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The Dirty Politics of Climate Change

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Behind the daily news reports there is a secret world of politics in Canberra, the world in which the real business is transacted. It's a world of powerful lobbyists who use methods both subtle and brutal to advance their own interests without a care for the effects on other Australians. Because the way it works is so contrary to the democratic process, it is in the interests of those involved never to speak of it in public. Occasionally we get glimpses of it when things go wrong, or when a former insider allows us a peek, but its true nature remains shrouded in secrecy.

The inner workings of this world were exposed on the ABC's *Four Corners* program on 13 February. The program was based on a disturbing analysis of how climate change policy is decided in Canberra. We now know that for a decade the Howard Government's policies have been not so much influenced but actually written by a tiny cabal of powerful fossil fuel lobbyists representing the very corporations whose commercial interests would be affected by any move to reduce Australia's burgeoning greenhouse gas emissions.

To the extent that they think about it, most people imagine that when the Federal Government makes decisions on something as vital as the future of Australia's and the world's climate system, it will first seek advice from a range of sources including experts and public servants. It will then consult with various interest groups and call for submissions to inquiries. Then Cabinet will weigh up the pros and cons of different courses of action and decide what is in the nation's interests. This is how it is supposed to work; but this rosy view of democracy in action could not be further from the truth. The

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truth is closer to the corrupt underbelly of Washington lobbying which was spectacularly revealed last month with the arrest on criminal charges of uber-lobbyist Jack Abramoff.

The story has been uncovered by the efforts of the author of a doctoral dissertation recently completed at the ANU. Guy Pearce, a member of the Liberal Party and a former adviser to Senator Robert Hill when he was environment minister, has managed to coax the leading members of the fossil fuel lobby into frank admissions about how they go about their business.

It emerges that climate change policy in Canberra has for years been determined by a small group of lobbyists who happily describe themselves as the 'greenhouse mafia'. This cabal consists of the executive directors of a handful of industry associations in the coal, oil, cement, aluminium, mining and electricity industries. Almost all of these industry lobbyists have been plucked from the senior ranks of the Australian Public Service where they wrote briefs and cabinet submissions and advised ministers on energy policy. The revolving door between the bureaucracy and industry lobby groups has given the fossil fuel industries unparalleled insights into the policy process and networks throughout government.

The members of the greenhouse mafia claim to be more familiar with greenhouse policy than the Government, because they are the ones who wrote it. As one bragged: "We know more about energy policy than the government does. ... We know where every skeleton in the closet is - most of them we buried". One insider said that at meetings of the greenhouse mafia some of the ex-bureaucrats made 'Freudian slips' and talked as if they were still Assistant Secretaries in the industry or energy department.

Several members of the mafia have rotated from one industry lobby group to another within the greenhouse network. As a result of the closeness of the personal and political connections within the network, Dr Pearce concluded that the greenhouse mafia is probably the most potent lobbying alliance in Australia. Most of its members have been operating in Canberra for two decades, making their way up the bureaucratic ladder under Labor and Coalition governments. According to one insider, "they had all been taught by Peter Walsh and Gareth Evans how to be a bastard in the game" and, according to Dr

Pearse after hours of interviews, they are absolutely committed to defeating the environment movement on climate change. Emboldened by their success, he wrote, “they pursue the greenhouse agenda with an almost religious zeal”.

The Howard Government has allowed the greenhouse mafia extraordinary influence over Australia’s stance on climate change. Alone among the nations of the developed world, key members of fossil fuel lobby groups have actually been made members of Australia’s official delegation that has negotiated - or more accurately, attempted to derail - international agreements on climate change, notably the Kyoto Protocol. Even the Bush Administration does not permit this unseemly arrangement, relegating fossil fuel lobbyists to the gallery along with other NGOs rather than having them at the conference table. Said an insider: “They are part of the [Government’s] team. It is probably the best cross-industry alliance - the most successful - ... of any one that has been put together. ... We all write the same way, we all think the same way, we all worked for the same set of ministers”.

Unsurprisingly, other industry groups that would win from policies to reduce greenhouse gases - such as the insurance industry, the gas industry and the tourism council - have been unwilling to take on the greenhouse mafia and its ruthless methods. These industry groups Dr Pearse dubs the MIAs - missing in action. It’s not just the greenhouse mafia (who also refer to themselves as ‘the Society for Egomaniacs’) that would cause them grief, but the Government itself. When I asked one senior businessman why his company was unwilling to publicly urge the Government to ratify the Kyoto Protocol he said that ministers made decisions affecting their commercial interests every week and they did not want to see the decisions start to favour their competitors.

Green groups have been no match against such a powerful opponent when it comes to crucial policy decisions. This is when the inside knowledge and connections of the greenhouse mafia really make a difference, and when the democratic process is trashed.

Dr Pearse reminds us that Cabinet deliberations, ministerial committees and preparation of cabinet submissions are meant to be confidential and beyond the reach of lobbyists. Indeed, the unauthorised disclosure of cabinet-in-confidence materials is a crime. Yet the

research reveals that the greenhouse mafia has “unrivalled access” to internal government processes. Members of the greenhouse mafia even admit to being called in to government departments to vet and help write cabinet submissions and ministerial briefings, referring to ‘mutual trust’ between the lobbyists and the bureaucrats (whose seats the lobbyists once warmed). They have used this access to help bureaucrats in the industry and energy departments write submissions designed to counter proposals coming to Cabinet from the Australian Greenhouse Office through the environment minister. “It is about fixing the outcomes”, one said. If the environment minister tried to “slide [an action] by the Prime Minister” the mafia would immediately know of it and alert sympathetic ministers like John Anderson to stymie Robert Hill.

The greenhouse mafia has direct access to the Prime Minister. One celebrated incident at a meeting of the Minerals Council involved David Buckingham, a former senior bureaucrat in the environment department who became the Executive Director of the Business Council of Australia. Under the influence of Hugh Morgan and a handful of powerful mining and aluminium companies, the BCA took a strongly anti-Kyoto view which Buckingham wanted to soften. In arguing his case, Buckingham reportedly said that he had it from “the highest levels of government” that industry ought to take a certain view. At that point Dick Wells, the executive officer of the Minerals Council excused himself, left the room and, it’s claimed, rang Arthur Sinodinos (Prime Minister Howard’s chief of staff). Let me quote from the greenhouse mafia informant:

So Dick calls Arthur - and he said ‘Arthur, Buckingham is sitting in a room next to me in my office here telling us that the government wants us to do this, this, and this. And he is talking like it is coming from you.’ And Arthur says - ‘Well, it has not come from me, and we do not want you to do it.’ And so Dick walked back in and said “Look, sorry David - I just talked to Arthur Sinodinos and he disagrees completely with what you just said.’ It was that sort of game.²

If early intervention failed and a proposal to tackle greenhouse gas emissions got to Cabinet - such as occasionally happened when Robert Hill thought he could get

² G. D. Pearse, “The business response to climate change: case studies of Australian interest groups”, Doctoral thesis, Australian National University, July 2005, p. 352

something up - the mafia would turn to its closest friends in Cabinet to knock it off. Said one: “if we wanted to put a spoke in the wheel of Robert Hill or whatever we could do it pretty quickly ... we reverse-managed that ministerial (greenhouse) committee so many times”. Dr Pearse suggests that the publication of the Howard Government’s energy white paper in 2004 was the “pièce de résistance for Australia’s greenhouse mafia” because it was an almost complete endorsement of the “mob’s” agenda.

Another glimpse into the cynical world of greenhouse politics was afforded last year when a set of secret meeting notes was leaked. In May 2004 the Prime Minister called a meeting of LETAG, the Lower Emissions Technology Advisory Group, which consists of the CEOs of the major fossil fuel companies, including Rio Tinto, Edison Mission Energy, BHP Billiton, Alcoa and Orica, the companies behind the lobby groups that make up the greenhouse mafia. These sorts of meeting are never publicised, but we know about this meeting because private notes made by Sam Walsh, Chief Executive of Rio Tinto’s iron ore division, were leaked. The notes provide another extraordinary insight into how climate change policy is really made under the Howard Government.³

The industry minister Ian Macfarlane, who was also present, stressed the need for absolute confidentiality, saying that if the renewables industry knew they were meeting “there would be a huge outcry”. The Prime Minister told this highly select group that his Government was in political trouble over greenhouse policy as it was being out-manoeuvred by the NSW Government and by Mark Latham who was benefiting politically from his promise to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and support the renewable energy industries. There was an election coming up and the media, especially the *Sydney Morning Herald*, “had created a problem for Government” so he had called the meeting to get some ideas about how the Government could beef up its greenhouse credentials in a way that would convince the SMH that it was serious about climate change.

The Prime Minister also said he was also worried about the Tambling Review of the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target (MRET), which had cautiously recommended extending the scheme. Grant Tambling, a former Government backbencher and

³ The notes have been posted under Other papers on the Australia Institute website - www.tai.org.au.

parliamentary secretary, had failed to stick rigidly to the script. Minister Macfarlane said that MRET review had “found that the scheme worked *too well* and investment in renewables was running ahead of the original planning”. The Government was looking for an alternative so that it could kill off MRET. According to the leaked notes, the Prime Minister said that “it was not credible to ignore the Tambling Report unactioned (it was tabled in January) and there was a real need to propose alternatives to extending MRET”. He said that he was “keen to protect Industry” by which, of course, he meant the fossil fuel based industries at the expense of the renewable and energy efficiency industries.

The Prime Minister proposed a Low Emission Energy Fund to support technological developments with \$1.5 billion to be funded jointly by government and industry. Most of the corporate heads responded to this proposal arguing that it would be much better, Prime Minister, if all of the money came from Government. They issued the usual threats about companies shifting offshore if any levy were imposed. I urge you to read the notes to appreciate the sheer rapacity of these energy companies. They can sniff a pot of taxpayer funds from a mile off. Of course they all fully supported the Government’s proposal to kill off support for renewables and transfer large sums of money from taxpayers bank accounts to their own. When the dollar signs fell from their eyes they remembered to commend the proposal. Presumably speaking with a straight face, Wayne Osborn of Alcoa praised “the Government’s leadership in the Greenhouse debate”. The “proposal makes sense” declared Bob Driscoll of Edison Mission, and Sam Walsh reassured the Minister that they all “understood the confidentiality issue”.

In the tight little world of greenhouse lobbying, the Prime Minister saw nothing improper in going to the country’s biggest greenhouse polluters to ask them what the Government should do about greenhouse policy, without extending the same opportunity to other industries, not to mention environment groups.

Despite a decade of window-dressing and obfuscation, the Government is under continuing public pressure to do something about climate change. Having rejected Kyoto, the need to appear to be doing more resulted in the development of the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate. But someone forgot to explain to

Environment Minister Ian Campbell what the game was. When it was first announced he embarrassed the other AP6 members by blurting out that it was an “alternative” to Kyoto. He was quickly corrected by the wiser heads who insisted that it was but a *complement* to the Kyoto Protocol; after all, four of the six members have ratified it. Even legendary US hard man Harlan Watson gently rebuked Campbell for this gaffe.

Of all of the vacuous, misleading and just plain stupid comments to emerge at the Sydney meeting of AP6, the prize must go to US Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman who declared that he was confident the business sector would respond to climate change. “The people who run the private sector, who run these companies, also have children and grandchildren ...”.⁴ Well, they all must have become parents very recently, because they have shown little concern to this point.

I was reminded of the observation made by David Brent, the embarrassing boss in the British mock documentary called *The Office*. On realising that something he’d said to the assembled staff could suggest he was sexist he declared: “How could I hate women? My *mother* was one!” How could I trash the planet? My kids will have to live on it.

It is not necessary for me to level any criticism at the AP6 because the Government itself released the most devastating critique of it. ABARE’s analysis of the effects of the partnership on global greenhouse pollution is summarised in a little diagram included in its report.⁵ To the extent that one can believe anything ABARE’s modelling shows, it concluded that under the best-case scenario annual global emissions will increase from approximately 8 gigatonnes of carbon equivalent now to over 17 gigatonnes in 2050 under the influence of the AP6 agreement.

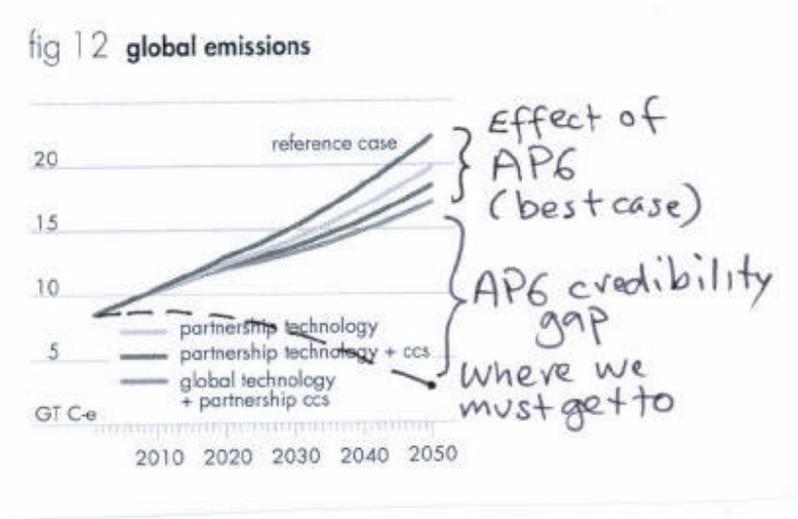
The consensus among climate scientists is that annual emissions must be reduced to around 3 gigatonnes to prevent the worst effects of global warming. Even Ian Campbell says he accepts this. So 14 thousand million tonnes of carbon annually have gone missing in the Government’s calculations. The Government has criticised the Kyoto Protocol for

⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 January 2006, p. 2

⁵ Brian Fisher *et al.*, *Technological Development and Economic Growth*, ABARE Research Report 06.1, January 2006, p. 34

not going far enough yet its own answer will have no appreciable effect. The AP6 agreement will do virtually nothing to curtail run-away climate change. The catastrophic consequences forecast by the IPCC appear to be accepted by the Government. How can the Howard Government expect to be taken seriously when this travesty is its contribution to tackling global warming?

ABARE's projections about the effects of AP6 on global greenhouse gas emissions



The dirty dozen

The greenhouse mafia of industry lobbyists have not, of course, been the only people preventing Australia from taking climate change seriously and, for the historical record, the main culprits need to be outed. So let me nominate the twelve people who in my opinion have done more than all others over the last decade to prevent any effective action to reduce Australia's burgeoning greenhouse gas emissions.

In 50 years time, this 'dirty dozen' should be remembered as those most responsible for the failure of Australia to accept its international responsibilities and tackle the gravest threat facing the country in the 21st century. Some are well known, others have been highly influential behind the scenes. As the toll from global climate change becomes apparent for all to see - with whole populations displaced by rising seas, millions dying from famines due to crop failures attributable to climate change, and millions more struck

down by diseases associated with a transformed climate - these 11 men and one woman will be accountable for Australia failing to play its part and for slowing down international efforts.

I hope that in 50 years time as Australians swelter in debilitating heatwaves, battle fierce bushfires, fight over dwindling water resources, lament the loss of unique species and tell stories recalling the wonders of the Great Barrier Reef, they will be reminded of the names of those who refused to act in the face of overwhelming evidence of what lay ahead. They carry a huge burden of moral responsibility, and I hope that their descendants will understand the shameful role that they played. Here are the twelve.

Hugh Morgan. As the CEO of Western Mining and a member of the BCA, Morgan's anti-greenhouse activism reached extreme levels. He was influential in the Australian Aluminium Council and was responsible for establishing the greenhouse sceptics collected together in the Lavoisier Group. He described the AGO's four discussion papers on emissions trading as "Mein Kampf declarations" and has railed against the Kyoto Protocol as a devious plot by European bureaucrats to seize control of the Australian economy. Despite these extraordinary views Morgan has enjoyed unparalleled access to the Prime Minister.

John Eyles. Following the Howard Government's signing of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, Eyles was seconded from his senior position at Alcoa Australia to head up the Australian Industry Greenhouse Network (AIGN). He transformed the AIGN into a powerful industry vehicle beholden to the resource and aluminium sectors and used it to change the Howard Government's then tepid support for Kyoto into absolute rejection. AIGN has since helped to impede any move to reduce the growth of Australia's greenhouse pollution.

Ron Knapp. The Australian Aluminium Council has without question been the most powerful and effective fossil fuel lobby group in Canberra. Devoted almost single-mindedly to heading off action on greenhouse, it has regularly squashed any thought of seriously tackling Australia's emissions by threatening to take aluminium smelters offshore, there to exploit lax environmental standards in poor countries whose

governments it can push around. Ron Knapp has been the CEO of the AAC since 2001, after some years heading the World Coal Institute. Before that he was a senior bureaucrat in Canberra. Knapp's predecessor at AAC, David Coutts, should also share some of the blame.

Alan Oxley. The Chairman of Monash University's APEC Study Centre and former trade ambassador, Oxley has been involved in almost every major initiative and lobbying effort of the climate skeptics brigade since climate change first came on to the public agenda in the early 1990s. He has successfully traded on his former ambassadorial status to convince Australia's 'serious' media that his views are based on credible analysis. He is currently employed by TCS Daily – an extreme right wing web-based news and lobbying outlet partly funded by Exxon Mobil.

Peter Walsh. The old Labor political war horse who – with Hugh Morgan's right hand man Ray Evans – formed and organized the secretive right-wing Lavoisier Group. Whenever the troops need jollyng up, Walsh is wheeled out to push the radical line of the climate skeptics, rehashing all of their stale and discredited arguments, usually carried in the opinion pages of *The Australian*.

Meg McDonald. With a history as a trade negotiator McDonald was exactly the kind of person the Howard Government wanted to head our negotiating delegation to the Kyoto conference in 1997. Having secured an extremely lenient deal for Australia under the Kyoto Protocol, she walked away from government and joined Alcoa as its head of corporate affairs. Alcoa Australia has a great sense of humour, claiming on its website to be committed "to operate worldwide in a safe, responsible manner which respects the environment.... We will not compromise environmental, health or safety values for profit or production." Sure, and Enron's first concern was always for its customers. McDonald now represents Alcoa within the AIGN, the greenhouse mafia's organisation. She spearheads the aluminium industry's fierce rejection of the treaty she helped to negotiate.

Barry Jones. The former head of APPEA, Jones was at the heart of the greenhouse mafia in Canberra. Taking the skills and networks he acquired at public expense in the Federal

industry department, Jones was at the forefront of the efforts to stymie any effective policy response from Canberra.

Chris Mitchell. As editor-in-chief at *The Australian*, and before that at the *Courier Mail*, Mitchell has adopted an aggressive stance against anyone arguing that climate change is a problem. Not only have the opinion pages of *The Australian* provided unlimited space for all of the anti-greenhouse crazies but the news pages have regularly been turned over to anti-greenhouse propaganda. As an illustration of how news values now take second place to ideology, *The Australian* in January ran an anonymous anti-greenhouse news story - note, not an opinion piece - by someone identified as a 'special correspondent' employed by the fossil fuel lobby.

Ian MacFarlane. As industry minister in the Howard Government since November 2001, Macfarlane has been the greenhouse troglodyte of the Government. Even after the Prime Minister and the environment minister had accepted (at least in public) that climate change is real and potentially damaging, he continued to deny that there is a problem. MacFarlane has worked hand-in-glove with the fossil fuel lobby to sideline climate change. When the issue is unavoidable, he engages in policy window dressing in order to fool the Australian public into believing that the Government takes its responsibilities seriously.

Alan Moran. As the head of the Regulatory Unit at the Institute for Public Affairs, a right-wing think tank with close ties to greenhouse sceptics, Moran's role has been to support the Government and the fossil fuel corporations with anti-environmental opinions about climate science, the costs of emission reductions and the pitfalls of renewable energy. As a bureaucrat in the Kennett Government he played a major role in stopping, for a time, the national adoption of energy performance standards for home appliances that had been agreed by all the states. The IPA has assisted the anti-wind lobby in Victoria, a move that appears to be driven by hatred of environmentalists and a relentless scepticism about climate change.

Malcolm Broomhead. Broomhead has been the CEO of chemicals and mining company Orica since 2001 (and of North Ltd before then). Orica impishly claims that it "will

manage all our activities with concern for people and the environment and will conduct our business for the benefit of society and without compromising the quality of life of future generations”. Broomhead led the charge against emissions trading (which was supported by Treasury) on behalf of the fossil fuel lobby. He has chaired the Low Emissions Technology Advisory Group of big polluting companies - which might more accurately be called the Big Polluters Protection Club - whose purpose has been to tell the Government what it should do to head off public concern about greenhouse pollution.

John Howard. The Prime Minister has consistently taken the side of the fossil fuel lobby and dismissed the interests of other industries. He has challenged the science, stomped on cabinet members who nervously suggest that maybe we *should* try to reduce our emissions, and engaged in an elaborate charade of concern by putting up meaningless policies that have no effect. His door is always open to the bosses of big fossil fuel corporations and closed to those representing renewables (except his ethanol-producing mate Dick Honan).

The Minister for the Environment

It has become increasingly apparent that the role of the environment minister in the Howard Government is not to develop and implement measures to protect Australia’s natural environment. The role is to cover up inaction and to engage in an elaborate charade designed to persuade Australians that, in the face of all of the evidence to the contrary, the Government is sincere in its expressions of concern about climate change. The latest manifestation is Senator Ian Campbell, a real estate agent from Western Australia, given the task of trying to persuade the world that the Howard Government is sincere about climate change. Let us reflect on some of the things Campbell has said about the most important aspect of his portfolio.

Last year some observers were impressed that Campbell appeared to accept the science of climate change - around ten years after the rest of the world. But he accepts the science only when it is convenient. When asked about rising sea-levels in the Pacific he claimed

that “the jury is really out”,⁶ as if he can pick and choose from the analysis set out in IPCC reports. We have since learned (from *Four Corners*) that the Government has banned climate scientists from discussing or even mentioning the subject of environmental refugees.

His declarations of concern have become comical in the face of everything the Howard Government has done to defer, delay, deny and obfuscate on the issue. He seems to think that he deserves congratulations for acknowledging what virtually every sensible observer and government around the world has been saying for the last 10 years.

The surreal world in which the Minister lives was on full display around the time of the Montreal Conference of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol last November. As the nations of the world gathered to begin discussions for the second commitment period of the Protocol, Minister Campbell declared that Kyoto was dead and would not get beyond 2012. The debate had “moved on”, he said, and there was no need for the government to ratify Kyoto.

Moreover, he claimed that other countries were realising that Australia was right not to join the protocol, he said, and predicted the system for setting targets and timetables for greenhouse gas reductions could be scrapped after 2012.

“A number of (countries) are saying, ‘Look we made a mistake. We don't think that it's worth opening up a new negotiation about a future commitment when the commitments we have today are looking so unreasonable’,” he said. Ministers from several other countries had told him: “Australia made the right decision. This thing is not going to work.”⁷

For those of you who may also have recently arrived from another planet, Australia has been the subject of unrelenting criticism from the international community since the Protocol was agreed and especially since the Prime Minister announced Australia would

⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 January 2006

⁷ *The Age*, 10 December 2005

not ratify it. (For the record, someone should tell the Minister that Australia did in fact sign the Kyoto Protocol.)

Yet in a unique interpretation of what it means to repudiate an international treaty, Minister Campbell has declared that “no one has shown more support for the Kyoto Protocol than Australia”.⁸ But that doesn’t prevent him from attacking it at every other turn. So what’s wrong with the Kyoto Protocol? According to Campbell: “Signing Kyoto is like catching the 3pm train from (Sydney’s) Central Station when it’s five o’clock”.⁹ Huh? Perhaps that’s something the Minister does often; the rest of us have no idea what he is talking about.

Even when the Montreal meeting made unprecedented progress on agreeing to begin discussions for the second commitment period after 2012, and was hailed around the world for injecting new life into Kyoto, Campbell did not miss a beat.

While the rest of the world sees Australia as a pariah on climate change, Campbell proudly tells all who’ll listen that we are actually regarded as a world leader on climate change.¹⁰ While the rest of the world thought that Australia was doing all it could to undermine Kyoto and to wreck consensus, Campbell says we are seen as being a constructive player. He must have gone to the wrong conference.

Australia is in the middle of world efforts to defeat climate change. Australians should be very proud, not only of our domestic programs, but the fact that we are an integral and constructive player in all of the international fora, ... seek[s] to change the world to save the climate.¹¹

Yes, and Saddam Hussein was interested in world peace.

When asked why Australia refused to adopt greenhouse gas reduction targets, Campbell reasoned: “Targets are a proxy for doing the hard work.” So, let’s get this straight: accepting a legally binding limit on our greenhouse gas emissions is a substitute for

⁸ SBS’s *Insight* program, due to go to air on 28th February, 2006

⁹ *The Australian*, 5 January 2006 p. 4

¹⁰ *Weekend Australian*, 29-30 October 2005, p. 20

¹¹ ABC Radio, 29 November 2005

undertaking real actions, like voluntary programs with business. Perhaps this astonishing confusion owes something to that other formidable intellect in the Cabinet, Alexander Downer. When asked why Howard Government would not impose limits on Australia's emissions, (you know, like the US does on SO₂) he snapped: "We are not trying to run some kind of police state".¹²

Just before Montreal, the UN released a report showing large increases in Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. Campbell responded by saying the UN report only tells part of the story. "It's basically adding up all of the increases in the emissions but it isn't taking into account any of the measures we're doing to reduce emissions, so it's only part of the equation," he said.¹³ How does one begin to explain? If his policies are having any effect then the adding up will give a lower number. Maybe the UN should have subtracted some of Australia's emissions to make the number smaller.

Asked if we should be concerned about the new report that showed Australia's energy emissions rising rapidly, Campbell said: "No, I think Australians should not be concerned about that, because we are a growing economy. We've got a growing population."¹⁴ Let's get that straight. If our greenhouse gases are growing because of population growth then they don't count. Let's hope the Earth's atmosphere understands this and takes corrective action.

When the Bureau of Meteorology in January released figures showing 2005 was the hottest year on record, Campbell declared: "It's the hottest year, the hottest decade, the hottest minimum and the hottest maximum", before adding: "The main thing is not to alarm people".¹⁵

In 2000 John Howard appointed Wilson Tuckey Minister for Forests. When WA Liberal Premier Richard Court was asked why Howard had made the appointment he said that it was because the Prime Minister has a sense of humour. When he watches his

¹² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 January, 2006, p. 2

¹³ ABC Radio, 19 November 2005

¹⁴ ABC Radio, The World Today 8 December 2005

¹⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 January 2006)

environment minister on television today, I wonder whether John Howard is still having a joke on us.