioseismologists can probe the stellar interior in much the same way geologists use earthquakes to probe inside Earth. With sunspots out of the way, we gain a better view of the sun's subsurface winds and inner magnetic dynamo."

"There is also the matter of solar irradiance," adds Pesnell. "Researchers are now seeing the dimmest sun in their records. The change is small, just a fraction of a percent, but significant. **Questions about effects on climate are natural if the sun continues to dim.**"

Pesnell is NASA's project scientist for the Solar Dynamics Observatory (SDO), a new spacecraft equipped to study both solar irradiance and helioseismic waves. Construction of SDO is complete, he says, and it has passed pre-launch vibration and thermal testing. "We are ready to launch! Solar minimum is a great time to go."

Coinciding with the string of blank suns is a 50-year record low in solar wind pressure, a recent discovery of the Ulysses spacecraft. (See the Science@NASA story [Solar Wind Loses Pressure](#).)

The pressure drop began years before the current minimum, so it is unclear how the two phenomena are connected, if at all. This is another mystery for SDO and the others.

