

The GWPF bemoans state of climate debate – while promoting antagonism

Nigel Lawson's climate change sceptic group complains of 'intolerance' in climate science, but what of its own record?

Lord Nigel Lawson and his associates at the Global Warming Policy Foundation have been [all upset this month](#).

Professor Lennart Bengtsson, a 79-year-old meteorologist from the University of Reading, had resigned from the foundation's academic advisory council only a couple of weeks after joining.

According to Bengtsson, once news got out that he had joined the GWPF, colleagues and peers in the academic community put him under "enormous pressure" and one refused to co-author a science paper with him.

In his [resignation letter](#), Bengtsson said the situation reminded him of the anti-Communist fervour fuelled by 1950s US Senator Joseph McCarthy.

David Henderson, chairman of the GWPF's academic advisory council, wrote this "degree of intolerance" and the "rejection of the principle of open scientific inquiry" was "truly shocking".

This was just the kind of situation that the GWPF "was created to remedy", wrote Henderson. Really?

Models of restraint?

Let's have a look at the Global Warming Policy Foundation's record in its noble fight for tolerance and respect for scientific inquiry.

In 2010, it kicked things off by inviting Vaclav Klaus, then the President of the Czech Republic, to deliver its [inaugural annual lecture](#) [pdf]. He said:

It seems to me that the widespread acceptance of the global warming dogma has become one of the main, most costly and most undemocratic public policy mistakes in generations. The previous one was communism.

Comparing people who accept the evidence of human-caused climate change to communists hardly seems conducive to breeding tolerance.

The following year, the GWPF called on Australian Cardinal George Pell to deliver [the lecture](#). Here's what he said about climate change campaigners.

Some of those campaigning to save the planet are not merely zealous but zealots. To the religionless and spiritually rootless, mythology - whether comforting or discomfoting - can be magnetically, even pathologically, attractive.

Later in his speech, Pell said debates about anthropogenic global warming “can only be conducted by the accurate recognition and interpretation of scientific evidence”.

Pell's own “interpretation” of the state of the science was described by some of Australia’s leading climate scientists as [“dreadful”, “utter rubbish” and “flawed”](#).

The 2013 lecture was delivered by former Australian Prime Minister John Howard who said he was an “agnostic” on human-caused climate change.

He titled his speech [“One Religion Is Enough”](#) which was a reaction to the “sanctimonious tone” he said came from people who advocated for sharp cuts in greenhouse gas emissions.

The GWPF’s own academic advisory council can hardly be described as being populated by those hoping to spread love and tolerance either.

For example, three members of the [GWPF academic advisory council](#) – Professor Nir Shaviv, the Cato Institute’s emeritus Professor Richard Lindzen and Professor William Happer – co-signed a column printed in the [Wall Street Journal in 2012](#) where they suggested climate scientists were only in it for the cash.

Alarmism over climate is of great benefit to many, providing government funding for academic research and a reason for government bureaucracies to grow. Alarmism also offers an excuse for governments to raise taxes, taxpayer-funded subsidies for businesses that understand how to work the political system, and a lure for big donations to charitable foundations promising to save the planet.

The trio also compared modern day climate scientists to the work done by Trofim Lysenko and the totalitarian regime of Stalinist Russia – a comparison that's a [popular climate denialist canard](#).

It almost feels like there's a communist analogy under every climate contrarian's bed.

Another GWPF advisory council member is Professor Ian Plimer, a geologist and director for a number of mining companies, including several owned by one of the world’s richest women, Gina Rinehart.

Plimer has written two debunked books claiming climate change is all natural – [Heaven and Earth](#) and [How To Get Expelled From School](#) – the second of which was aimed at children and teachers.

Plimer told one audience at a book launch to “maintain the rage”. His upcoming book Not For Greens, [the publisher says](#), will claim “unless the greens live sustainably in caves in the forest

and use no trappings of the modern world, then they should be regarded as hypocrites and treated with the disdain they deserve”.

Another Australian GWPF member is Dr Robert Carter, who has no academic position at any university but is associated with about a dozen climate science denial organisations in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and the United States.

One of those organisations is the Heartland Institute, which ran an [infamous billboard campaign](#) that associated people who accepted the science of human-caused climate change with the values of terrorist and murder Ted “Unabomber” Kaczynski. After seeing the outrage caused by the billboard campaign, Carter [thought it was a good idea](#).

The GWPF has also been all upset over the rejection of a manuscript submitted to the journal Environmental Research Letters by Professor Bengtsson.

The Times and other mainstream media in the UK, the United States and Australia ran stories claiming his manuscript had been knocked back because its conclusions would be “unhelpful” to the mainstream science community.

It turned out that the [manuscript was knocked back](#) because the peer reviewers said it contained several errors, had tried to compare “apples with pears” and showed “troubling shallowness” in its arguments.

Open scientific inquiry?

When Lord Lawson is characterising certain behaviours as McCarthyesque or intolerant, he might want to stop and consider the actions of some other GWPF associates.

[The Independent](#) newspaper has reported how an unnamed GWPF trustee wrote a letter to the employer of one of the foundation's harshest critics, Bob Ward, a policy director at the London School of Economics.

The letter reportedly claimed one distinguished Oxford scholar was “appalled” that the LSE was employing Mr Ward.

"This is the way in which the foundation goes about its business, trying to intimidate its opponents into silence," Ward claimed. The GWPF has said it knew nothing of the letter.

Another GWPF advisor is Professor Richard Tol, of the University of Sussex.

Tol is the co-developer of a model known as FUND that is used as one way to assess the societal cost of greenhouse gas emissions.

When economist Frank Akerman co-authored a technical paper criticising aspects of Tol’s FUND model, Tol responded by accusing Akerman of libel and writing to his employers and several of his publishers. When Akerman changed jobs, Tol wrote to them too.

Tol was allowed to post a response in the journal, where he claimed that Akerman had ignored known problems with his own analysis.

In a web page devoted to the “[Tol Controversy](#)”, Akerman writes that Tol had “waged a relentless campaign to convince the world that one of my published articles is illegitimate”.

On the accusations of libel, Akerman wrote: “This is a false accusation of a serious offense, no longer just an academic disagreement. It has gone far beyond the bounds of acceptable debate.”

The GWPF and Lord Lawson are keen to leave people with the impression that climate sceptics are being being victimised.

Yet they never seem keen to mention the numerous occasions where academics researching climate change have themselves been abused and hounded.

There are many examples - they could start with [Dr Ben Santer](#) or [Professor Michael Mann](#).

There’s also the [use of Freedom of Information laws](#) to monitor scientist’s inboxes or make unreasonable or uninformed demands for data that’s either already there or irrelevant to a finding.

When the [Daily Mail](#) looked around for examples of Lennart Bengtsson being abused on the internet, they chose to highlight how one writer had called Bengtsson (sensitive types should mute their internal reading dialogue now) a “cry baby”.

I’d say this is somewhat milder than emails to some climate academics from people who want to “[smack the living shit out of you](#)” or ask you to “[die you maggot](#)”. It’s certainly less shocking than arriving at your car to find the words “[climate turd](#)” smeared in excrement across your bonnet.

[Bjorn Lomborg](#), the political scientist who heads the US-based Copenhagen Consensus Center think tank, is another to have run with the confected outrage at so-called climate McCarthyism. He wrote:

When researchers mix up their role as a scientist with that of an activist, the reputation of their science will inevitably diminish. Climate science deserves better.

Ironically, Lomborg’s analysis comes only days after it was revealed that the GWPF had decided to restructure itself so that it can [actively campaign](#), something that in Lomborg’s eyes would presumably “inevitably diminish” an already questionable reputation.

But all this talk of McCarthyism and communists reminds me of a passage in the book *Merchants of Doubt: How a handful of scientists obscured the truth on issues from tobacco smoke to global warming* by Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway.

The book explores the roots of science denial, tracing many of its earliest actors – some of which are still active – to a group driven by a fear of communism and a fanatical devotion to free markets.

Evidently accepting that their ends justified their means, they embraced the tactics of their enemy, the very things they hated Soviet Communism for: its lies, its deceit, its denial of the very realities it had created.