

To Senators on the Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy,

Ordinary folk looking at the issue of Carbon Trading are seeing the right questions and the wrong answers.

Let me put it into words for you...

Question one: Is the emission of carbon into the atmosphere pollution or not?

For 30 or more years (from even before it became the status quo and therefore a guarantee of grants) scientists have been sounding warnings that have grown more dire with the years. The IPCC consolidated the science and left no doubt that there are serious risks.

Therefore: carbon emissions beyond a certain volume are pollution and must be stopped.

Question two: What is a safe level of this form of pollution?

The science is available to establish two crucial targets.

A) The total concentration in the atmosphere beyond which the danger becomes potentially disastrous. This is the limit of science.

Morality must define that "cut-off" point. What is that limit to be? Try "Displaces no more than 100 million people in island and coastal communities" or "Starves to death no more than 200 million sub-Saharan farmers" or "Starts only conventional, non-nuclear wars between states over the waters of the major rivers."

B) The level of on-going emissions that will do no further harm. Once target A) has been defined, target B) is just maths.

Question three: Once the targets are established and the world has available a set amount of carbon emissions beyond which emissions become pollution, how do we share the responsibility of stopping the pollution?

This is also beyond science and is another moral judgement. It could be decided by the traditional method – "I'm bigger than you (more guns, more money, more selfish) so I get to do what I like and you don't". Or by the less-tried concept of fair play – "Every person in the whole world can have a carbon footprint of x tonnes per year." (This could also be described using one of our other cherished principles: "Do unto others...").

Assuming that we believe that "all animals are created equal and NONE are more equal than others", we in the Developed Nations have a moral obligation to start on the path of reducing our emissions to allow others their fair share. Quickly.

Question four: How?

Science offers a hundred and one alternative technologies and systems that could supply almost all that we presently get by the outmoded technologies that cause carbon emissions.

All we have to do is switch.

Why is that so hard?

Rhetorical question: There is a massive demand for services to help the poor throughout the world - why is this demand not met by business?

Because our economic system does not deal in morality, only profit and loss. In this dominant ethical system "100 million displaced persons" or "200 million starving sub-Saharan farmers" don't register.

Therefore an attempt to find a "business solution" to a moral question is a pointless exercise.

Illustration: I work in the Film Industry. In the 1980's we made only about 6 movies a year – two were good, two were OK and two were pretty unsuccessful. It became a matter of concern that our film industry was struggling against the power of Hollywood and it was decided that the Australian Film Industry should be helped to become more viable. This was essentially a moral decision but a business solution was created using tax concessions. In its first year of operation we made about 36 movies. Of which two were good, four were OK and 30 were pretty unsuccessful. Oh, and a lot of lawyers, doctors and dentists got significant tax breaks.

Conclusion: Controlling carbon emissions is a moral issue and therefore should not be sorted out by the amoral business of deals and lobbying amongst the operators of the outmoded technologies and systems that caused the problem in the first place.

Business solutions like "cap and trade", particularly if the "trade" is in "international permits", is only a variant of "I'm bigger than you (more guns, more money, more selfish) so I get to do what I like and you don't" where the poor and desperate of the world will end up paying too high a price.

So: The target is defined – save the world. The method has to be an irrevocable decision to establish a timetable for reductions of emissions by replacing the dangerously outmoded with the safer alternatives. Anything less would be a failure of leadership and an abandonment of our most cherished moral principles.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my ideas.

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