

Published in "The Independent" (UK) Jan 20, 2006

Sir: There are many credible scientists that are very worried about global warming, but who would seriously object to the most significant points raised in the 16 January articles by James Lovelock and Michael McCarthy.

Dr Lovelock cites the predictions of 5C tropical and 8C temperate latitude warming by the end of this century. The 2001 IPCC report indicates that these changes are at the very extreme of all model projections; more conservative scenarios yield increases about one half those values.

Although I certainly agree that global warming is a real and serious problem, it seems almost outlandish to claim that "before this century is over, billions of us will die, and the few breeding pairs of people that survive will be in the Arctic". Yes, it will be warmer in the tropics, but it was probably that warm 100 million years ago in the tropics and life, though very different, was nowhere near to being extinguished.

Although I agree with Dr Lovelock on his pessimistic assessment on international negotiations to reduce greenhouse gases, there is some real hope that increases might be contained if first world countries undertook a genuinely serious effort to aspire towards energy independence. Such efforts would be self-serving in the short term but they could help reduce greenhouse gases if, for example, "clean" coal and nuclear, became the primary transitional source of energy for the next few decades.

But that may only be possible if, rather than castigating others and raising wild alarms, environmentalists are willing to sit down at the negotiating table with industry and conservative politicians and do some good old-fashioned "horse trading" in which one side does not feel as if it is being the target of extremist views.

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