

## ***Some Reflections on the Saga of the Pouto Point Turbines***

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The New Zealand government plans a period of public consultation for May and June 2018 before its Climate Commission decides how to implement a judicious cutting back on the nation's greenhouse gas emissions. The California governor Edmund Brown also plans a Climate Summit for 2018, presumably seeking a broader convergence on the goal of "zero carbon" in August. Therefore I have decided to publish a certain "fact sheet" that was placed before the mayor and councillors of the South Taranaki District Council in New Zealand on February 26. These reflections on a saga are for those members of the public who have read the short paragraph, the third on the sheet, entitled *Pouto Point Saga*.

Why was it indeed that the Crest Energy project to install turbines at Pouto Point was canned? (At one stage, there was a wonderful Crest Energy website, reflecting a profound conviction about the future. All the regulatory hoops had been passed over.) I am unable to answer this question categorically, but many observers will join with my suspicion that it was canned out of shame. The relevant energy balance accounting was in a shameful condition and nobody realised until I began my campaign. I may have succeeded in drawing the attention of the powers sufficiently well enough to halt this particular project but as witness the impending commissioning of a new tidal generator in Wales, the awakening mind has yet to populate into spheres of governance among nations generally.

It could be that Crest Energy was canned quite coincidentally to my campaign writing. Maybe the various letters I wrote had no effect whatsoever. However I was led to another hypothesis after delivering a talk to the Stratford Rotary Club in 2016. I now suggest a modification of this hypothesis, with hopes that it may merit some comment.

A scientist at my Rotary Club talk thought that people may be imbibing madness pills upon joining certain ranks in the parliamentary civil service, e.g. upon taking up posts with the Ministry for the Environment. On reflection, there is unlikely to be a concoction of pure physical chemistry to explain why civil servants would run scared from analysis. Underlying the shape of their shame, there may have been a kind of poisoning of the constitution. Have some senior civil servants gone *Beyond Good and Evil*, to borrow words from the title of one of the works of the existentialist philosopher Freidrich Nietzsche? Abandoning ordinary scruples, do they press hands on the wax of civilisation, like Nietzsche's superman? Heaven forbid, surely.

But this would go back to before the time of any of the current lot. As I have explained elsewhere, in 1969 the New Mathematics movement forced certain nomenclature lessons into the shadows. The then new content in our primary school curriculum required teachers to aver, among other things, that the indeterminates, as surely as 5 divided by 0, did not exist. And yet children would still be able to assert *One of the natural numbers is 5. One of the natural numbers is 7*. There is an indeterminate mentioned copiously in such elementary mathematical sentences. It needs to be acknowledged but when it also supposedly does not exist, a profound illogic is sworn at the door and many children will fail to develop their powers of

inference, upon stumbling over such illogic.

It was arguably a group of professors assisted by a group of sooks that facilitated the illogic and made it somewhat mandatory. This is to take a sook as someone who so doggedly clings to a sookish value that no fact of evidence will persuade them to abandon it. In the case of the New Mathematics movement, sooks probably saw that the existence of centres of excellence, like Taupo Primary School for example, meant that there would be children unfairly getting a second-to-best education. In order that all children should receive the same formula of state porridge in mathematical conventions, then, something had to be done. Step up the professors who wanted to shape the wax!

We may still be suffering a crisis in mathematics education that arose on the heels of New Mathematics and we may, in addition, be suffering a similar crisis connected to atmospheric physics. Cut from indeterminate numbers to the gravitational potential energies of atmospheric molecules. Do these exist? By the canons of the work mentioned in the short paragraph that is eighth on the sheet, apparently not. The virtuous canard of the greenhouse effect could be just the latest manifestation of the advancing force to be reckoned with. An hypothesis may be put:

Professors + Sooks = the Wax Controlburgher

Putatively the members of parliament decide, somewhat as if by a political pragma, that going along with the Wax Controlburgher is the appropriate thing to do. Thus to the likes of international agreements to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Whereas such agreements are not sound reflections of scientific knowledge but rather expressions of desire about the shape of the wax, we should be careful. If all our energies go into a following of the Wax Controlburgher, we could pass up an important strategic opportunity. We could end up very sadly afflicted by a trend of climate change that was quite simple to address.

When I learnt philosophy at Victoria University of Wellington, when I touched upon the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, I was told that the German third Reich under Adolph Hitler was fired up like superman. More recently I have heard that the damage from climate change will be at least as great as the damage from World War II. Reflecting on these items, I believe that the civil service should exist, in the West at least, not to collapse at the feet of some Wax Controlburgher, but to exert a moderating and sobering influence. It must therefore have some independent analytic capacity at its fingertips.

It seems that the parliamentary civil service in New Zealand has been found wanting in connection with the claims I made about the energy balance accounting for tidal turbines. If it was wanting also in connection with the introduction of New Mathematics then the underlying problem is systemic and ingrained. It deserves some careful thought. It could go much further than merely New Zealand.