



The Global Warming Policy Foundation

1 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5DB
020 7930 6856 www.thegwpf.org

Sir Paul Nurse
President
The Royal Society
6-9 Carlton House Terrace
London SW1Y 5AG

February 25, 2013

Dear Sir Paul

My attention has been drawn to a speech you gave last month at Melbourne University, in which you chose to criticise me by name in terms which bear no relation to the truth. In the interests of accuracy, I have obtained a full transcript. I recognise that, as a distinguished geneticist, you are not a climate scientist, and may therefore feel ill at ease discussing the complex issue of climate policy. But that is no excuse for wanton misrepresentation both of the issues involved and of my own position.

So far as the latter is concerned, you claim that I “would choose two points and say ‘look, no warming’s taking place’, knowing that all the other points that you chose in the 20 years around it would not support his case”. That is a lie. I have always made clear that there was a modest degree of recorded global warming during the 20th century (see, for example, my book *An Appeal to Reason*, which you have clearly not taken the trouble to read). However, so far from choosing any arbitrary ‘two points’, I was drawing attention to the fact that this warming trend appears to have ceased, since – contrary to the predictions of what you describe as “consensus scientific opinion” – there has been no further recorded global warming at all for at least the past 15 years, as even the IPCC Chairman, Dr Pachauri, has now conceded. Whatever the precise reason for this, it cannot simply be dismissed or denied.

Again, you assert that the reason I do not share your position is that I am one of those “who have political or ideological views that lead them to be unhappy with the actions that would be necessary [*sic*] should global warming be due to human activity... Because these actions are likely to include measures which involve greater concerted world action, curtailing the freedom of individuals or companies and nations, and curbing some kinds of industrial activity, potentially risking economic growth.”

Director: Dr Benny Peiser

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

Registered in England, No. 6962749. Registered with the Charity Commission, No. 1131448

There is nothing 'political or ideological' about my dissent from your position. It is true that I value individual freedom, and consider it immoral to be recommending measures which would hold back growth in the developing world and condemn hundreds of millions to avoidable poverty. But my objection to the policy you favour (see, again, my book, where it is clearly set out) is that it is not cost-effective (even if it were globally attainable, which the recent collapse of the Kyoto process suggests is not the case); and that, should an active policy response prove necessary, the only rational course is adaptation.

On the wider issue, I cannot accept your contention that only 'scientists' should decide the appropriate policy response. The role of scientists (or, rather, climate scientists) is to try and understand the complex science and its implications, and to convey that understanding, with all its attendant uncertainties, to democratically elected policy makers, who are then responsible for framing policy, taking full account not merely of the science but also, crucially, of the economics – which, insofar as you consider it, you appear to dismiss as not being "as evidence-based or as rational as science".

In conclusion, I hope that, on reflection, you will recognise that there should be a difference between the behaviour appropriate to a President of the Royal Society and acting as a shop steward for some kind of scientists' closed shop. Not to do so can only bring the Royal Society into further disrepute, which cannot be in the public interest.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'The Rt Hon Lord Lawson', written in a cursive style.

The Rt Hon Lord Lawson
Chairman