



**ACTION FOR  
A GLOBAL CLIMATE  
COMMUNITY**

## **AGCC Conference: 'Kyoto and Beyond: a Global Strategy'**

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I want to start off by suggesting that belief in climate change is much more far reaching in its implications than is normally accepted. Because it changes our attitude, not just for the world in a kind of global planetary sense, but to the nation and to other nations. If you believe in climate change as the most significant physical threat that we face, then you must accept that it is a global challenge that can only be solved globally. That doesn't mean to say that you don't also say that it has to be solved primarily and from the first by the nations that have benefited from the pollution, which is the cause of climate change. Of course that is true. But however you measure it, whether it is by per capita emissions or total emissions, there is no solution which, in the end, can avoid being a global solution. And that of course means that the attitude of the rich and powerful nations towards those who have been seen as weak and poor nations in the past has to change. Not as has been claimed in the past, for religious or philosophic reasons but for practical necessity. And I do think that does change the nature of the dialogue. Most people here would argue that, for reasons either of the brotherhood of man, or the fatherhood of God, men are equal. But we would probably have suggested that that is a philosophical or theological attitude, which is not shared by many and those who do share it don't normally act upon it.

The point about climate change is that you have to accept the practical necessity of behaving in a way that respects other people and their importance in a sense that has not been seen before. And that is why of course George W Bush is right. In the sense that, he knows that the moment he accepts climate change, it changes the whole nature of American's role in the world. It ceases to be possible to be an Imperial nation. Hard luck on the Americans at the moment that they become an Imperial nation, it is no longer possible so to be. And, he knows, the moment he accepts that, then a whole series of actions, which are part and parcel of his policy, become impossible. And that's why, much more than the support of Exxon Mobil, although their reasons are very similar, he will continue to hold to the need for disbelief until he leaves office.

But of course it has the same effect when it comes to dealing with social justice at home. I'm a chairman of a water company, and as such I'd just like to say that I think it is appalling that the Commonwealth Institute think it is necessary to produce water in bottles when it is perfectly available in the tap and it is only through sheer laziness that people do not pour it out into jugs. What is more, although I am not the chairman of Thames Water, and it is a competitor, I have to say that their water is probably healthier than that that is in those bottles. So, let's realise that when you chair a water company and you are in the middle of a drought period, and I happen to have one of the three which is the most water stressed in Britain, the first thing that we have done since getting that designation is to say that if we are going to have to have compulsory metering, which is necessary, we are going to have to have a socially acceptable tariff to deal with that. Unfortunately with the current legislation at the moment, although I am in course of discussion with the new operator of the regulation system, the regulation is difficult to use in a way in which you would provide a basic tariff which would cover people's basic needs and charge significantly more sharply thereafter, which does seem to me to be an essential part of any consideration of the effects of climate change. For unless you have a socially just system, at home as well as universally, you cannot, I believe, expect people to join in. And I want to emphasise those words "join in". I know they are not very elegant, but they are a necessary part of any understanding of what you do about climate change. We have just heard an eloquent description of the concerns and worries about these issues from India and why it is that India finds it difficult to join in. Of course, at the heart of that is a real or a perceived view that others should take the burden partly because it is their fault, and partly because they are more able to do it. Now, it is also important to take the necessity to join in because it helps us to be very careful about the "silver bullet" argument, a point which others have made before. I do believe that the "silver bullet" argument is one of the most dangerous ones that are around. It explains, in so far as it is explicable, the Prime Minister's speech yesterday [17 May 2006]. It is convenient to say to people in a comforting way, "if only we do x then we

won't have to do anything much else". "I have bitten on the silver bullet. I have made the great statement. I shall be unpopular with many, but I am strong enough and powerful enough to tell you that nuclear power is necessary because of climate change." Now that is actual nonsense, in any case. But it is particularly pernicious nonsense, and I say that, not for party political reasons because Elliot [Morley], I think, would agree with me on it. It is in fact pernicious nonsense because it will push people away from the real issues of energy, believing that there is a simple and not very difficult to implement and happily some way away answer.

In the commission, which I chair, we have come to the conclusion already that to discuss the means of generation before you discuss the reduction of energy use and before you deal with energy efficiency, is to put not only the cart before the horse, but to disentangle the reins and the connections between the half cart and the horse to such a degree that you'll never get them tied up together again. You have to recognise that the first step in dealing with climate change is to reduce the emissions. And that means that you cannot concentrate upon supply, you do have to concentrate upon demand. And that's why the commission that I head has a huge advantage in the sense that we do have a figure. It may not be the figure which, no doubt, Aubrey [Meyer] will want us to have, but the figure is clear and that is that the whole of our quality of life commission is due to find ways in which we can genuinely reduce our emissions by 60 per cent by the year 2050. This is a real and, in general, accepted target.

Now that leads me to say why I think the "silver bullet" argument is so dangerous in a second sense. It not only takes the eye of the real priorities, but it also confuses the argument about consensus. Now I have a problem with consensus, which is quite close to that of Lord Redesdale, and it is this. I was the Secretary of State for the Environment at a time in which the opposition had no interest in the environment at all. My opposite number was Mr Dobson and whatever you say about Mr Dobson is that the environment has never been at the top of his priorities. So, it was very easy to ignore the opposition. Without Greenpeace, I would have been in real trouble. What happened was, that I could get the Cabinet to do the things I wanted because Greenpeace was pushing and making the fuss. Without it, the consensus view, which is what we had, made it very easy for those less enlightened members of the Cabinet to say, "We are already; it's the one thing we are ahead of the opposition, right

the way through, any test you wanted". And it was true, and so you do want to have the kind of consensus, which means that there is no pressure to do better. But you also have to understand, it seems to me, that the traditional system of confrontation politics doesn't work if what you have to do, has to be done every year until 2050, if it is going ever to happen. You can't do it on the basis of everybody taking advantage of the difficult decisions, which governments, of their nature, have to do. And that's what I mean by the revolutionary effect of a belief in climate change. And that's why I do believe that we need to have a mixture of the kind of competition between political parties, which is essential for the health of the democracy and still a mechanism of common policies, which carry on through elections.

Now, it happens to be true that in general, the policies have carried on through the last fourteen years, roughly speaking.

I have great criticisms about the connection between the rhetoric and the delivery of recent years I have to say. But it is at least true, and unusual, in British politics, that we've had a consensus of that kind. But I do think that we have to move to the proposal, which now is being supported by all the opposition parties, including the Liberals and the Nationalists and including even the DUP. A challenge of a negotiation, if ever there were one. And together, the idea is, that inside this system would of course be the normal political argument. But outside it would be this target and would be an independent assessment every year of how far we have moved towards it, and an ability for those independent assessors, having done that measurement, to insist upon such measures as are necessary to ensure that we don't fall behind the targets which have been decided upon.

Now you can still have arguments within that as to which are the right things to do and what is the fastest speed you can do with that as against that, but you cannot get away from the fact that who is ever in power has got to recognise the independent measurement of what it is.

Now I am pretty cynical about some of the targets, which have been produced for us under all governments. But you do need to have targets, which are agreed by independent people outside, or you find that the targets are restated towards the end of the year in order to make sure that you have met them. And you do have to have measurements from somebody outside in order to show that what

you say you have done, you have actually done. Otherwise you find yourself in the sort of situation, which we've had over Brownfield sites where you discover that half of the sites are actually people's back gardens. That's not what you thought was happening until you actually discover it. So you need to have somebody who at least tells you what is happening and you have, in fact, to reach the levels year by year that you have agreed yourself to do.

So there is a kind of consensus, which you can achieve and it is one, in the end, which has got to be accepted by a government. I want it to be accepted by this government. There is a commitment by the next government, actually, to accept it. But it ought to be accepted by this government because we will then have at least four years - or let me put it in my own words, we will have four years - ahead of where we would otherwise start. And that is the only party political comment I shall make.

And it has got to be sensible and it's got to be within the context of the real world. We want to have a go at that sort of argument that we must put economics on the side.

The problem with climate change is that it also, and this is the third huge change, challenges our historic economics. It doesn't say that we shouldn't have economics. It merely says that the economic models we have used in the past are failing because they do not measure a number of things, which are actually, properly part of an economist's activity. The key thing about the market, and I am a committed "market man", is that it does not have a sense of time. And you need to import that sense of time. That -whatever it is- dimension in order to ensure that we don't have a market which only works on the information available now about the situation now and which is therefore willing to do what has happened in the fishery world, which is to fish until the last fish has gone on the Daim banks of Canada, because there was no mechanism to say that there ought to be a measurement about how you fished in a certain way as how you could fish in fifty years time.

What we have to ask, those of us who believe in climate change, is that the measurement of economics brings into the market those levers which insist that we take and price the cost of ensuring that we can go on having resources, go on doing things fifty, a hundred and a hundred and fifty years time. So, we have to price differently and

governments have to use taxation and regulation in order to do that. In order to get the acceptance so that "we are all in it together", these things have to be proportionate, they have to be fair and we have to be willing also to get rid of unnecessary ones. One example of the views that we have is that if we are going to get the building that we need for the homes that we need in Britain in a way that is sustainable, we have to change the regulatory structure that applies to buildings. Not by adding Pelion upon Ossa, but by eradicating building regulations altogether, which are prescriptive and restrict the kind of huge technical change that we need to meet these requirements and replacing them, not by the prescriptive minutiae of today but by clear and clearly increasing standards. So that we would set a thermal efficiency standard which would come into operation immediately and which would be in the context of saying that in five years time it would go up. And in five years beyond that it would go up further. So that you begin to push the technology to meet the needs and that of course is something else which demands a degree of consensus so that people know that it won't be reversed by some future government or by some change in the present government in the way that so many things have been changed in the past five or six years. And we have to do that too; because we can't have the standards and the toughness of them if at the same time we are telling people the ludicrous situation that we have today of exactly what gage the pipe shall be between this kind of lavatory and that kind of outflow. It doesn't make sense. We don't do it with motorcars and there's absolutely no reason why we should do it with buildings.

So I suggest we have to be very radical indeed in the way in which we approach these matters. I'll finish by suggesting that the only way that we can engage people is to recognise that this is a new renaissance. Not only is climate change producing the biggest change in thought-patterns since the renaissance, but also it ought to be seen as exciting and as full of opportunity as the renaissance. The thing about the Green movement that all of us, in our different ways, have got to learn is that the hair-shirted puritan approach is absolutely bound to fail. Even if you like it, it won't work. Praise God barebones is Praise God dead. And he died totally unfulfilled, as all puritans do. The definition of a puritan, as you know, is someone who suspects that somewhere else, someone else is enjoying themselves and seeks to stop it. We need to recognise that if people are going to do this together, it has to be filled with hope and with

change; with ideas and with new concepts; making people recognise opportunity rather than restriction. It may be that some don't like that and want to make us miserable. I just say to them, even if they are right, that is the way to turn people off and make people say, "if that is the situation, if it is as bad as what you tell me, if it is going to be as awful as you tell me it is going to be, then eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die". And I have to say that's my view. The reason why I spend most of my time dealing with climate change is because I do believe that we can find an answer. I do believe that it is possible to deal with this problem and the moment you cease to believe that, and then it seems to me that you may as well give up and eat, drink and be merry. And tell your children to do the same thing. If you don't want to do that, then we have really got to give people hope.