

# An Orwellian climate

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***“In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act” (George Orwell)***

In George Orwell’s novel *1984* the term “Newspeak” conveys changes not only to the language but to the nature of thought itself, where:

*“The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible. It was intended that when Newspeak had been adopted once and for all and Oldspeak forgotten, a heretical thought – that is, a thought diverging from the principles of Ingsoc – should be literally unthinkable, at least so far as thought is dependent on words...” [1].*

Thought control is irreconcilable with the scientific method, which, since the 17th century, has hinged on the identification of natural and human realities, using systematic observation, measurement, experiment, formulation and testing of hypotheses in an endeavor to construct an accurate representation of the world. By definition, the scientific method, which along with humanism forms the basis for the Enlightenment, the Age of Reason, poses a challenge to attempts at thought control [2].

In an Orwellian world the science itself would be deemed to constitute a ‘*thoughtcrime*’ [2].

Currently much of the world is either denying, or not acting on, the ultimate warning science has ever issued to humanity, namely, that any major interference with the atmosphere-ocean-land carbon cycle threatens to erode the very life support system of the planet.

Prior to the Neolithic, some 10,000 years ago, and the development of Great River Valley civilizations, erratic climates severely hindered cultivation of crops, requiring our ancestors to rely on hunting and gathering. Since then the relatively stable world climate has permitted the development of agriculture and civilization. However, the release since 1750 of over 560 billion tons of carbon (Gt C), more than 40% of which accumulates in the atmosphere, at the unprecedented rate of 2 parts per million/year [3], signals the termination of stable climate, as manifested by the spate of extreme weather events [4].

As CO<sub>2</sub> remains in the atmosphere for 1000 to 10,000 years, current emissions are condemning future generations to impossible conditions. [5]

Overlooking all that, the “powers to be” appear bent on business as usual, and have developed an Orwellian language that attempts to circumvent the scientific message. Rarely are the dominant terms used in the media questioned. An example of such terms which have direct and indirect implications for the future of the Earth’s atmosphere include: ‘sustainable growth’ – The notion of endless growth in populations, GDP and material goods, on a finite planet, has acquired religious overtones among economists and politicians. To date no government appears to have the courage to call for a reversal of this trend.

Government statements appear to take for granted a continuation of the basic social and economic structures, taking little account of the state of the world should the IPCC-projected trajectories toward 4 degrees Celsius increase in global temperatures continue.

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Rational decisions depend on the knowledge of facts. As recorded in history, the cradle of democracy in ancient Greece was destroyed by the rise of the demagogues, distorting the factual basis on which any choices could be made by voters. Modern analogues, where people grow from cradle to grave watching commercial and political propaganda by privately-owned media and by governments, are obvious.

Between 1988 and 2011 the world spent between \$1.0 and \$1.6 trillion annually on the military (Figure 1), and \$1.56 trillion in 2012 [6], mostly on remote conflicts, wrecking economies and killing millions. These astronomical amounts of money are now required for the defence of the human race and other species from extinction in a world 4 degrees Celsius warmer.

There are those who see through the Newspeak. Ian Dunlop, a former international oil, gas and coal industry executive, states in his submission to the Senate committee on extreme weather events:

*“Scenarios abound, setting out the implications of differing assumptions for the future of our children and grandchildren. All of which would be laudable were it not for the fact that the critical scenario, of accelerating climate change and resource scarcity, is deliberately ignored – apparently too scary for ‘political realism’ to contemplate. Which is a nonsense, for the whole idea of scenarios is to prepare for the real, and increasingly likely, risks and opportunities which we face.” [7]*

However, attempts at suppression of the scientific evidence are growing.

In North Carolina a bill that could be introduced in the state General Assembly would prevent state agencies and local governments from planning for the higher seas that many scientists expect later this century as the climate warms, making it illegal to accurately

measure that sea level rise. Instead, the bill requires that any state forecast for future sea-level rise be based on the historical rise of the last century [8].

In New Zealand, the climate-change-denier organisation, the New Zealand Climate Science Education Trust went to the High Court to challenge data published by the National Institute of Water and Atmosphere Research showing rising temperatures in New Zealand between 1909 and 2009. The judge threw out their claims, commenting "This Court should not seek to determine or resolve scientific questions demanding the evaluation of contentious expert opinion." [9]

In Australia, which in 2010 became the world's fourth-largest coal producer, after China, the United States, and India, and which exports roughly 70% of its coal production [10], climate change has become a sensitive political issue. The government has introduced a Carbon Tax which aims at a 5% reduction in carbon emissions, while at the same time the infrastructure is built for the export of over 1 billion tons of coal in the next few decades – almost 10% of the world's annual fossil fuel consumption – which will all end up in the atmosphere.

Opposition by conservative parties to the Carbon Tax constitutes a mask for their denial of climate change. Attempts at either denying the science or belittling the consequences of carbon emissions are common, including by political leaders [11, 12, 13, 14]. Only rarely are the precautionary and risk management principles mentioned. Echoing Senator James Inhofe's attempts to challenge climate science at the US Senate [15], some call for political-based inquiries into climate science [16] – unprecedented since Galileo.

**Good planets are hard to come by.**

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[1] <http://www.newspeakdictionary.com/ns-prin.html>

[2] <http://www.netcharles.com/orwell/articles/col-thoughtcrime.htm>

[3] <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v451/n7176/full/nature06588.html>

[4] <http://www.climatecentral.org/news/hansen-study-extreme-weather-tied-to-climate-change-14760/> ;

[5] <http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2009/01/28/0812721106.abstract>

[6] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_military\\_expenditures](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_military_expenditures)

[7] [http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate\\_Committees?url=ec\\_ctte/extreme\\_weather/submissions.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=ec_ctte/extreme_weather/submissions.htm)

[8] ] <http://www.politicususa.com/north-carolina-gop-truth-rising-sea-levels-illegal-ratherthan-deal.html>

[9] <http://www.nbr.co.nz/article/climate-change-deniers-shot-down-high-court-challenge-niwa-bd-127869>

[10] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coal\\_in\\_Australia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coal_in_Australia)

[11] <http://reneweconomy.com.au/2012/newman-takes-aim-at-climate-and-renewables-95574>

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[12] <http://www.smh.com.au/national/heat-on-ofarrell-and-newman-say-greens-20130130-2dk58.html>

[13] <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/climate-propaganda-on-lnp-summit-hit-list-20120712-21ygz.html>

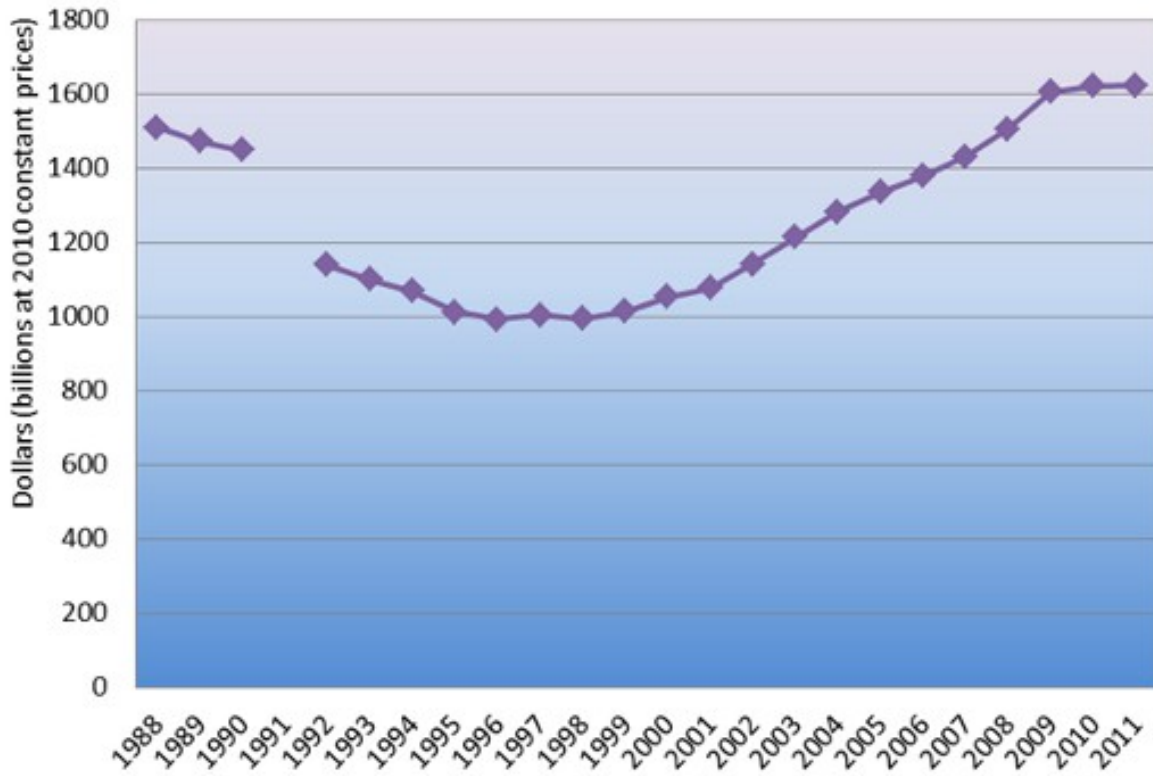
[14] <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/environment-ministers-climate-science-doubts-refreshing-20120605-1zthu.html>

[15] <http://www.desmogblog.com/james-inhofe>

[16] <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-08-15/liberal-climate-change-commission-ludicrous/2840070>

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## World Military Expenditure 1988-2011



Source: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database 2012, <http://milexdata.sipri.org>

Figure 1