



The Global Warming Policy Foundation

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The Lord Hall
Director General
British Broadcasting Corporation
NBH 04A
Broadcasting House
Portland Place
London W1A 1AA

December 14, 2012

Dear Lord Hall,

As Trustees of the all-Party and non-Party Global Warming Policy Foundation, we would like to wish you every success in your new and important post of Director General of the BBC. It is clear that you have a number of urgent matters to attend to in your post. But when you have done that, we hope you will find time to turn your attention to a matter which, although not urgent, is of considerable importance: the BBC's treatment of global warming and climate change issues.

That the BBC recognises the importance of these issues is clear from the lecture given at Oxford University last month by your predecessor but one, Mark Thompson, who opened with an extensive quotation from the Director of this Foundation, Dr Benny Peiser, which he then proceeded to discuss at considerable length. While he was, of course, speaking in a personal capacity, it is reasonable to suppose that his lecture reflected the present view of the BBC on how it should treat climate change issues; and since it is the fullest statement of that view currently available it merits close attention.

We wish to be fair to Mr Thompson. In places his discussion betrays a welcome acknowledgment that perhaps the BBC has not got its treatment of global warming and climate change issues quite right. And he does seem grudgingly to concede that the Global Warming Policy Foundation has a point when it insists that these issues need to be fully and openly debated.

However, against this have to be set a number of less commendable aspects of the lecture. His account of what the Global Warming Policy Foundation is and does is a travesty, wholly ignoring the fact that (as our name clearly implies) our principal focus is the policy response rather than the science. He refers, in patronising terms, to the detailed analysis by Christopher Booker of the BBC's coverage of climate change issues which we published last year, a fully-documented and peer-reviewed report, without deigning to address any of the serious charges it made.

Director: Dr Benny Peiser

Board of Trustees: The Rt Hon Lord Lawson (Chairman), Lord Donoughue, The Rt Hon Lord Fellowses,
Rt Rev Peter Forster, Sir Martin Jacomb, Baroness Nicholson, Sir James Spooner, Lord Turnbull.

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He also shows (as, it must be said, does the BBC as a whole) considerable ignorance of many of the issues he discusses. In particular, he seems to imagine that the issue is a simple yes-no question, namely, whether man-made carbon emissions are likely to warm the planet. He shows no awareness of the fact that there has been no recorded global warming for the past 15 years or so (despite an accelerated rise in carbon dioxide emissions), no awareness that climate scientists are deeply divided over how great or small any future warming is likely to be, and no awareness of the complexity of what the impact, for good or ill, of any such warming might be.

Above all, he shows no awareness of the crucial question of what the most cost-effective response might be, a matter on which economists are divided and on which scientists have no expertise to bring to bear. Nor, incidentally, does he recognise that what might be a sensible policy for the world as a whole may not be sensible for the UK on its own. These are all distinct issues deserving the most careful scrutiny and debate; yet the BBC appears to maintain that there is one single issue which is no longer a matter for debate at all.

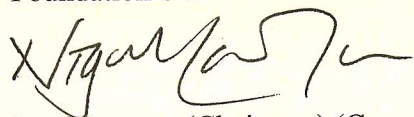
The lamentable report to the BBC Trust, earlier this year, by Professor Steve Jones fell into precisely this error, arguing that the BBC should in future allow even less airtime to dissenters from the conventional wisdom, on the grounds that "For at least three years, the climate change deniers (*sic*) have been marginal to the scientific debate, but somehow they continued to find a place on the airwaves".

Curiously, since he was in post when the event occurred, but perhaps revealingly in the light of recent events, Mr Thompson fails to mention what has come to be known as '28gate'. We refer to the now notorious seminar on global warming held in 2006, involving 28 senior BBC staff and 28 outsiders. As the BBC Trust subsequently explained, "The BBC has held a high-level seminar with some of the best scientific experts, and has come to the view that the weight of evidence no longer justifies equal [ie more than derisory] space being given to the opponents of the consensus [on climate change and climate change policies]". Ever since then, the BBC has fought tooth and nail, at considerable public expense, to keep secret the identity of "the best scientific experts".

As you may be aware, it now emerges that, of the 28 present, there were only two (hand-picked) climate scientists; and the bulk of the rest were either green activists (including two from Greenpeace alone) or non-scientists with a vested interest in promoting renewable energy. So the BBC stands convicted not only of culpable imbalance, but also of rank dishonesty.

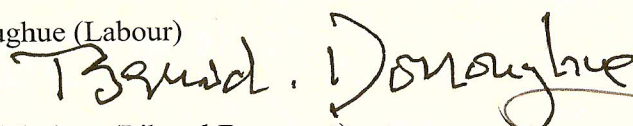
We hope that, once you have grappled with the more immediate challenges facing the BBC, you will revisit this important issue. We suggest that you might start by convening a new high-level seminar, this time a more balanced one, whose non-BBC participants would be qualified climate scientists, energy and environmental economists, and experienced policy-makers - whose names, incidentally, would be made known. The Global Warming Policy Foundation would be happy to be represented in any such seminar.

In the light of the public interest in this issue, we shall be posting this letter on the Foundation's website.



Lord Lawson (Chairman) (Conservative)

Lord Donoughue (Labour)



Baroness Nicholson (Liberal Democrat)

