

Peter Hale, Climate Concern UK

From: "Climate Concern UK" <peterhale@climate-concern.com>
To: "Margaret Hale" <margaret@pmhale.fsnet.co.uk>
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Subject: Climate Change 20 years ago (to all contacts)



The following points may be of interest from a book "The Greenhouse Effect" published in 1989, co-written by Stewart Boyle, Director of the Assn for the Conservation of Energy, and John Ardill, the then Guardian's Environment Correspondent.

Apart from dates, much of the book reads as if it could have been written yesterday!:

In 1985:

Climate scientists from 29 countries met at a conference in Austria to review research on the greenhouse effect; concluding that a warming of between 1.5 and 4.5 degC might occur during the 21st century.

In 1987:

Margaret Thatcher told scientists that we may have "unwittingly begun a massive experiment with the system of this planet".

The President of the Maldives said "We are an endangered nation".

In 1988:

The statement from a world climate conference in Toronto included: "The Earth's atmosphere is being changed at an unprecedented rate. It is imperative to act now".

A World Congress on Climate and Development in Hamburg called for an initial 20% CO2 reduction by 2005.

"Trying to deal with the consequences 20 years from now may be too late". (House of Commons Environment Committee)

"It is time to stop waffling so much and say that the evidence is pretty strong that the greenhouse effect is here". (US scientist Jim Hansen)

"It can go horribly non-linear on you at some stage - runaway effects can occur at almost any time". (Joe Farman, discoverer of the Antarctic ozone hole)

The atmosphere is within 1% certainty of proving that humanity has upset its natural balance (the authors).

George Bush stated in an election campaign speech: "Those who think we're powerless to do anything about the greenhouse effect are forgetting about the White House effect. As President I intend to do something about it. I will convene a global conference on climate change.....all nations will be welcome - and indeed, all nations will be needed" ! (GB senior that is!).

"The Gulf Stream could change route" (World Resources Institute).

"Snowless ski resorts face bankruptcy".

"In Beijing, the percentage of households owning a fridge has increased from 3% to more than 60% in the last five years".

Some other notables:

"Nuclear power would use up potential investment capital for energy efficiency and renewable energy sources". Topical!

"Fit a gas condensing boiler"; "Buy locally produced goods"; "Refuse excess packaging"; "Eat less meat";

"Choose a fuel-efficient car", etc, etc.

The Foreword is by David Bellamy!

As a further historical point, in 1957 the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in California reported that half of the extra CO₂ which we emit stays in the atmosphere. Until then, most climatologists had dismissed Arrhenius' warnings (from 1891), arguing that it would be absorbed by the oceans.

Well!

Peter Hale
Climate Concern UK
tel 01325 378452
www.climate-concern.com
www.climate-speakers.org.uk

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