

THE GLOBAL WARMING EMPEROR HAS NO CLOTHES

For many years now, human-caused climate change has been viewed as a large and urgent problem. In truth, however, the biggest part of the problem is neither environmental nor scientific, but a self-created political fiasco.

Consider first the simple fact, drawn from the official temperature records of the Climate Research Unit at the University of East Anglia, that for the years 1998-2005 global average temperature did not increase (there was actually a slight decrease, though not at a rate that differs significantly from zero).

Yes, you did read that right. And also, yes, this eight year period of temperature stasis did coincide with society's continued power station and SUV-inspired pumping of yet more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

In response to these facts, a global warming devotee will chuckle and say "how silly to judge climate change over such a short period". Yet in the next breath the same person will assure you that the 28 year-long period of warming which occurred between 1970 and 1998 constitutes a dangerous (and man made) warming. Tosh. Our devotee will also pass by the curious additional facts that a period of similar warming occurred between 1918 and 1940, well prior to the greatest phase of world industrialisation, and that cooling occurred between 1940 and 1965, at precisely the time that human emissions were increasing at their greatest rate.

Then will follow the much-repeated but vacuous assertion that "dangerous global warming is occurring because x out of the last y years have been the hottest 'on record'". Well of course they have, because the late 20th century temperature rise represents a culmination, and perhaps the last culmination, along a warming trend that started 150 years ago at the end of the Little Ice Age. The "logic" here is similar to that of persons who advise you to buy yet more shares because 9 out of 10 of the highest monthly share market peaks have occurred recently. Follow such a strategy and you are destined to lose money, as will those who bet on the assumption that global temperature will shortly resume a steady increase for the rest of the 21st century.

Consider a second simple fact. It is that atmospheric carbon dioxide - which is a natural trace constituent of the atmosphere and not a pollutant - is a benefice to life in general and to mankind in particular. Why? Because as a strong aerial fertilizer for plants carbon dioxide forms the basis for most organic food chains, including ours; and, in acting as a mild greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide helps also to maintain the Earth's temperature at its equable average of around +15°C. Greening the planet and maintaining an equable planetary temperature are very much public goods.

"But" our warming devotee will protest, "carbon dioxide is the primary cause of global warming, and if we double the amount in the atmosphere we are all going to fry". Well, no actually. Evidence from ice cores shows quite clearly that changes in temperature PRECEDE their matching changes in carbon dioxide by several hundred to a thousand years or so, for the simple reason that a rising planetary temperature causes outgassing of dissolved carbon

dioxide from, amongst other places, the cold southern ocean. The very mild additional feedback warming that may then follow is unable to be characterised precisely but is most likely to be only a few tenths of a degree. And the overall effects of feedback after a warming could even be negative when increasing evaporation (and cloudiness) are factored in. In short, alarmist claims of an increase in temperature of up to 60C for a doubling of carbon dioxide are just that - intentionally alarmist.

Something seems very odd here, doesn't it?

That industrial carbon dioxide is not the primary cause of earth's recent decadal-scale temperature changes doesn't seem at all odd to many thousands of independent scientists. They have long appreciated - ever since the early 1990s, when the global warming bandwagon first started to roll behind the gravy train of the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) - that such short-term climate fluctuations are chiefly of natural origin.

Yet the public appears to be largely convinced otherwise. How is this possible? Since the early 1990s, the columns of many leading newspapers, worldwide, have carried an increasing stream of alarmist letters and articles on hypothetical, human-caused climate change. Similar articles in the international media, such a recent issue of Time Magazine, have heightened the propaganda barrage directed at the public. Each such alarmist article is liberally larded with words such as - if, may, might, could, probably, perhaps, likely, expected, projected or modelled - and many involve such deep dreaming, or ignorance of scientific facts and principles, that they are akin to nonsense.

The results of press-encouraged alarmism, and the inadequacy of current general science education, are epitomized by the continual letters "debate" that occurs in the columns of New Zealand newspapers. Here, the great majority of correspondents accept - as if they were articles of religious faith - that emissions of carbon dioxide are environmentally harmful, and that dangerous human-caused climate change is occurring. The problem, of course, is not that of climate change *per se*, but rather one of a sophisticated scientific brainwashing that has been inflicted on the public, bureaucrats and politicians up to the level of Acting Minister Hodgson alike.

The New Zealand government generally chooses not to receive policy advice on climate from independent scientists. Rather, it seeks guidance from its own self-interested climate science bureaucracies and senior advisors, or from the IPCC itself. No matter how accurate it may be, cautious and politically non-correct science advice is not welcomed in Wellington, and nor is it widely reported by media outlets which thrive instead on reporting sex, sport and environmental scare stories in roughly equal proportions.

Marketed under the imprimatur of the IPCC, the bladder-trembling and now infamous hockey-stick diagram - a statistical construct by scientist Michael Mann and co-workers from mostly tree ring records, which showed dramatically accelerating warming during the 20th century - has been a seminal image of the climate scaremongering campaign. Thanks to the work of Canadian statistician Stephen McIntyre and others, this graph is now known to be deeply flawed, if indeed not fraudulent. But the image was so effective in its time that alert teachers of Media and Communications have already substituted it for Lord Kitchener's 1916 words famous exhortatory poster, "Your country needs you", as the iconic propaganda image of the 20th century.

There are other reasons, too, why the public hears so little in detail from those scientists who approach climate change issues rationally, the so-called climate sceptics. Most are to do with intimidation against speaking out, which operates intensely on several parallel fronts. Happily, however, this has not prevented the recent formation of a New Zealand Climate Research Consortium, which has as one of its main aims providing “opinion on matters related to both natural and human-caused climate change” (<http://www.climatescience.org.nz/AboutUs.php>).

Intimidation operates, first, because most government scientists are gagged from making public comment on contentious issues, their employing organisations instead making use of public relations experts to craft carefully tailored, frisbee-science press releases. Second, scientists are under intense pressure to conform with the prevailing paradigm of climate alarmism if they wish to receive funding for their research. Third, members of the Establishment have spoken declamatory words on the issue, and the kingdom's subjects are expected to listen.

For example, at a recent global warming meeting in Wellington, Dr Kevin Trenberth, from the US National Centre on Atmospheric Research, asserted that global warming caused hurricane Katrina to deposit “an extra 25.4 mm of rainfall than might have occurred anyway” and that this “rainfall (was) enough to cause the levees to break” These are alarmist, if indeed not irresponsible, statements. And NIWA's Georgina Griffiths advised the same conference that in future New Zealand “in the east would suffer from more frequent severe droughts. In the west, erosion and flooding would become more frequent, affect farming and expensive infrastructure” all of which she appears to have based upon a naive linear extrapolation of historical trends in data which normally exhibit a natural cyclicity.

Overseas on the alarmist campaign trail, the UK's chief scientist Sir David King is reported as saying that global warming is so bad that Antarctica is likely to be the world's only habitable continent by the end of this century. Warming devotee and former Chairman of Shell, Lord Ron Oxburgh, reportedly agrees with another rash statement of King's, that climate change is a bigger threat than terrorism. And goodly Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, who self-evidently understands little about the science, has threatened even the British PM with the wrath of the climate God unless Mr Blair acts to control climate change. And as if all of that weren't enough, the Anglican church recently hosted a public meeting in St. Paul's Cathedral to enable Saint Tim Flannery, author of "The Weather Makers" (which some view as the best written book of Australian fiction since Tim Winton's "Cloudstreet") to spruik his book and polemical message. Next, they'll be selling climate indulgences.

By betraying the public's trust in their positions of influence, so do the great and good become the small and silly.

Three simple graphs provide needed context, and exemplify the dynamic, fluctuating nature of climate change. The first is a temperature curve for the last 6 million years, which shows a 3 million year period when it was several degrees warmer than today (biodiversity crisis, anyone?), followed by a 3 million year cooling trend which was accompanied by an increase in the magnitude of the pervasive, higher frequency, cold and warm climate cycles. The second graph shows the details of the last three cold (glacial) and warm (interglacial) cycles since 0.4 million years ago; high latitude temperatures were as much as 5 degrees warmer

than today's during recent interglacials. And the third graph shows global average temperatures over the last 8 years, which has proved to be a period of stasis.

The essence of the issue is this. Climate changes naturally all the time, partly in predictable cycles, and partly in unpredictable shorter rhythms and rapid episodic shifts, some of the causes of which remain unknown. We are fortunate that our modern societies have developed during the last 10,000 years of benignly warm, interglacial climate. But for more than 90% of the last two million years the climate has been colder, and generally much colder, than today. The reality of the climate record is that a sudden natural cooling is far more to be feared, and will do infinitely more social and economic damage, than the late 20th century phase of gentle warming.

The New Zealand government urgently needs to recast the sources from which it draws its climate advice. The narrow alarmism of its public advisors, and the often eco-fundamentalist policy initiatives that bubble up from the depths of the civil service, have all long since been detached from science reality. Internationally, the IPCC is a deeply flawed organisation, as acknowledged in a recent House of Lords report, and the Kyoto Protocol has proved a costly flop. Former Minister Peter Hodgson and the government have simply backed the wrong horses.

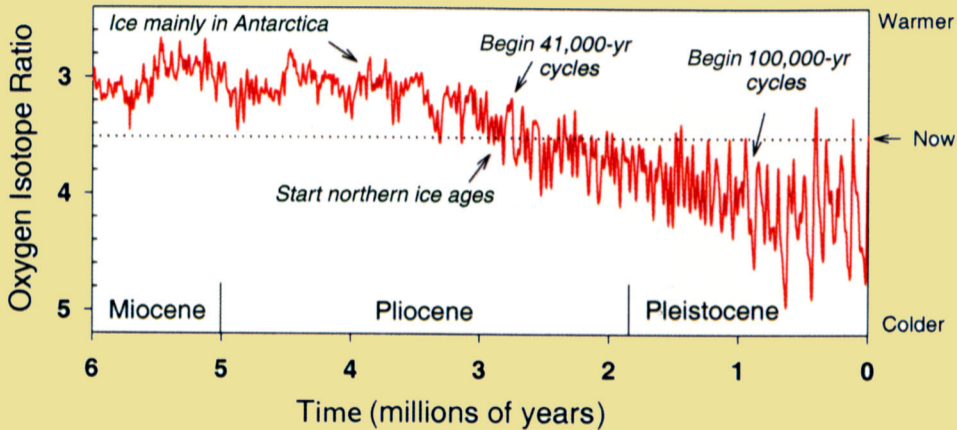
As mooted recently in the press, the time has probably come for New Zealand to join instead the new Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (AP6), whose six member countries are committed to the development of new technologies to improve environmental outcomes. There, at least, some real solutions are likely to emerge for improving energy efficiency and reducing pollution.

Informal discussions have already begun about a new AP6 audit body, designed to vet rigorously the science advice that the Partnership receives, including from the IPCC. Can New Zealand afford not to be at the table?

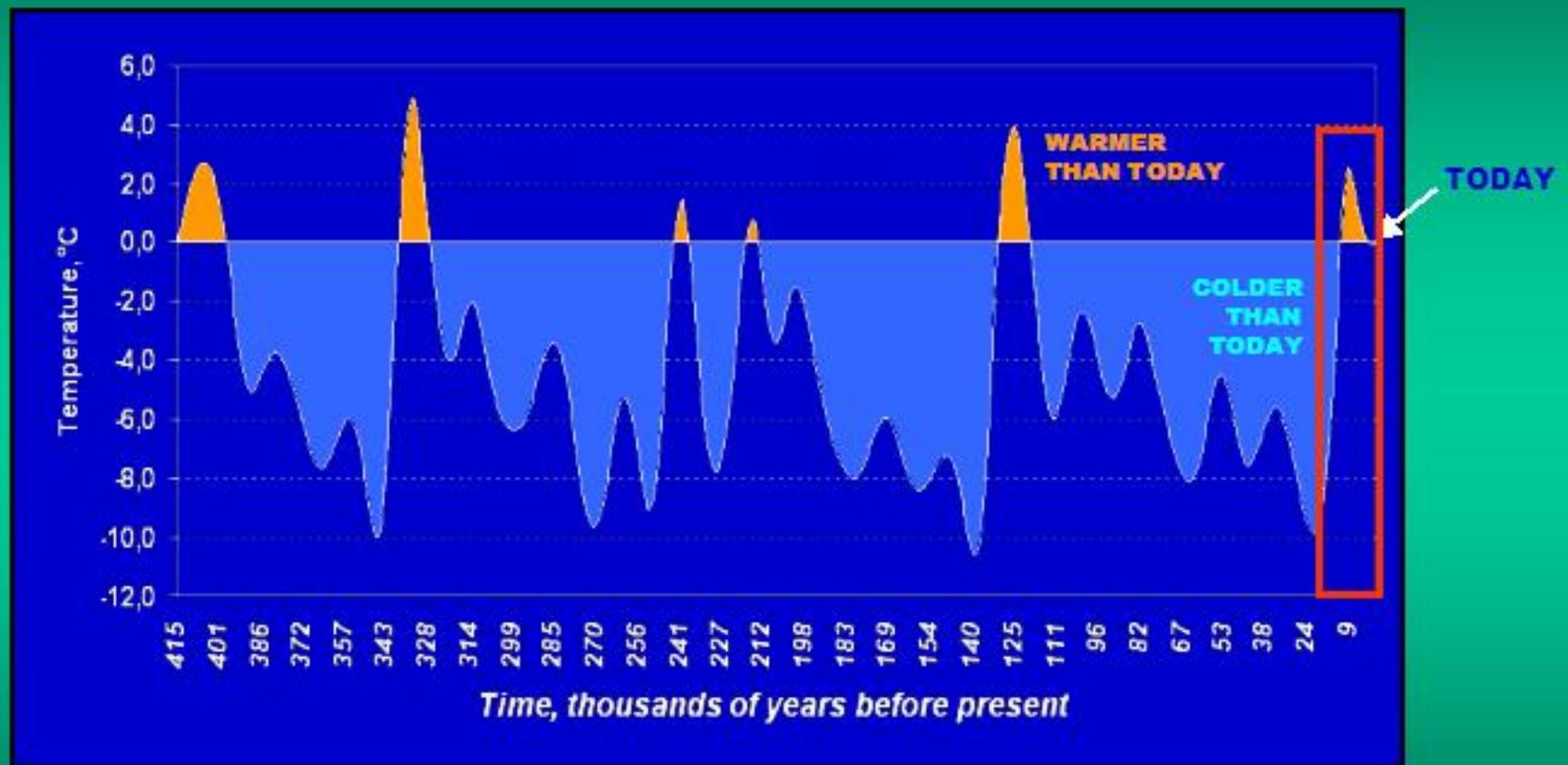
Prof. Bob Carter is a geologist at James Cook University, Queensland, with long experience in paleoclimate research.

Figure captions

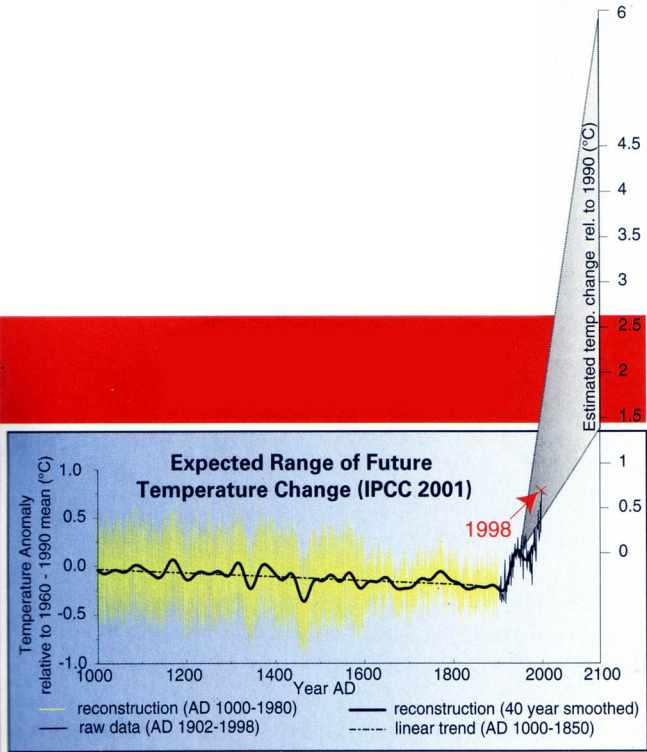
1. Ocean temperature for the last 6 million years (Ocean Drilling Program core)
2. Antarctic polar plateau temperature for the last 400,000 years (Vostok ice core).
3. Global average temperature since 1998 (Climate Research Unit, U.K.).
4. The “hockey stick” curve of postulated global temperature over the last 1,000 years (after Michael Mann and co-authors).
5. Lord Kitchener’ famous recruiting poster for World War I.



Long-term climatic (Milankovitch) cycles over last 415 000 years from the Vostok ice core



Salamatin A.N., Lipenkov V.Ya., Barkov N.I., Jouzel J., Petit J.R., Raynaud D. Ice-core age dating and palaeothermometer calibration based on isotope and temperature profiles from deep boreholes at Vostok Station (East Antarctica). *Journal of Geophysical Research*, 1998, vol. 103, N D8, pp. 8963-8977.



Mann et al., 1999; Houghton et al., 2001; Alverson et al., 2002



YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS

YOU