

## The Global Warming Crisis.

### The 2°C Limit.

The government - along with most other governments in the world - claims to recognise that it is necessary to keep the temperature rise caused by global warming to less than 2°C as otherwise global warming will be "dangerous".

*Let us add as an aside that global warming is already dangerous and will be considerably more dangerous well below that limit. Already there are floods, droughts, forest fires and severe hurricanes and so far the temp rise is only about 0.8°C.*

### Current Misplaced Complacency.

It is this current 0.8°C temp rise that seems to be causing a misguided level of complacency (0.8°C seems to be a good way from 2°C). Regrettably what does not appear to be recognised is that, like stopping or turning a super-tanker heading straight towards the rocks, it takes a long time to make any difference and meanwhile the tanker goes on towards the rocks. Already the level of GHGs in the atmosphere is such that if it remains at this level we are probably stuck with a temperature rise in excess of 2°C.

### The IPCC Estimate of the Danger Level and Timescale.

The IPCC estimate that the GHG levels in CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent concentrations which give a

2.1 to 2.4°C rise are 445 - 490 ppm.

The current estimated level is 430 ppm.

The current rate of increase is about 3 ppm/pa.

Similarly the IPCC level for CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations which give the

2.1 to 2.4°C rise are 350 - 400 ppm.

The current estimated level is 390 ppm.

The current rate of increase is about 2 ppm/pa.

This means we have already passed the mid-point of the CO<sub>2</sub> range which is estimated to exceed the 2°C limit.

### What Level of Cuts are Needed.

The scientists said in 1992 that we needed a reduction in the world emissions to 40% of the then figure starting in 1992.

Instead world emissions have risen continuously since that date.

World emissions in 1992 were about 3.6 tons CO<sub>2</sub> per person on average.

40% of that figure is about:- 1.7 tons per person

Currently the UK figure is claimed to be about 10.5 tons per person

*"Note that this ignores the fact that we import most of our high emission raw materials and products - so are responsible for their production emissions .*

### What is the Timescale and Targets for Action.

It is impossible to give a safe timescale for action. If we had any sense at all we would not be where we are. The uncertainties in the science suggest that there is some possibility that it is already too late to bring global warming under control. Fortunately the probability of this is quite low but the longer we go on delaying real action the greater this possibility becomes.

Given this situation all one can say is that we would be wise to start to take drastic action immediately, and conversely would be unwise to delay. However politicians and world

leaders want to postpone action - 'til next year, 'til after the election, 'til the next administration takes over, etc. Somehow we must persuade them to take action now.

So the target ought to be that we take action as fast as we possibly can to reduce GHG emissions. But what is as fast as we can? In TGWS we believe that given the will and the understanding it would be possible to cut world emissions by 10% in the next year, by 30% by 2025 and by 50% by 2040. That might approximately stabilise the level of GHGs in the atmosphere, though that would depend on the present rates of natural absorption being maintained about which there is some doubt. A stabilised level of GHGs will still allow the temperature to go on rising initially at about 0.2°C per decade but this would slow down after about 2040 and might possibly keep us under the 2°C target. To give a good chance of staying under the 2°C target world emissions have to be reduced by further preferably to zero.

Attaching numbers to these percentages give world average targets 3.5 tons CO<sub>2</sub> per person by 2025 and say 2.5 tons per person by 2040. In the UK's case a reduction of 75% by 2025 and of 90% by 2050.

### **Government Response.**

Against these figures the response of the world's politicians remains inadequate. *"Copenhagen was supposed to be the conference at which a new deal was finalised. All the signs are that despite 2 years of negotiation a proper new deal will not be reached."*

As also is our UK government response.

As one of the major polluters in terms of emissions per person we should be aiming to catch up with the world requirement by 2025 or 2035 at the latest. How could we expect the developing economies to impose the necessary restraints unless we who have contributed much to the problem go further. This would give us targets of 3.5 tonnes for 2025 a 65% reduction and 2.5 tonnes by 2040 a 75% reductions by 2040. Even allowing us an extra 10 years to get on track would still require 70% by 2035 and say 55-60% by 2025.

All these targets and more distant ones will need to be adjusted in the light of what the science tells us is happening.

Are we aiming for that?

Are we H\*\*\*!

Are we any where near such an aim?

No!

Are we even thinking about such an aim?

No!

*"All we are thinking about is the next election".*

*"Fiddling while Rome burns".*

### **What is Needed.**

Currently the British people are beginning to recognise that global warming is serious, but at the same time they see that the government is not taking crisis action - no amount of words can outweigh the effect of actions like expanding the airports and allowing public transport fares to rise.

*"I ask you raising rail fares in order to reduce overcrowding on trains!"*

The government has to introduce policies, which indicate that global warming is really serious - policies like rationing flying and fuel and policies to make public transport an acceptable alternative to the private car.

*"Yes that means subsidies or nationalisation - why not all public transport free (paid for by taxation) not only for the over 60s"*

Policies which both convey the message that global warming is serious and that the government is prepared to do something real about it.

### **Is it Politically Possible?**

For years politicians have been dismissing such ideas, saying it is politically impossible to do such things because:-

- a) The public will not stand for it.
- b) The WTO and the EU will not stand for it.

Within the conventional framework such statements are true.

*"But that is like saying I will refuse a lifesaving operation because it might hurt"!*

- a) The public will not stand for it because the politicians will not get up and explain that it is necessary. We need a united front on this from all the political parties - just as in a time of war we need a national government. The Daily Mail and similar rubbish (on the global warming issue) needs to be silenced in the national interest. So it is necessary to get together a coalition of the 3 main parties plus the Green Party and they need to begin to speak with one voice.
- b) Just as in time of war the WTO and the EU need to be told what we have to do. It is at least possible that they or at least some of their members will come along with us, if not immediately at least within a short time.

*If not we are all doomed anyway.*

### **Will it be Painful?**

Yes of course. Whole industries will be decimated, aircraft and car manufacture and servicing, airports, foreign travel firms and advertising. But at the same time public transport and internal tourism and entertainment will be boosted. Taxes will have to rise, but that will in turn contribute to a reduction in consumption, which is also necessary to reduce total emissions. New government regulation could stem the throw-away culture replacing it with one of preservation and repair reducing our gross over-consumption of the worlds limited stock of raw materials.

### **Where Next?**

That then is our prescription for giving us a chance.

Whether the government is prepared to do anything about it is up to us.

We have the choice of shirking our responsibilities to the future - in which case our grandchildren will curse us - or of trying to make a difference.