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Connecting Environment, Science and Christianity

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Copenhagen— before, during and after

Editorial— Dr. Martin Hodson

The last few months have been very busy ones for many of us involved in JRI. Undoubtedly the main reason has been the COP15 UN Climate Change Conference which was held from 7th to 18th December 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark. Let us give you some insights into the run up, the conference, and the aftermath. Possibly the best way to do this is to work in chronological order, starting with our JRI Pre-Copenhagen consultation.

Pre-Copenhagen Consultation

On Wednesday November 18th 2009, forty JRI associates and invited guests met at the Arthur Rank centre for a Pre-Copenhagen Consultation chaired by **Revd. Dr. John Weaver**.



The speakers at the Consultation- left to right: Ann Pettifor, Ben Niblett, Richard Weaver, John Weaver (Chair) and Sir John Houghton.

Sir John Houghton (President of JRI) was the first speaker, and considered “The Challenge of Climate Change”. He covered the basics of climate change science, and then moved on to consider the major impacts: heat waves, droughts, floods, sea level rise, environmental refugees and biodiversity loss. It is now clear that if we do nothing to control emissions then we could see a 4-6°C rise in global temperature by the end of the century. It is essential that we keep temperature rise below 2°C, and to do this we need to peak global emissions by 2016. It will not be pos-

sible to correct an overshoot later. There is a moral imperative: we in the rich world have grown wealthy because of fossil fuels. We did not realise the damage we were doing, or that it would land disproportionately on poor countries. Our imperative is to care for the Earth and for the poor.

Ann Pettifor (Executive Director of Advocacy International) said that we need to make a complete transformation of lifestyles and to start living as if we did not have fossil fuels available. Christians have a duty to play a genuinely evangelical role to show people how we can live the future. There is no mission more important. We have to deal with our economy and our ecology. We will have to live more locally, and not live beyond our means and our boundaries. We should model ourselves on Christ when he turned over the money tables in the Temple as described in John’s Gospel. Jesus went and got the cords to make a whip, and whipped the money lenders and overturned the tables. There was calculated and righteous anger in his act. What Ann finds is a lack of righteous anger from Christians today because of the easy money that has fuelled our over rich lifestyles.

Richard Weaver (Tearfund Senior Policy Adviser - Climate Change and Disasters) looked at the impact of climate change on the poorest people and the role of advocacy. Tearfund was the first NGO to get involved in the climate change negotiations and has been at each of the UN conferences since 1992. It is also involved with partners on the ground. Richard highlighted some of the issues facing poor countries like India, Bangladesh, Malawi and Nepal. When he looked forward to Copenhagen he considered that it would only be a good deal if it is good for the poorest communities. So a strong adaptation component is required. Both long term (2050) and short-term (2020) emissions targets are needed. We also need near-term and long-term finance and support, and a financial architecture that is fair to all and seeks to give continued support to the least developed countries.

Ben Niblett (Tearfund Campaigns Team Leader) wanted to talk about the response - what people can do and how you can persuade more people to do more? What does it take to motivate people? Facts alone rarely get people to take action. We need to campaign because we can’t solve the problem by just

giving money. Ben encouraged everyone to attend The Wave demonstration on 5th December 2009 (see below). Not all campaigns involve rallies and other examples include:

a. Sending messages to politicians, especially if you can do it face to face. Or you can send postcards like Act Fast from Tearfund.

b. The Climate Justice Fund - helps churches work out their carbon footprint and pay an Anglican diocese in Africa to deal with the damage there.

c. Superbadger – if you are on Facebook then you can campaign from your computer. See <http://apps.facebook.com/superbadger/> Finally, Ben compared this with the campaign against slavery - that took 30 years and we can't take that long.

We need to be smarter and faster, but we have had 200 years to learn so we should be able to do it!!

Full notes on all the talks can be found at: <http://www.jri.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/PreCopNotes.pdf>



The Wave

JRI is mostly about thinking, education and advocacy on environmental issues, but I guess there are times when all of us feel called to take some action. Spurred on by Ben Niblett quite a number of us went to The Wave, and here we present two reports.

Dr. Martin Hodson writes:

Since we moved to Haddenham, Margot and I have been very involved in Transition Thame and District (TTD), a local group looking into living a more sustainable lifestyle. The Wave began for us two Sunday afternoons before, when we had a special banner making session with TTD in the Scout Hut. In the summer the Climate Rush visited us in Haddenham, and stayed on the village green. They gave us some tips on banner making, and these proved very useful. We all drew around our hands, and then stuck the

images onto the banner. The completed product looked great!

Margot and I decided to go to The Wave on the bus organised by TTD. A fair number from St Mary's, Haddenham were on the bus with us, as were people from both the Baptist and Methodist churches. Grosvenor Square was absolutely packed with people from all ages and backgrounds. Many were dressed in shades of blue, and there were lots of placards, banners etc. We had a long wait before we set out on the march, and were nowhere near the Houses of Parliament at 3.00 p.m. when the aim was to surround the Houses of Parliament and carry out "The Wave".

Two other JRI people who went to The Wave were Paul and Fran Houghton. We asked Paul to report on the special service he attended. **Paul Houghton** (JRI Treasurer) writes:

The purpose of this event was to focus on the crucial need for world governments to take action on the causes of climate chaos. An ecumenical service in Central Hall, Westminster at 11 o'clock was one of the first events of the day. The building was packed out and there was a further crowd outside unable to squeeze in - about 3,500 altogether. The Archbishop of Canterbury delivered a very bible-based and challenging address, focussing on climate change as an issue of justice in a media dominated age. The worship was led by a Holy Trinity, Brompton music group. Songs included 'How Great Thou Art' and 'Amazing Grace' and the volume of sound during worship was such that the song sheets vibrated in our hands! The service was introduced by the new Director of the Evangelical Alliance and included 'effects of a changing climate' interviews with representatives from international organisations. The President of the Methodist Conference led a Climate Change Act of Repentance. Key passages from Job 38 and Romans 8 were read by Joel Edwards and The Archbishop of Westminster who also led the prayers and pronounced the final blessing. Then . . . off to support the march, with many other environmental groups, ending up at Westminster Bridge and the Houses of Parliament. It was interesting that most media reports totally ignored the strong faith component of the whole event.



Dr Tjirk van der Ziel, a science journalist from The Netherlands, has recently joined us as a student on the CRES course. Tjirk was at the Copenhagen Summit and sent us this piece on his experiences:

Hidden faces of Copenhagen's failure

Remember December 2009, the most important summit in decades, we were told. Because the future of our societies, our lives, our Earth is at stake. Are we able to reach a worldwide agreement after Kyoto? We should. So, I went to this conference on climate change: 194 countries with 8053 participants, 832 non-governmental organisations with 20611 representatives, 1069 media organisations with 2941 journalists. Two weeks of talks, meetings, discussions, interventions, negotiations, irritations, resistance, anger, delays, bargaining, mediations, consensus, accord... or not...

All human emotions were raging during that process at the Bella Center, the enormous building in Copenhagen in which the UN summit took place. We observed the people, we presumed the troubles, we witnessed the gap between the rich and the poor countries. But still, even as a journalist for a Christian daily newspaper who writes regularly about global warming and human-nature relations, it was hard to understand what was really happening behind closed doors. More experienced colleagues were also complaining about the spinning of information, especially in the final hours of the last day. Most astounding was the press conference in a small room in which the whole world's press was kept on a string for more than one hour. Nobody showed up. But afterwards it became clear that exactly then President Obama was giving his own meeting with some White House reporters, just before returning to the airport. Everyone felt upset, deceived, misled. And how disappointing was the result. Perhaps not surprisingly, this summit was above all about economic interests and geopolitics. Since then we have heard stories from totally different viewpoints, from the Americans, the Chinese, the Europeans, the developing world. Copenhagen makes clear that it is almost impossible to get a political agreement on the global level. The UN should strive for more regional cooperation. And we, the media, should tell the story of climate change over and over again. Yes, it is a difficult subject, in debates, in jargon, and in methodology. Recent research in public use of media resources shows that the subtleties of differences in degrees of certainty related to different aspects of climate science are not picked up. Instead, most people connect uncertainty in a more generic way to notions of climate change itself, i.e., regarding the impact of human actions. These findings have strong implications for the wider public debate. Are we able to communicate the complexity of climate science?

How can we inform people about clearer indications of consensus in the scientific community, so that the accountability of sound science will increase? And most of all, can we put climate change into the bigger picture in which deeper values and hidden ideologies cling? Climate change has scientific, historical, sociological and cultural frameworks. But I believe that there is also a religious background, the way people care for humans and creation, which is the most important one.

We thank Tjirk very much for his valuable contribution, and wish him well on CRES.

We felt we could only give the final word in our special Copenhagen edition to the President of JRI, **Sir John Houghton**:

Copenhagen and the Climate Change Crisis

When written in Chinese the word crisis is composed of two characters, one represents danger and the other represents opportunity. John F Kennedy

At the world climate change conference in Copenhagen in December 2009, tens of thousands of delegates and other interested parties gathered with great expectation. What was hoped for was an outcome binding the world's governments to tough action to halt damaging human-induced climate change. But no such agreements were forthcoming. Nor was there agreement over a timetable to make such agreements. All very disappointing. So what, if anything, was achieved and what needs to be done now to bring the process back on track?

The final document of the conference called the Copenhagen Accord was brokered by the United States, China, India, South Africa and Brazil and just noted by all the other delegates. It included some important **positive outcomes** namely:

- 1) A near-global consensus for a goal of 2°C for the maximum rise of global average temperature from its preindustrial value due to human activities – a tough but necessary target. That it emerged intact demonstrates a high level of concern about the damaging impacts of climate change and the need for strong action.
- 2) Developed countries committed to implementing quantified economy-wide emissions targets for 2020 at levels to be notified by 31 January 2010. It is essential that these are not just token reductions but substantial and meaningful. Indications are that they are likely to be more in line with 3 or 4°C in global average temperature rise rather than 2°C¹. The offer made by the European Union will be especially important. If it were for 40% reduction as has already been agreed in Wales and Scotland, it would provide a serious lead for other nations to follow.

3) Actions by developing countries receiving support from other nations will be monitored by an international inspection regime – an agreement that was vital for President Obama to take away from the conference to help him persuade the US Senate to pass a necessary climate bill next Spring.

4) New and additional funding to be provided by developed countries to assist developing ones in adapting to climate change and in mitigation actions. No binding agreements were made but included was a declared aim to raise about 30 billion US dollars for the years 2010-12 and about 100 billion US dollars per year by 2020 from a wide variety of sources. This indicates that developed countries recognise, at least to some degree, their moral responsibility for the plight of developing countries many of which will suffer very serious damage as climate change begins to bite.

5) A further positive point about the conference is that no compromise agreements, for instance regarding reductions of emissions to inadequate levels, were made at Copenhagen. Better to have no agreement rather than one that is clearly unsatisfactory.

What is needed now?

After the disappointing outcome in Copenhagen – that began with a great sense of urgency - the problem will be to get back on track. Valuable time has been lost not least in providing the world's business and industrial sector with the policy certainty necessary to generate investments (e.g. in energy technologies) on the scale required to meet the 2°C goal. The sense of urgency, now even more necessary than before, is in danger of being lost in the post Copenhagen confusion. The Copenhagen Accord mentioned no further assessment until 2015!

A window of opportunity exists during this year of 2010 for action to secure a future that avoids very serious future climate changes that are most likely irreversible. Preparations for the Mexico conference at the end of 2010 must be much more thorough and detailed than those for Copenhagen and need to include serious bilateral and multilateral discussions. That such discussions can be effective is illustrated by the Accord from the Copenhagen meeting that resulted through hastily arranged discussions between the leaders of some of the nations that contribute most to carbon emissions. Of greatest importance are bilateral agreements that the US and China might be able to achieve – between them they account for nearly half the world's emissions. The G20 should also be seriously involved. If during the next year groupings of nations could work together on a time table of joint action to achieve the 2°C target, the Mexico conference might be able to draw all nations into the more complete arrangement that is required². Possibly the largest obstacle to moving forward

faced by developed nations like our own is the lack of public acceptance of the science of human induced climate change. In the UK only about 60% of the population (less than half in the USA) believe that human induced climate change is the serious problem that scientists make it out to be. A misinformation campaign has been underway for nearly 20 years that tries to persuade people that they are being steamrollered into believing something that may not be true and that may seriously impact their lifestyle³. If governments are going to be comfortable about taking the necessary action, an urgent need is for reliable information and education about the truth of climate change to be presented to a confused public. For Christians, I believe the most important challenges are (1) to present clearly the moral arguments for urgent action, (2) to look for practical ways in which the truth about climate change can be presented in an honest and open way and (3) to pray for world leaders and those with influence to be given wisdom, honesty and a sense of urgency as they address the climate change crisis.

Notes

1. At a 3 or 4°C increase the adverse impacts are very much greater – see Mark Lynas, *Six Degrees*, Harper Collins 2007.
2. The next UN climate change meeting, COP16, will be held in Mexico in November 2010. Anthony Giddens has argued for more bi- and multilateral negotiations in addition to the UN - see <http://www.policynetwork.net/publications/publications.aspx?id=3542>
3. Chapter 2 on 'The Denial Industry' in George Monbiot's book *Heat* provides detail and references.

JRI/Redcliffe College Environment Day Conference: Food Futures

9.30am – 4.30pm, Saturday 6 March 2010

Organised in partnership with Redcliffe College, CMS and the Agricultural Christian Fellowship. The speakers are Rev Dr Mike Rayner (British Heart Foundation, Oxford), Patrick Mulvany (Chair of UK Food Group) and Ruth Valerio, author of 'L is for Lifestyle'.

Cost: £35 including a two-course lunch. For more details go to:

<http://www.jri.org.uk>



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