

## UNESCO, butt out!

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A recent report by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee dated 1 June 2012 expresses great concern over threats to the Great Barrier Reef from coastal development, poor water quality and climate change. It states that,

*... there are a number of developments that, were they to proceed, would provide the basis to consider the inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger.*

The response to this report from the legions of eco-righteousness might best be described as delighted, with the news media and environmental groups widely presenting it an important problem demanding forceful action by government.

### **The Reef Is In Excellent Condition**

However, like all such concerns about “threats” to the GBR, these are all only hypothetical possibilities that might occur but with no evidence to indicate that anything detrimental is actually happening. In reality the reef is in near pristine natural condition.

- The human population of the region is small. Almost the entirety of the adjacent coast remains undeveloped. The port expansion at Gladstone about which the UN bureaucrats expressed great concern is over 20 Km downwind and across the prevailing ocean current from the nearest reef. Extensive experience of such dredging in GBR waters and elsewhere indicates there is no reason to expect any harm to the reef.
- No degradation in water quality has been actually detected and use of agrichemicals in the catchment area has declined in recent years.
- Occurrences of coral bleaching have been associated with El Niño events, not climate change. There is no indication that the frequency or intensity of such events have increased nor have floods or tropical cyclones.
- Surface water temperatures show no significant trend over the past 60 years. Over the past decade there has been a slight cooling.
- The maximum total catch for commercial fishing is restricted to an amount which equates with an average yearly harvest rate of only 90 g per hectare. This is about 1/1,600<sup>th</sup> of the average sustainable catch for well managed reef fisheries elsewhere.
- The total damage to the reef from all of the shipping accidents that have ever occurred there would be only a fraction of one-percent of the natural damage which takes place

naturally almost every year from tropical cyclones and that is well within the capacity of the reef to soon repair.

### **We Are Not in Such Great Condition**

While the reef is in great condition, our own human ecology is not. We face a worsening global economic situation of unprecedented extent and complexity. All over the Western World economies are in trouble with productive activity struggling under a growing burden of bloated government and stifling bureaucracy for which environmentalism has provided a major impetus. Pandering to Green votes and indulging ourselves in paroxysms of righteousness over matters of political and environmental correctness is a luxury we can no longer afford. It is time to cease the obsession with non-problems and begin to address the real ones. The UNESCO World Heritage Committee is only another pack of overpaid bureaucrats jetting around the world enjoying themselves on expense accounts Craig Thomson might envy.

Promoting hypothetical problems to maintain the rort is their first priority. The World Heritage mob is comprised of members from Mexico, Thailand, Cambodia, South Africa, Colombia, Senegal and United Arab Emirates. Senegal has no coral reefs and all of the others have badly abused ones. None of the committee members have any real expertise about reefs. They would all be well advised to go home and tend to their own problems. Their threat to list the GBR as being in danger would only make themselves look stupid. As for any effect on tourism, visitors are not going to stop wanting to see the GBR because some UN committee lists it as endangered. If anything, such listing would seem more likely to increase the desire to see it.

UNESCO, Pew, WWF, Greenpeace and sundry other denominations of the eco-salvation movement have found a rich ground for proselytizing in Australia. The cultural cringe has primed the chattering classes here for unquestioning acceptance of imported notions of political correctness. Whenever the latest fad or fashion arrives from overseas there is always a noisy crowd to welcome it and eagerly vie to hop aboard the bandwagon and have a go at striking an even more dramatic pose than the clowns already there. Never mind that we already have more marine protection than any other nation where it is needed least, we will add more as fast as we can.

Mindlessly swallowing the swill of lies, contradictions, misrepresentations and muddled thinking dished up by the global eco-industry is costing us dearly in our freedom, food, energy, housing, health and way of life. In terms of natural abundance and socio-economic development all of these things should be improving here. They are instead declining in availability and affordability with misguided environmentalism being a major cause.

### **The Deceptive Nature of Environmentalism**

It is characteristic of extremist ideologies to develop their own specialised vocabulary of words and phrases. Those denoting what they wish to be seen as unquestionably good or evil are especially favoured as are terms of emotional index conditioned to arouse fear, hatred, reverence, or righteousness. Terms used to provide a moralistic façade for less palatable truths are another favourite. Examination of such terminology can provide revealing insight into the true nature of the beast. Here are some common examples from the eco lexicon.

### *Concern -*

The concern so piously expressed by environmentalists about supposed threats to the environment is exposed as a sham by their immediate reaction to any suggestion that a purported problem may not actually be as serious as feared. Instead of the hopeful interest one would expect from anyone who genuinely cares about something, their response is invariably argument and even angry rejection. It is obvious their true commitment is to the threat itself, not to the environment. Threats provide meaning, purpose and funding. Nature itself is only a distant abstraction.

### *The Precautionary Principle -*

As originally formulated, the concept was that if there is an apparent risk of severe or irreversible damage, preventative measures should not be withheld because of a lack of scientific certainty. Environmentalists twisted this reasonable approach to uncertainty into an imperative for full protection against any hypothetical risk. They then added a burden of proof for no harm from anyone who objects. However, as every student of Logic 101 learns, proof of a negative is not possible. In practice this means that even the most dubious hypothetical concern must be acted upon and no acceptable objection is possible.

The muddled logic of the environmentalist formulation of the precautionary principle actually forbids doing anything at all. This includes precautionary measures themselves because everything we do, or don't do, entails some possibility of risk. That this vacuous and pernicious bit of intellectual drivel has even been written into the enabling legislation of government bodies charged with environmental management only underscores the corrosive influence of environmental correctness on rational thinking.

### *Love of Nature –*

This is another phony façade of the eco-saviours. The demographics of green voters clearly show that their preferred habitat is not the remote regions where nature prevails or rural areas where it remains prominent. It isn't even the outer suburban areas where at least remnants of it still retain some influence. Despite their professed love of nature, the habitat where the majority of Greens chose to live is the tiny fraction of the planet where nature has been virtually annihilated, the inner urban heart of large cities.

### *The Fragile Delicate Balance of Nature –*

The concept of ecology as a house of cards, susceptible to collapse at the slightest “unnatural” disturbance is still another mushy misrepresentation promoted by the environmentalists. Unnatural in this context is code for human at any societal level above Stone Age hunter gathering. The reality of nature as a constant struggle for survival in a dynamic, ever changing, often harsh, natural world has been replaced by a romantic notion of nature in a blissful state of harmony and balance, something pure and perfect where any detectable human influence is by definition a desecration.

Somehow in all this, ecology itself has also been transmuted from a scientific discipline involving a study of the interrelations of organisms and their environment into something they refer to as *The Ecology*. This appears to be some kind of undefined but implied spiritual entity more or less synonymous with the one they also refer to as *Gaia*.

This view of ecology seems to have a special appeal for those who produce nothing themselves; but, who enjoy having their sense of moral superiority untainted by any tinge of gratitude or guilt regarding those who provide their needs.

### *Threatened -*

Threatened is an especially popular term of emotional index in the environmentalist lexicon. It even enjoys a formal status *via* the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Such listing is often highly political and includes numerous so-called iconic or charismatic species whose populations are large, and healthy. Such listing is aimed at support for various eco-agendas, not any real existential concern. Even the grey kangaroo was listed for a time. It was only removed when the absurdity of having to cull several million every year to prevent overpopulation threatened the Red List itself with being re-listed from misleading to meaningless.

The mother of all environmental threats has, of course, been Anthropogenic Global Warming (a.k.a. Climate Change). AGW has become the most revered of all eco threats. To doubt it is equivalent to denying the Holocaust. Accepting it and renouncing (but not giving up) the sin of fossil fuel consumption promises to save the world, punish unbelievers and bring about a fair, harmonious, balanced, sustainable restoration of Eden. The fact that every prediction of the climate “experts” has failed and climate itself is cooling is only a test of faith for the true believers.

### *Sustainable –*

Like all the other eco buzz words, this one appears benign until it is examined more closely. As used by the eco-alarmists it is a no brainer. The less any resource is utilised the more sustainable it becomes, so the more restrictions the better. What the urban green non-producers fail to recognise is that sustainability of the industry is also important. Whatever we don't get from one source becomes an added pressure somewhere else.

The fisheries that Greens are so anxious to close down, have the lowest environmental impact of any means of food production and the health benefits of increased seafood consumption are substantial. The seafood our waters could produce but our fishermen aren't permitted to catch, sustains only greater costs, human misery and environmental impacts on the land. The 70% of domestic sea food consumption we import and pay for by selling off non-renewable mineral resources sustains only bloated bureaucracy here and overfishing elsewhere.

### *Impact -*

In the environmentalist lexicon the consequences of natural events, no matter how devastating, are referred to with neutral sounding terms such “influence” or “effect”. However, any detectable change attributable to humans, no matter how slight, is referred to as an Impact.

If you drive down a beach in your SUV, a few of the tiny creatures who live among the sand grains might presumably be affected. In eco-speak this is an impact and should be prohibited. On the other hand, if a hurricane washes away the entire beach, that is only a natural ecological succession. However, if the storm should be attributed to climate change, it would immediately become a terrible impact and a tragic violation of nature's delicate balance.

### *Stakeholder -*

A stakeholder used to be a person with something invested or something to lose. Environmentalists revised this to include themselves on the basis of their “concern” providing them a proprietary interest. With nothing invested and no experience or special knowledge to offer, they are now commonly deemed to be “stakeholders” in distant places they may have never even seen with equal standing to those whose homes, livelihood and way of life are at stake.

### *Social License -*

This recent addition to the environmental lexicon seems to be mainly used to imply that primary producers must only be permitted to operate if they come hat in hand with bowed head to pay obeisance and beg humble permission from their eco-overlords.

### **Behind the Eco-facade**

Behind the carefully contrived facade of piety and righteousness the environmental movement is heavily infected with suppurating dishonesty, delusion and perversity. It's the kind of maladaptive response that animal behaviourists have found may arise when strong instinctual drives are blocked. In this instance it might well be a consequence of the biologically impoverished urban environment compounded by the boredom of a non-productive parasitic lifestyle which affords little purpose or meaning. It's not unlike the obsessive compulsive neuroticism often observed in animals living in sterile cages.

In most developed nations a large majority of the population now dwell in cities and only a minority toil to produce the goods and services which support everyone. For many urbanites in particular, the natural environment has acquired a distant, romantic, somewhat sacred, status. Though themselves voracious consumers, they are removed from the production which supplies their demands. The producers who provide their needs tend to be seen as greedy exploiters and defilers of nature. Even more ironically, their own lifestyle has virtually annihilated the natural world in a small portion of the environment, yet, that is where they choose to spend their lives.

### **Ecology is above all holistic**

Every organism must have effects in order to exist. Like all species, the effect of our own can be either harmful or beneficial depending upon whether the net result is to decrease or to enhance the diversity, abundance and condition of life. The observable reality of natural ecosystems is that they are far less delicate, fragile and balanced than is popularly imagined. They are in fact much more robust, dynamic and fluctuating with every organism impacting on others. Aiming to maximise our beneficial effects and minimise the detrimental ones requires trade-offs and adjustments whereby we seek to spread our impacts across our whole resource base within the bounds of sustainability. Every restriction we impose unnecessarily puts more pressure on others elsewhere and makes genuine sustainability more difficult.

### **The future of environmentalism**

All over the Western World economies are in trouble with productive activity struggling under a growing burden of bloated government and stifling bureaucracy for which

environmentalism has provided a major impetus. In developing nations it has been estimated that as many as 30 million people have been driven into landless poverty as conservation refugees. In the US, UK, Germany and Australia power grids are approaching the threshold of major blackouts as a consequence of a decade long failure to invest in new generating capacity because of uncertainty regarding environmental regulations. Meanwhile hundreds of billions of dollars have been wasted on costly, inefficient and unreliable wind and solar farms which produce only trivial amounts of power and no measurable reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Without a radical change in direction, declining productivity and competitiveness in the global marketplace may soon make it impossible to maintain our vast urban resource sinks populated by large numbers of non-producers. This modern society which the environmentalists regard with such contempt looks likely to prove far more fragile and delicate than the reefs and forests about which they are so obsessed. Ironically, the sustainability they are so concerned with imposing may ultimately render they themselves and their way of life unsustainable. Even more ironic, in such circumstances their most valuable contribution to Gaia or The Ecology could well be as compost.

Of course, events don't have to go that way. People do have a remarkable ability to abandon a strongly held belief when it becomes obvious it is costing themselves and not just others. That will be the real test of faith.

Although we all want clean and healthy air, water, and food and few do not appreciate the beauty of nature, achieving this requires knowledge, difficult decisions, costs and some trade-offs. Turning concern for the environment into another *ism* to serve as an opportunity for know-nothing, do-nothings to indulge in displays of self-righteousness only adds to the difficulty. Those with nothing invested and nothing to contribute but complaint have earned no right to decide.

Signing away our sovereignty to inept and unaccountable UN bureaucrats with a demonstrable track record of failure in their own countries is worse than just stupid or spineless. It is treasonous. As a liberal democracy our government is one that is supposed to be of, by and for the people. It is past time that we the people started to take back our rights and our government from those who have usurped them. It is also time to tell the UN bureaucrats to butt out, go home and deal with their own problems.