

Climate Science with Personalities and Protests

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The BBC radio 4 programmes on Wednesday morning explored the origin of our moon before giving a chronology of our awakening to the depletion of ozone over the Antarctic and to the urgent international measures that would moderate and reverse the damage.

In those years Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev with the near unanimous support of the US Senate also joined the world campaigns to reduce our dangerous increase in human actions that boosted the carbon dioxide added to the atmosphere.

Leaving aside the catastrophic possibility of an earth shattering solar system collision like the one that put our moon into orbit, we can consider what can be done in the waste hierarchy to reduce, to re-use and to recycle.

Most of us do not really need Holy Week protestors to occupy major road junctions, causing the diversions and delays to London bus passengers. What was the twisted thinking that saw merit in sticking a passenger to the top of a Docklands Light Railway carriage, causing interruption to an environmentally friendly form of transport?

Who was impressed when a notable actress was reported to have flown 6,000 miles to show solidarity with the group camped in Parliament Square? I spotted four plastic bottles with a group of three protestors.

It is impressive that the 16 year old Swede travelled by train to London. How many Swedish journalists flew to be able to join me listening to her debating with Michael Gove? Incidentally, when the British Prime Minister offered to meet her, Greta's organising team should have varied their own programme to accept.

I have been aware of many of the underlying issues since listening to the geophysicist Joe Farman in the 1980s. He discovered the ozone hole. World action came within two years. By chance when not in the Antarctic he lived in Cambridge next to my good cousin Enid whose father was the founder of geodesy and geophysics at the University.

In 1963 when eighteen I stood in as a teacher at Geelong Grammar School in New South Wales, in place of the director of studies John Bechervaise who wanted three weeks away to visit Antarctic islands. He had led two national expeditions to Antarctica. I was fascinated by his diaries.

Our long term success in reducing and then reversing the dependence on carbon will not in my view be either easy or fast. Some schemes like the Swansea tidal lagoon project may not be justifiable. We still need to face the environmental scandal that traffic problems in and around Worthing have just worsened in forty years. Whether our lorries and cars become hydrogen or electrically powered will become clear. Either will need appropriate roads.

One interesting local question is why there have not been recent deposits of massive amounts of seaweed on our beaches? Scientists: do please write with your ideas.

On Tuesday it was a delight to meet young people from The Laurels school in Durrington, including the children who had kindly escorted me around their school when I was invited to visit. It is for their futures that we make decisions today.