

Meet the man who has exposed the great climate change con trick

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James Delingpole talks to Professor Ian Plimer, the Australian geologist, whose new book shows that ‘anthropogenic global warming’ is a dangerous, ruinously expensive fiction, a ‘first-world luxury’ with no basis in scientific fact. Shame on the publishers who rejected the book.

Imagine how wonderful the world would be if man-made global warming were just a figment of Al Gore’s imagination. No more ugly wind farms to darken our sunlit uplands. No more whopping electricity bills, artificially inflated by EU-imposed carbon taxes. No longer any need to treat each warm, sunny day as though it were some terrible harbinger of ecological doom. And definitely no need for the \$7.4 trillion cap and trade (carbon-trading) bill — the largest tax in American history — which President Obama and his cohorts are so assiduously trying to impose on the US economy.

Imagine no more, for your fairy godmother is here. His name is Ian Plimer, Professor of Mining Geology at Adelaide University, and he has recently published the landmark book *Heaven And Earth*, which is going to change forever the way we think about climate change.

‘The hypothesis that human activity can create global warming is extraordinary because it is contrary to validated knowledge from solar physics, astronomy, history, archaeology and geology,’ says Plimer, and while his thesis is not new, you’re unlikely to have heard it expressed with quite such vigour, certitude or wide-ranging scientific authority. Where fellow sceptics like Bjorn Lomborg or Lord Lawson of Blaby are prepared cautiously to endorse the International Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) more modest predictions, Plimer will cede no ground whatsoever. Anthropogenic global warming (AGW) theory, he argues, is the biggest, most dangerous and ruinously expensive con trick in history.

To find out why, let’s meet the good professor. He’s a tanned, rugged, white-haired sixtysomething — courteous and jolly but combative when he needs to be — glowing with the health of a man who spends half his life on field expeditions to Iran, Turkey and his beloved

Outback. And he's sitting in my garden drinking tea on exactly the kind of day the likes of the Guardian's George Monbiot would probably like to ban. A lovely warm sunny one.

So go on then, Prof. What makes you sure that you're right and all those scientists out there saying the opposite are wrong? 'I'm a geologist. We geologists have always recognised that climate changes over time. Where we differ from a lot of people pushing AGW is in our understanding of scale. They're only interested in the last 150 years. Our time frame is 4,567 million years. So what they're doing is the equivalent of trying to extrapolate the plot of Casablanca from one tiny bit of the love scene. And you can't. It doesn't work.'

What Heaven And Earth sets out to do is restore a sense of scientific perspective to a debate which has been hijacked by 'politicians, environmental activists and opportunists'. It points out, for example, that polar ice has been present on earth for less than 20 per cent of geological time; that extinctions of life are normal; that climate changes are cyclical and random; that the CO₂ in the atmosphere — to which human activity contributes the tiniest fraction — is only 0.001 per cent of the total CO₂ held in the oceans, surface rocks, air, soils and life; that CO₂ is not a pollutant but a plant food; that the earth's warmer periods — such as when the Romans grew grapes and citrus trees as far north as Hadrian's Wall — were times of wealth and plenty.

All this is scientific fact — which is more than you can say for any of the computer models turning out doomsday scenarios about inexorably rising temperatures, sinking islands and collapsing ice shelves. Plimer doesn't trust them because they seem to have little if any basis in observed reality.

'I'm a natural scientist. I'm out there every day, buried up to my neck in sh**, collecting raw data. And that's why I'm so sceptical of these models, which have nothing to do with science or empiricism but are about torturing the data till it finally confesses. None of them predicted this current period we're in of global cooling. There is no problem with global warming. It stopped in 1998. The last two years of global cooling have erased nearly 30 years of temperature increase.'

Plimer's uncompromising position has not made him popular. 'They say I rape cows, eat babies, that I know nothing about anything. My favourite letter was the one that said: "Dear sir, drop dead". I've also had a demo in Sydney outside one of my book launches, and I've had mothers coming up to me with two-year-old children in their arms saying: "Don't you have any kind of morality? This child's future is being destroyed."' Plimer's response to the last one is typically robust. 'If you're so concerned, why did you breed?'

This no-nonsense approach may owe something to the young Ian's straitened Sydney upbringing. His father was crippled with MS, leaving his mother to raise three children on a schoolteacher's wage. 'We couldn't afford a TV — not that TV even arrived in Australia till 1956. We'd use the same brown paper bag over and over again for our school lunches, always turn off the lights, not because of some moral imperative but out of sheer bloody necessity.'

One of the things that so irks him about modern environmentalism is that it is driven by people who are 'too wealthy'. 'When I try explaining "global warming" to people in Iran or Turkey they have no idea what I'm talking about. Their life is about getting through to the next day, finding their next meal. Eco-guilt is a first-world luxury. It's the new religion for urban populations which

have lost their faith in Christianity. The IPCC report is their Bible. Al Gore and Lord Stern are their prophets.'

Heaven And Earth is the offspring of a pop science book Plimer published in 2001 called A Short History of Planet Earth. It was based on ten years' worth of broadcasts for ABC radio aimed mainly at people in rural areas. Though the book was a bestseller and won a Eureka prize, ABC refused to publish the follow-up; so did all the other major publishers he approached: 'There's a lot of fear out there. No one wants to go against the popular paradigm.'

Then someone put him in touch with a tiny publishing outfit in the middle of the bush — 'husband, wife, three kids, so poor they didn't even have curtains' — and they said yes. Plimer couldn't bring himself to accept an advance they clearly couldn't afford. But then something remarkable happened. In just two days, the book sold out its 5,000 print run. Five further editions followed in swift succession. It has now sold 26,500 copies in Australia alone — with similarly exciting prospects in Britain and the US. There's even an edition coming out in ultra-green Germany.

But surely Aussies of all people, with their bushfires and prolonged droughts, ought to be the last to buy into his message? 'Ah, but the average punter is not a fool. I get sometimes as many as 1,000 letters and emails a day from people who feel helpless and disenfranchised and just bloody sick of all the nonsense they hear about global warming from metropolitan liberals who don't even know where meat or milk comes from.'

Besides which, Australia's economy is peculiarly vulnerable to the effects of climate change alarmism. 'Though we have 40 per cent of the world's uranium, we don't have nuclear energy. We're reliant mainly on bucketloads of cheap coal. Eighty per cent of our electricity is coal-generated and clustered around our coalfields are our aluminium producers. The very last thing the Australian economy needs is the cap and trade legislation being proposed by Kevin Rudd. If it gets passed, the country will go broke.'

Not for one second does Plimer believe it will get passed. As with its US equivalent the Waxman-Markey cap and trade bill, Kevin Rudd's Emission Trading Scheme legislation narrowly squeaked its way through the House of Representatives. But again as in America, the real challenge lies with the upper house, the Senate. Thanks in good measure to the influence of Plimer and his book — 'I have politicians ringing me all the time' — the Senate looks likely to reject the bill. If it does so twice, then the Australian government will collapse, a 'double dissolution' will be forced and a general election called. 'Australia is at a very interesting point in the climate change debate,' says Plimer.

The potential repercussions outside Oz, of course, are even greater. Until this year, environmental legislation has enjoyed a pretty easy ride through the parliaments of the Anglosphere and the Eurosphere, with greener-than-thou politicians (from Dave 'Windmill' Cameron to Dave 'climate change deniers are the flat-earthers of the 21st century' Miliband) queuing up to impose ever more stringent carbon emissions targets and taxes on their hapless electorates.

In the days when most people felt rich enough to absorb these extra costs and guilty enough to think they probably deserved them, the politicians could get away with it. But the global

economic meltdown has changed all that. As countless opinion surveys have shown, the poorer people feel, the lower down their list of priorities ecological righteousness sinks. 'It's one of the few good things to come out of this recession,' says Plimer. 'People are starting to ask themselves: "Can we really afford this green legislation?"'

Reading Plimer's *Heaven And Earth* is at once an enlightening and terrifying experience. Enlightening because, after 500 pages of heavily annotated prose (the fruit of five years' research), you are left in no doubt that man's contribution to the thing they now call 'climate change' was, is and probably always will be negligible. Terrifying, because you cannot but be appalled by how much money has been wasted, how much unnecessary regulation drafted because of a 'problem' that doesn't actually exist. (South Park, as so often, was probably the first to point this out in a memorable episode where Al Gore turns up to warn the school kids about a terrible beast, looking a bit like the Gruffalo, known as ManBearPig.)

Has it come in time to save the day, though? If there's any justice, *Heaven And Earth* will do for the cause of climate change realism what Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* did for climate change alarmism. But as Plimer well knows, there is now a powerful and very extensive body of vested interests up against him: governments like President Obama's, which intend to use 'global warming' as an excuse for greater taxation, regulation and protectionism; energy companies and investors who stand to make a fortune from scams like carbon trading; charitable bodies like Greenpeace which depend for their funding on public anxiety; environmental correspondents who need constantly to talk up the threat to justify their jobs.

Does he really believe his message will ever get through? Plimer smiles. 'If you'd asked any scientist or doctor 30 years ago where stomach ulcers come from, they would all have given the same answer: obviously it comes from the acid brought on by too much stress. All of them apart from two scientists who were pilloried for their crazy, whacko theory that it was caused by a bacteria. In 2005 they won the Nobel prize. The "consensus" was wrong.'

Ian Plimer's Heaven And Earth: Global Warming — the Missing Science is published by Quartet (£25).

http://www.spectator.co.uk/essays/all/3755623/part_6/meet-the-man-who-has-exposed-the-great-climate-change-con-trick.shtml