



The Debate Rages On

Publish Date:

April 2012

This article from the [April 2012 edition](#) of the [IPA Review](#) is by Director of Climate Change Policy and the IP and Free Trade Unit at the IPA, Tim Wilson.

Following on from his earlier bestseller, professor Ian Plimer has continued his substantial contribution to climate change scepticism through 'How to Get Expelled From School: A Guide to Climate Change for Pupils, Parents and Punters'.

Along with the title, the introductory chapter from proud sceptic and current Czech president, Dr Václav Klaus, makes the book's objective apparent from the start. After the success of *Heaven and Earth: Global Warming, the Missing Science*, this new book is designed to be a compendium of his sceptical analysis for the average person.

The book condenses information from his earlier best-selling book and adds new material on the scientific, policy and political debate about the state of anthropogenic climate change. Crucially, it presents it in an easy to understand and accessible format that is aimed at 'pupils, parents and



punters.'

As Plimer outlines the 'book is deliberately seditious' and seeks to cut through the spin that has developed, particularly by politically interested governments, and enveloped the public debate around climate change.

Littered with statements that quickly counter the perception that scepticism amounts to heresy, Plimer asserts his views as mainstream within public discussion.

He also seeks to bring the known unknowns around climate science back to the fore, critiquing the discredited Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and its *Summaries for Policymakers*, which he argued 'is not a summary at all but state pre-ordained conclusions'.

Edging into the economic and policy space Plimer also punches hard, highlighting the development of a climate industrial complex with the large number of departments, academics and non-government organisations now wedded to catastrophic climate change being real for their own survival. What's worse is that as governments finance these same groups, the voices and vested interests to wind back bad government policy also become more active.

As a straight shooter Plimer also takes on his critics. Tackling the well-known scandals that have exposed the groupthink within the climate science community, Plimer provides examples of how the conduct of some in the climate science community has contributed to diminishing public confidence in scientific analysis.

In particular he takes aim at the demonisation of those who dispute the arguments of academic Michael Mann, who was found in the leaked Climategate emails to have sought to malign qualified astronomers as 'astrologers' because they disagreed with him.

Where Plimer makes his most meaningful contribution is in the most recognisably disputable area of the science of climate change about projections resulting from computer models. As he argues, 'computer models do not constitute evidence', especially when there are known but impossible to simulate variables included, such as cloud formations.

In making his arguments Plimer succeeds in presenting his dispassionate case as a sober and rational contribution weighted by the evidence he provides. It stands in stark contrast to Tim Flannery's book, *The Weather Makers: How Man is Changing the Climate and What it Means for Life on Earth*.

Unlike Flannery, Plimer doesn't rely on fabricated pseudo-religious faiths about the Earth God and Gaia to make his case, or that the climate system operates on a Uri Geller-style form of telekinesis.

Reading the two books together highlights that while incremental progress is being made to better understand the nature of earth's climate and the contribution man is making to shape it, there remain many areas of agreement. Both agree on many key areas of fact. Yet they draw very different conclusions, which can at least in part be explained by their divergent attitudes towards humanity.

And that's where Flannery exposes himself not just as an obsessive with a religious faith, but also a misanthropic pessimist, as he writes, 'the collapse of civilisation due to climate change becomes inevitable' and 'the root cause of the issue-[is] the total number of people on the planet'.

In response he offers supranational structures where 'humans would have no choice but to establish an Earth Commission for Thermostatic Control, something that could easily grow from the Kyoto Protocol'.

Flannery's vision is bleak and easily gets lost in worst case scenarios. Plimer's, by comparison, is cautiously optimistic and focused on what he considers known.

Compounded by the scandals that have surrounded the tightlyknit climate science community through the progressive release of incriminating Climategate emails and the inappropriate referencing of unscientific reports by the IPCC, Plimer's tome will find many sympathetic ears.

It's clear that Plimer's ambition is to reach further by offering a digestible analysis of the state of the science, economics, politics and policy of climate change from a sceptical perspective for those whose sole employment isn't within the hallowed walls of the Climate Change Department or the CSIRO.

The book ends by calling on students to ask probing questions of teachers who may be 'feeding them with environmental activist propaganda' and for parents to help their kids and themselves against 'environmental advocacy and political propaganda'.