

ENVIRONMENTALLY SPEAKING 9

THE BUSINESS-AS-USUAL APPROACH

If humans pursue a business-as-usual course for the first half of this century, I believe the collapse of civilization due to climate change becomes inevitable.

(Tim Flannery, *The Weather Makers* page 209)

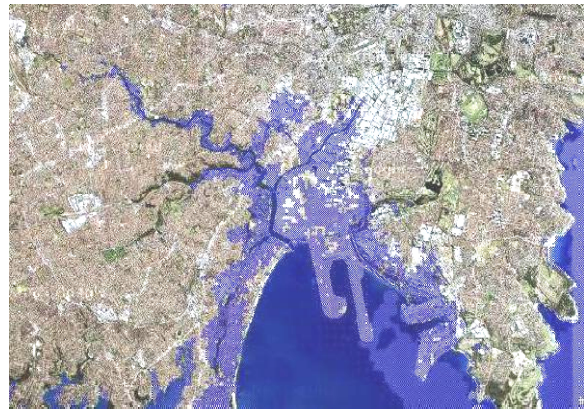
English environmental politician, Aubrey Meyer, suggests that a policy of 'adaptation' to climate change has acquired a 'genocidal meaning'. At the highest levels, Meyer points out, some economists are advising that it is too expensive to do anything worthwhile. Under a do little scenario it is the poorest nations and communities which suffer the most.

Climate change threatens humanity as a whole, and so requires a species-level response. Meyer's proposal - "contraction and convergence" (C&C) - proceeds from the recognition that all countries must act together to set a limit on global greenhouse emissions. Once this limit is agreed (the contraction bit), they must decide how the remaining emissions are to be shared. Meyer's suggested basis for this is equity. Given that we are all created equal, why should poor countries accept a smaller share of the shrinking pie? And so, after a period of transition, all countries are allocated emissions entitlements based on their populations (convergence).

In practice, both the contraction cap on emissions and the convergence date to equity would be negotiable. World governments might, say, agree to limit global carbon-dioxide concentrations to 450 parts per million - enough, it is hoped, to keep global warming below 2 C - with convergence by 2030. This would give a less developed country such as Bangladesh a large wad of unused emissions, which it could sell for cash on world markets. Countries such as Australia, meanwhile, would have to buy spare emissions credits in order to keep on using a disproportionate amount of fossil fuel. The result would be large financial

flows from rich to poor, giving developing countries the resources to participate in the clean energy revolution.

In contrast, Kyoto avoids the question of equity by excluding poorer countries from targets and allowing emissions trading only among the industrialised nations that have signed up. Meyer is scornful of this approach. "You can't sell what you don't own," he points out. Emissions entitlements are the birthright of all human beings - part of our equal right to the use of the atmosphere.



Predictions for Botany Bay if the Business-As-Usual approach continues. Both Sydney Airport and Port Botany will be under water at a 1% increase in temperature.

The concept of Peak Oil was identified in 1956 by the late US oil industry and government geologist M King Hubbert. As the US energy administration now concedes, oil production in the USA peaked in 1971, as he predicted. Production for all nations outside the Middle East peaked in 1997. The Middle East will peak between 2006 and 2020.

As fuel prices double and then double again in the years after the peak, we will be faced with some very hard choices in the fields of agriculture, food distribution and transport generally.....The challenges we face after peak

oil will require localised food production and industry in a way not seen for 100 years....Self-contained communities living close to work, farms, services and schools will not be merely desirable; they will be essential. (Andrew McNamara, Qld MP, in Queensland Parliament February 2005)

Currently in New South Wales – and this is based on New South Wales health data – 13.4 per cent of people report that they are not able to access a health treatment, a significant proportion because of a transport problem. That kind of situation is going to get worse as a result of rising fuel costs. (Mr Wadiwell, at Senate Inquiry into Fuel Supply, 30/6/06)

The Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee of Senate is conducting an Inquiry into Australia’s future oil supply and alternative transport fuels. International Oil expert, Dr Samsam Bakhtiari, appeared at the Inquiry in July. Committee member, Senator Barnaby Joyce, described himself as a ‘quiet fan’ of Dr Bakhtiari whose work on Peak Oil began in the 1960s. Dr Bakhtiari predicts that over the next 14 years present global production of 81 million barrels per day will decrease by roughly 32 per cent, down to around 55 million barrels per day by the year 2020. *One of the new rules, in my opinion, (says Bakhtiari) is that **there will be in the very near future nothing like business as usual.***

When asked about transport solutions, Bakhtiari stated that *the future is to rails because rails are the most fuel efficient system.* He went on to illustrate this by quoting fuel efficiency figures: *at tonne kilometers per litre of fuel, aeroplanes are between two and three, cars are between 10 and 22, trucks are between 65 and 85 and trains are around 320.....I have heard that Sydney in 2006 is planning to spend half its budget on roads and other infrastructures and half on public transportation – it seems to be*

roughly fifty-fifty. I think that as soon as you change this percentage towards rail and public, fuel efficiency might begin to make some sense. I think you can see the future here. At this point, the Committee’s Chair, Senator Rachel Siewert adds: *It is not planes.* Bakhtiari goes on: *Aeroplanes will be the first casualty in the system. They are already making losses. I do not know how they can carry on because the jet fuel is directly proportional to the increases in crude oil.*



Michael Gutteridge is a Senior Scientist with the Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines. In his submission to the Senate Inquiry he predicts a dim future for centers such as Cairns which are reliant on Tourism.

Tourism is unsustainable.

In his paper *Calculating SEQ(South East Queensland) carrying capacity in a theoretical sustainable future* Gutteridge found that we get an ecological footprint of 12hcy on our 2.2 million hectares of SEQ. This tabulates to a population of around 180,000 people. This finding is not so dissimilar to a recent report commissioned by the Mosman Local Government in that precinct of Sydney that argues for 14.7hcy and a supportable population of 58 rather than the 28,000 domiciled there. ...It is expected that nearly 4 million people will be living in SEQ by the year 2030, ...by necessity goods and waste will need to be transported in and out of the region to maintain current lifestyle.Given however the requirements for sustainability, it is likely that this hinterland area would need to be considerably larger than SEQ, and,

paradoxically, the larger it becomes, the larger it needs to be to support the energy requirements of the extended transport network. Inevitably there would be an upper limit to a population's hinterland, hence an upper limit to concentrations of populations in any one metropolis. This of course has implications for pushing too far with urban consolidation.

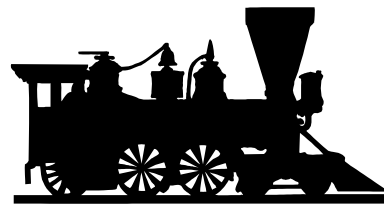
In another paper on Peak Oil, Gutteridge concludes that *we need to start getting the public used to the idea such that they can initiate transition toward a lower energy society. The worst of all worlds is to say nothing and let the system go into shock. A government that lets this happen will be held responsible.*



In his book *The Long Emergency* (2005), James Howard Kunstler, outlines possible scenarios for the future post peak. *The successful regions in the twenty-first century will be the ones surrounded by viable farming hinterlands that can reconstitute locally sustainable economies on an armature of civic cohesion. **Small towns and smaller cities have better prospects than the big cities**...New York and Chicago face extraordinary difficulties, being oversupplied with gigantic buildings out of scale with the reality of declining energy supplies. Their former agricultural hinterlands have long been paved over. ...The way that commerce is currently organized in America will not survive far into the Long Emergency. Wal-Mart's "warehouse on wheels" won't be such a bargain in a non-cheap-oil economy. The national chain stores' 12,000-mile manufacturing supply lines could easily be interrupted by military contests over oil and by*

internal conflict in the nations that have been supplying us with ultra-cheap manufactured goods...America will have to make other arrangements for the manufacture, distribution and sale of ordinary goods. They will probably be made on a "cottage industry" basis...Tens of thousands of the common products we enjoy today, from paints to pharmaceuticals, are made out of oil. They will become increasingly scarce or unavailable. The selling of things will have to be reorganized at the local scale. It will have to be based on moving merchandise shorter distances....The commercial aviation industry, already on its knees financially, is likely to vanish. The sheer cost of maintaining gigantic airports may not justify the operation of a much-reduced air-travel fleet. Railroads are far more energy efficient than cars, trucks or airplanes..

One More Step Towards a National Freight Strategy: The North-South Rail Corridor Study



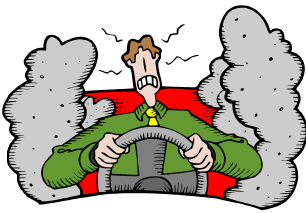
The DOTARS(Department of Transport and Regional Services) commissioned study for a Brisbane-Melbourne rail link was released earlier this month. The Inland Route has the potential to revitalize regional centers such as Parkes. It would also reduce the number of semi-trailers on the Pacific Highway and provide alternative distribution networks from those now centered on Port Botany.

The report highlighted the shortcomings in the rail network in Sydney(page 6) *Rail passenger services compete with freight trains for infrastructure capacity, especially as they are usually given priority. In the Sydney area, freight trains may not operate during the suburban peak periods due to the curfew arrangement. The restrictions have a severe*

impact on freight services. Much of the reliability issues associated with the Melbourne-Brisbane services relate to network constraints in the Sydney area. Conflicts between freight trains and passenger trains in the Sydney metropolitan network are caused by narrow windows for train paths and freight train curfews. Limited passing lanes and crossing loops also impact on the line haul sections.

CLIMATE CHANGE, CONGESTION, POLLUTION AND PEAK OIL

It is estimated that congestion in Sydney is costing NSW \$10billion each year. (Dr Philip Laird, 30/6/06, Senate Fuel Supply Inquiry)



The General Purpose Standing Committee Inquiry into the health impacts of air pollution in the Sydney basin, chaired by Patricia Forsythe, has been reading and hearing submissions from groups and individuals concerned about pollution impacts in Sydney. The Western Sydney Clean Air and Water Action Group provided a compelling story of lack of concern by Government departments in protecting citizens around the Alcoa aluminium plant at Guildford. The Residents Against Polluting Stacks(RAPS) outlined problems with the M5E tunnel. The Southern Sydney Region of Councils listed the impacts of industries such as Orica and the expansions of Port Botany and Sydney Airport. They also noted pollution from motor vehicles, wood heaters and motor mowers. The Randwick Council submission from the Director of City Planning concentrated on motor vehicles and public transport such as light rail. In South Ward, the citizens are

heavily impacted by major polluting industries and the emissions from motor mowers are greater than those from motor vehicles. Randwick Council failed to mention any of this. Nor did it comment on NSW government planning strategies, such as the loss of Prince Henry hospital, which has required people to travel further for health services.

Business As Usual is still the norm in NSW with Minister Sartor giving approval for precious farmlands in Sydney's South-West and North-West to be converted into residential developments and warehousing under the Metrostrategy. Freight projections for Port Botany given by the Minister for Ports, Joe Tripodi, at the recent Budget Estimates Committee confirm that Treasury is committed to expanding Sydney well beyond it's carrying capacity. Oversighting the major infrastructure projects which will drive this growth is Professor David Richmond. Professor Richmond was responsible for the Richmond Report into Mental Health, oversaw the development of Olympic Park and the Redfern –Waterloo Project.

When I met Professor Richmond earlier this year to discuss the expansion of Port Botany and allied infrastructure, he assured me all the government could do was **FOLLOW TRENDS.**



Neville Chamberlain's 'Peace in our Time' – ignoring the inevitable at huge cost.

Lynda Newnam
September 2006