

PRESENTATION
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THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

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CLIMATE CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

How many of us are willing to pass on to our children and grand children a life and legacy that no longer includes the heritage we have known in these islands? This is what is at risk because of climate change.

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing the world today. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has concluded in their most recent report that the Earth has warmed since 1905 and globally, eleven of the warmest years on record have occurred in the last 12 years. The report also stressed that it is very likely that human emissions of greenhouse gases have caused most of the warming over the past 50 years.

Atmospheric concentrations of the key greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, have increased significantly since the pre-industrial period, primarily due to human emissions from fossil fuel use, agriculture and land-use change.

According to the most recent report the Earth is already committed to further warming over the next few decades, from past human emissions alone. The report gives “best estimates” for global mean temperature rise for the end of this century range between 1.8 and – 6.4°C), depending on the amount of greenhouse gases emitted.

As a result of the rise in mean temperatures, both the basic science and climate modeling suggest; rising sea levels estimated to reach up to 59cm or about 2ft above 1990 levels by the end of the century (and that’s conservative), a rising frequency of high temperature extremes; changing rainfall patterns; an increase in prevalence of flooding and droughts; and more intense tropical storms including hurricanes.

The consequences of global warming for us in the Caribbean are sobering. Although along with the Maldives and all of Polynesia, we only account for .05% of all GHG, we, like all islands everywhere have too much to loose. Firstly and most frighteningly is the consequence of sea level rise. If Arctic sea ice along with the Siberian permafrost and the Greenland ice cap melts, sea levels could rise by a minimum of 59cm or 2 feet (and that’s conservative). This would wreck havoc on the engines of our tourism economies which are primarily beach based and major infrastructural assets like sea ports and some airports which are very close to sea level could be rendered useless.

In 2005 I presented a graphic of Anguilla's potentially changed geography at a local environmental conference, if such sea level rise occurred. The graphic was mind boggling. 50 % of our key economic assets would be submerged . I do not doubt that the same shocked reaction would occur if such a graphic was developed for your own territories. Added to this, is the certainty of much greater coastal erosion as wave action would now obtain more height and more corrosive power. Even more scary is the likelihood of severe coral bleaching and coral die off as the oceans warm and acidify further impacting our tourism and fishing industries. I need not mention the effect of increased intensity of hurricanes, we all have had our share of those since 1995 and can expect much more of the same if predictions hold true. The dry seasons and rainy seasons could also change as they have begun to do already in other parts of the world, impacting agriculture in ways yet unforeseen, and if severe economic dislocation occurs as a result we could have mass movement from or between our islands which could strain social cohesion both in the territory directly impacted and by those receiving fleeing emigrants. The case of Montserrat is a focused example of this as is the case of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina and we may all soon become familiar with the term 'eco migration'.

In short the science behind this issue points to an ecological fallout which in a phrase I used at the CPA Climate Change conference in London last November is enough to frighten the fecal matter out of us all.

Although there is a lot more bad news, lets take a quick look at what is good news. Technology has always cursed and blessed the human animal down through the ages. And although the rise of technology which first triggered the

industrial revolution in the midlands of Britain in the 18th century is arguably the genesis of the problem today, technology can likewise afford us some significant solutions to the issue. The burning of fossil fuels for electricity production and for transportation is by far the single largest contributor to CO₂ emissions. Yet contrary to popular perception, 2007 saw a true global milestone of \$100 billion dollars of investment into renewable energy technologies, in capacity, manufacturing plants, research and development. These investments were primarily in wind, solar, photovoltaic, geothermal and biofuel technologies. Renewable electricity generation capacity reached an estimated 240 gigawatts worldwide in 2007, an increase of 50% over 2004. Jobs worldwide from renewable energy manufacturing, operation and maintenance exceeded 2.4 million in 2006, which is before the exponential growth in investment in renewables. At least 60 countries – 37 developed and transition countries, have some type of policy to promote renewable power generation. In the developed world, policy targets for R.E exist in all 27 EU countries, 29 US states and 9 Canadian provinces. We can also be assured that as the demise of the Bush administration draws near, a sea change in US federal policy will be inevitable in whatever party wins the US presidency in November. When that happens far more effort, investment and progressive policies will be implemented perhaps to the level of a 21st century Marshall plan.

The question for us in the Caribbean region is “what are we doing”? I do not need to discuss here in any detail the concern we all must have about the sky rocketing price of oil. With prices at \$143 a barrel and rising we had better start thinking differently, and even our brethren in T and T should think carefully,

because, I will dare to say that their windfall obligates them to take some leadership on this matter as to how profits can be best invested over the long term not only for themselves but as a demonstration to rest of the region.

The association of Caribbean electrical utilities CARILEC is not unaware of this issue and is discussing the use of R.E. in a serious way. I believe Antigua has announced a new energy policy. Nevis is seriously pursuing its geothermal resources. Jamaica has established at least one wind farm and a comprehensive draft energy policy has been drawn up for the OECS, although I am not sure about its adoption at the level of Government. Here in Anguilla a draft energy policy with supporting technical and scientific “how to implement data” will be submitted to executive council and the H.O.A. by August for consideration and I can tell you that the scientific data already collected for our wind resources are extremely promising and demonstrate enormous viability for the future exploitation of this resource. It is therefore logical to assume that since we all lie in the path of the trade winds that what is good for Anguilla should be good for the entire region. Furthermore I do not need to count our blessings when it comes to sunshine and the potential for solar technologies.

So again the question must be asked “what are we as Parliamentarians doing?” The C.P.A UK branch organized an excellent conference in November last year on climate change.

85 parliamentarians attended including delegations from Japan and Mexico. Our region was not well represented. I was honored to represent those islands that did attend including Bermuda, Cayman, the BVI, the TCI and Jamaica on

the drafting committee for the conference communiqué. That communiqué called in part on Parliamentarians to pelage to do all they could on

- a. Calling on our domestic political leaders to support an ambitious and ethical post- 2012 treaty
- b. Encouraging debate in our legislative bodies, including promoting the formation of climate change standing committees, developing national legislative climate change plans and strengthening links between our country's legislative bodies.
- c. Using our links with political leaders and citizens to raise awareness of and to highlight the opportunities in tackling climate change.
- d. Holding our Governments to account on international commitments made.

But along with technology and political will and action, (assuming we have that) is the difficult issue of "behaviour". All Political Leaders use the term sustainable development very loosely. After all it sounds good. But do we really ponder what it means? Are we certain that real sustainability and capitalism as we now practice it are compatible? Since we too, as Caribbean people have bought into the notion of economic growth as the authoritative marker of genuine development do we not sometimes pause to wonder if, the increasing numbers of cars on the roads, pressures on our infrastructure, demand for as

many foreign products as we can possibly consume with nowhere to dump them when we blithely discard them, add up to sustainable living? “I consume therefore I am” seems to be the new philosophical basis for our very existence. As Jonathan Porritt a sustainable development activist puts it- “ contemporary capitalism responds to the shortest of short terms, abominates the very notion of limits, celebrates excess, accepts that its “invisible hand” will fashion as many losers as winners – and has no connectedness with the natural world other than as a “dumping ground and a store of raw materials”, if you think that climate change is real, think of the linkage between fossil fuels, deforestation worldwide, rising pollution of our seas and waterways and human behaviour. We are now paying a very high price for materialism and the natural world is reacting. If we accept that, behaviours have to change, and to do so this will be a grindingly difficult issue for Caribbean Political Leadership. Our people have come to expect a lot of what they see on TV and advertisers are very, very talented people. How do we change course?

It is my belief that climate change will force a new development paradigm on all economic theory and practice. With China adding as much coal powered electrical capacity every year equal to what the whole of the UK consumes, I am not optimistic that human kind will not exceed GHG emissions of 550ppm by 2050. A recent IPCC report made an important and telling change in its wording. Instead of discussing the need to avoid “dangerous” climate change, the report spoke of “abrupt and irreversible” climate change.

Adaptation and mitigation are also terms we are going to hear a lot of in the coming months and years. It will be in some ways an extension to our disaster

preparedness planning but ramped up significantly to a degree yet unknown and tailor made to each island and community.

I would like to believe that a people who have endured the middle passage and slavery, colonialism, the struggle for human dignity and self determination, will now have the courage to look inwardly. To seriously examine the intrinsic values of Caribbean life, of what it means not just to be prosperous but to be happy and mold a new development paradigm from that. And even though the causes of climate change, truly, are not of our own making, have the moral courage to make a stand as citizens of the planet and do our part to make a difference.