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GREENHOUSE: THE BIGGEST RORT IN CHRISTENDOM

The above is the title of the book written by Peter Toynbee in 1995. It is still available in the Paraparumu (New Zealand) public library. Peter was Director of the Coal Research Association of New Zealand when I was Chief Chemist. We did not get along all that well at the time as he was a bit of a one man band, but after we both retired he became one of my best friends. He died in 2002 and I miss him.

I have been reluctant to regard the argument that human-induced greenhouse gas emissions are harming the climate as an outright fraud, hoax, or rort. I originally considered that it was a problem that demanded study and resolution, but I soon found that the scientific procedures that I had been trained to apply were being ignored. Evidence was being selected to suit a preconceived solution. Other evidence was being concealed. Doubtful procedures which helped the cause were not properly scrutinised. Honest attempts to argue were rejected, sometimes with insults.

Then I began to find examples of deliberate distortion, concealment of evidence to avoid checking of results, outright prejudice by journal editors, and manipulation of words and meanings to produce what are essentially unsound conclusions. Many of the people involved are so sure they are right that they consider that the end justifies the means. What started as a straightforward scientific enquiry has become a mass delusion and then a gigantic confidence trick on the public, a scam, a rort. There are many scientists and others who are uneasy about the escalation that has occurred, but are unable to jump off the bandwagon and the gravy train, and lose all its benefits.

Is this really the biggest rort of all? It has been going now since the 1970s, some 40 years, and it is far from being over, despite all the signs of a decline.

There are many examples from history of large numbers of people developing mass delusions. The Scottish poet Charles Mackay published in 1841 "Popular Delusions and Madness of Crowds". In it, he gives details of many such delusions, including alchemy, witchcraft, the Crusades, the South Sea Bubble and Tulipmania. Witchcraft is still widely believed, and other delusions, such as fortune telling and haunted houses are still current. One gets the impression that the entertainment industry depends heavily on promoting beliefs such as aliens from outer space, poltergeists and other superstitions.

Mackay pointedly omits delusions based on religion. An example of a successful religious hoax was recently the subject of an article by a namesake of mine, Ron Gray, in the Emmanuel College Magazine. He discusses the success of "The Da Vinci Code" based on a completely fabricated biblical history, and points out that a much more successful religious hoax was

perpetrated by a book called "The Golden Legend", published in the thirteenth century, largely a compilation of stories of saints, mostly invented by the Archbishop of Genoa, Jacopo Voragine. Many of the saints listed, notably, St George and St Barbara, never existed. Yet it has provided the inspiration for artists through the ages and it is still considered to be authentic by most Christian authorities.

I belong to a nation which has a flag containing St George's Cross, as do numerous other nations, including Georgia itself, where in the main square of Tbilisi, the former statue of Lenin has been replaced by one of St George,

I won't go into detail about other religious hoaxes. What about Santa Claus? Saint Nicholas of Myra never saw snow. Did Jesus Christ ever exist? (he occurs in only one contemporary history).

I have to conclude that perhaps Peter Toynbee was exaggerating a little and we all hope that the Greenhouse Scam will not outlast Santa Claus.