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WORLD JUSTICE, CARBON CREDIT SCHEMES AND PLANETARY MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES

Rodney G. Peffer

The present situation and catastrophic climate change

We – the residents of earth at this particular point in history – are facing an interrelated set of global problems that relate not only to the issue of world justice but also to the prospect of maintaining the minimum social and material conditions within which principles of justice can sensibly be said to apply. This is not the prediction of a fringe-dwelling doomsayer but, rather, merely a statement of what has come to be accepted as mainstream thought. For while there has always been human poverty and misery in the world, disease and natural catastrophes, our species has never before been in a position of imminently despoiling the entire planet's natural environment (for both ourselves and almost all other species). And while the danger of nuclear holocaust seems to be at least temporarily off the agenda, there is still the danger in the foreseeable future of the world's civilization buckling beneath the combined pressures of poverty, population growth, environmental degradation, the depletion of natural resources, and (quite possibly) catastrophic climate changes.

For example, besides the direct health problems that hydrocarbons and other air pollutants pose for people, animals and plants a potentially even more important consequence of contemporary air pollution is an intensification of the greenhouse effect. It is the commonly accepted view among scientists who have studied the problem that the increasing carbon emissions (and the emission of other so-called 'greenhouse gases') together with the destruction of the world's tropical rain forests and the possible extinction of the phytoplankton in the world's oceans (which are the two main sources of removing carbon from the atmosphere and recycling oxygen back into it) will result in a run-away greenhouse effect which will lead to a significant increase

in the world's average temperature. This, in turn, will transform much presently arable land into desert as well as melt a portion of the polar icecaps, flooding many coastal areas.

Although some scientists point out the possibility that increased particulate emission (which reflects sunlight) may at least temporarily offset global warming, few of them are betting against global warming in the long run, given current trends. In fact, some scientists – like James Burke¹ – assert that it is too late to prevent significant global warming and suggest that our goal should be to *contain* the global rise in temperature to no more than 6 to 8 degrees centigrade at the equator and, thus, to no more than 20 degrees centigrade at the poles. But even this will cause a minimum three-foot rise in the oceans which will mean that many low-lying coastal areas will be under water. In addition to many inhabited islands these areas include approximately one-third of Bangladesh, the southern half of Florida, New Orleans and the bottom part of the Mississippi Delta, the delta area of the Nile (including Cairo), and many manufacturing centres along the coasts of Great Britain, Northern Europe, and China. And even if it should turn out that the effects are only half this bad we would still have a serious problem on our hands.²

But the truth about this problem – as with many of the other contemporary environmental problems – is, first, that it can't be solved by the piecemeal policy decisions of individual nations; second, that its solution is intimately tied up with considerations of social justice and, indeed, social justice on a planetary scale; and, third, we need some 'intermediate' institutions as viable mechanisms to achieve these goals. As Bernard Rollin puts it:

even a cursory examination of some major environmental issues affecting the non-sentient environment indicates that those problems are insoluble outside of the context of international justice. The question then becomes: What, if any, philosophical basis exists for a system of international justice in this area?

(Rollin 1988: 136)

the relevance of a viable mechanism of international justice to environmental ethical concerns is manifest. Indeed, many if not most environmental issues, and certainly the most vexing and important ones, entail major global consequences and thus cannot be restricted to local issues of sovereignty. An environmental ethics is inseparable from a system of international justice, not only in terms of policing global dangers and verifying and monitoring compliance with international agreements, but also in terms of implementing the distributive justice necessary to prevent poor countries from looking only at short-term gains. The rain forests are not only a problem for the countries in which they are found; if other developed nations are to benefit from the continued existence of the rain forests, we must be

prepared to pay for that benefit. No country should be expected to bear the full brunt of environmental concerns. Classical economics does not work for ecological and environmental concerns; each unit pursuing its own interest will not enrich the biosphere, but deplete and devastate it.

(Rollin 1988: 138-9)

It seems obvious that social justice requires that the North transfer to the South emergency and developmental aid (funnelled through the governments of the developing countries and/or various non-government organizations such as UNICEF or the Red Cross) and, in addition, that there should also be transfers in terms of cancellation or rescheduling of debts, more equitable trade relations, monetary reforms, and other measures proposed by the New International Economic Order movement in the United Nations in the 1970s.³ In addition, the strategy of 'autarchy' or autonomous development – of which the policy of national food self-reliance is a part – also seems an important part of the solution. But all of this would mean not merely a transfer of wealth from North to South but a transfer of decision-making power as well.

Even though the transfer of developmental aid from North to South to eliminate absolute poverty in the Third World would be considerable, the aid necessary also to save and regenerate the natural environment in the Third World may be much more substantial. This fact, together with the fact that affluent Northerners must reduce their consumption of resources *regardless* of what they do *vis-à-vis* the Third World if the environment is not to be substantially damaged, would seem to indicate that the standard of living of such affluent Northerners must, indeed, be substantially reduced. While greater efficiency can go some way toward the goals of saving the environment and slowing resource depletion, an absolute reduction in the North's consumption also seems necessary. (To be sure not all Northerners are affluent but all but the genuinely poor in the North will be required to consume less resources. Clearly, though, morality and justice may require the poor in the North to receive more resources just as they may also require affluent persons in the South to accept a reduced standard of living.)

In addition to improved efficiency, how much of a reduction in the standard of living is required will, of course, also depend on the rate at which the economies of the North and the South are growing as well as on how much internal, intranational redistribution is taking place. As to the latter point, an adequate theory of justice will put at least as much emphasis on *intranational* redistribution as on *international* redistribution. In any case, when it comes to deriving practical policies from such a theory of justice in the nonideal world in which we live, it seems fairly obvious that working-class and middle-class persons in the more affluent North are probably not going to be willing to accept reduced consumption unless the truly wealthy sectors of the population in *both* the North and the South are also willing to make proportionate sacrifices.⁴

Principles of justice for international redistributions

What, specifically, are the theoretical normative grounds for undertaking such measures – particularly, the massive transfer of income and wealth (and power) from the North to the South? One proposed ground, of course, is that of prudence. All of the UN-sponsored reports go out of their way to argue that a redistribution of wealth from North to South is in the long-term best interests of all of the countries involved. They assert that the trade and monetary reforms, tariff reductions, and greater concessional and non-concessional economic aid to the Third World will ultimately make for a healthier world economy and a more stable world political order. But while the empirical claims here are perhaps true, this ‘prudential’ justification must be taken with a grain of salt when it is offered as providing reasons for individuals or social classes to accept these policies, programmes, and institutions.

Although it may be true that in some sense it is in the public’s interest or a nation’s interest or even the world’s interest that these measures be implemented, it is clearly false that it is literally in every individual’s interest to have them implemented. Even if the meaning of one’s ‘self-interest’ is broadened to include the interest one has in seeing one’s family and friends do well – which is, of course, part of what Rawls’ does in specifying what it is for people to be ‘mutually disinterested’ within the original position – it still does not follow that such programmes are in everyone’s prudential interests. In fact, most relatively affluent Northerners whose disposable incomes will be significantly reduced will clearly not benefit by such programmes. And even if one’s grandchildren and great-grandchildren are brought into the equation (so-to-speak) and we concentrate on the health effects that the degradation of the natural environment will have on future generations it is still not clear that everyone evaluating the alternatives from a purely self-interested point of view must rationally opt for the measures in question even if they believe that this is the only way to prevent environmental degradation. Very wealthy people, for example, may calculate that their greater ability to protect themselves from the effects of a noxious environment through better housing and medical care, less necessity to be exposed to its effects, etc. would more than compensate them for such environmental degradation and would be far superior to submitting to an egalitarian redistribution of their income and/or wealth.

This is why such appeals to purely prudential reasons or Hobbesian modes of reasoning – e.g., Bernard Rollin’s Hobbesian argument for international cooperation to control pollution (Rollin 1988: 137–9) – do not work when taken literally and applied to all individuals. This is not to say that this general kind of argument is worthless or completely off the mark. In a sufficiently broad sense, it is true that it is in the public interest to implement these measures; but the argument in this broad sense seems to be at least as much a moral argument as a purely prudential one.

Although these quasi-prudential public-interest arguments are valuable

motivational tools, the correct normative theoretical justification must be based on an adequate theory of social justice which is broad enough to include the Duty to Aid and/or its correlative Basic Rights Principle. A modification of John Rawls’ social contract theory of social justice provides a sound basis for this. This modified theory is composed of the following four principles in order of priority:

- 1 Everyone’s basic security and subsistence rights are to be met: that is, everyone’s physical integrity is to be respected and everyone is to be guaranteed a minimum level of material well-being including basic needs, i.e., those needs that must be met in order to remain a normally functioning human being.
- 2 There is to be a maximum system of equal basic liberties, including freedom of speech and assembly, liberty of conscience and freedom of thought, freedom of the person along with the right to hold (personal) property, and freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure as defined by the concept of the rule of law.
- 3 There is to be (a) equal opportunity to attain social positions and offices, and (b) an equal right to participate in all social decision-making processes within institutions of which one is a part.
- 4 Social and economic inequalities are justified if and only if they benefit the least advantaged, consistent with a just savings principle, but are not to exceed levels that will seriously undermine equal worth of liberty or the good of self-respect (Peffer 1990: 14).⁵

These principles can be labelled (1) the Basic Rights Principle, (2) the Maximum Equal Basic Liberties Principle, (3) The Equal Opportunity and Democracy Principle and (4) the Modified Difference Principle. These principles are prioritized ‘lexically’, i.e. they are to be fulfilled one after the other, in order of priority.⁶

Although it is impossible in the absence of a world government and a common political constitution and legal system to implement all of these principles internationally, we can – and should – seek to apply the economic components of this theory globally at the present time. That is, we ought first and foremost to ensure that people’s security and subsistence rights are met and then – all things being equal – we ought to adopt programmes and policies which at least approach the implementation of the Difference Principle. In addition, there are two other principles that at least *prima facie* ought to apply to the international economy. One is the Equality of Resources Principle, i.e., an equal per capita distribution of the benefits from the planet’s natural resources, argued for by Charles Beitz (Beitz 1979). The other is simply the standard principles of compensatory justice as applied to the international economy, i.e., that restitution must be paid for past international injustices.

From the perspective of ideal theory all four of these principles provide a basis for a radical redistribution of material wealth from the First World to the Third (at least if one assumes the truth of a number of plausible empirical theses). These principles can be listed in the following order in terms of their strength of justification (at least in the sense of how many people will find them acceptable upon reflection):

- 1 a Basic Rights Principle (which is a corollary of the Duty of Mutual Aid or, more simply, the Duty to Aid);
- 2 the Principle of Equality of Resources applied between nations;
- 3 the Difference Principle; and
- 4 the Principles of Compensatory Justice.

As we pass from the first principle to the fourth it seems clear that the amount of the redistribution demanded increases while the strength of argument for redistribution – at least in most people's view – decreases. But of these four principles the Basic Rights Principle and its correlative Duty of Mutual Aid (as Rawls defines it) and the Equality of Resources Principle do not require there to have been any exchanges between the people of developed nations and people of developing nations in order to take effect. On the other hand, the Principle of Compensatory Justice requires there to have been harmful interactions between some of these parties; and Rawls' Difference Principle (which states that inequalities must be limited to those which, because of their incentive effects, benefit the most disadvantaged) requires the parties at least to belong to common institutions (which are defined as 'cooperative ventures for mutual advantage'). But the Basic Rights Principle/Duty of Mutual Aid holds between individuals regardless of whether they are part of the same institutions. Since this duty requires us 'to help another when he is in jeopardy, provided that one can do so without excessive risk or loss to oneself' (Rawls 1971: 114), and since Rawls, like J.S. Mill and many others, draws no strong line between acts of omission and acts of commission, it would seem that this principle issues in the demand that we each do (at least) our fair share to make sure that people's basic needs are met wherever they happen to live. (Since this task is probably much more effectively carried out by governments than by individuals or private charitable organizations at least part of this duty will presumably be to do our fair share in convincing our respective governments to take effective action along these lines.) And here it should be kept in mind that this duty enjoins the provision not only of emergency relief aid but also of long-term developmental aid of the sort that genuinely helps to improve the condition of the vast majority of people in Third World countries who are impoverished, without destroying the natural environment.

The Equality of Resources Principle is related to Charles Beitz's use of Rawls' social contract theory. The latter consists of a thought experiment

involving a hypothetical choice situation in which rational, mutually disinterested, and non-envious persons have all the general knowledge they need to formulate acceptable principles of social justice but have no specific knowledge of themselves (including what their natural abilities and disabilities are, what their social and economic position in the real world is, etc.) According to Beitz, ignorance about themselves must also include the period in history and the part of the world in which they live. They consequently would choose to make sure that they are not arbitrarily disadvantaged by being born in a country or area of the world that happens to be extremely poor in natural resources. Thus, they would choose – if possible – to implement policies and institutions that would more fairly distribute resources either directly or through compensatory payments between countries regardless of whether they were part of a 'cooperative scheme for mutual advantage'. Presumably, this would generally require greater transfers between the North and South than merely meeting people's subsistence needs internationally.

But as much as it may cost the advanced industrialized nations – through monetary reforms, cancellation or rescheduling of debts, and more equitable trade relations as well as direct economic aid – to meet their citizens' duties correlative to the Basic Rights Principle and the Equality of Resources Principle, it would presumably cost much more to implement at the international level Rawls' Difference Principle which limits inequalities to those that benefit the worst-off. To answer the common objection that this constitutes a *reductio ad absurdum* of this demand, unless the sacrifices on the part of people in advanced societies (and/or local elites) are so great that they would go beyond what Rawls calls the 'strains of commitment' as judged from the 'original position' of the social contract, not from the perspective of one's position in the actual world, this is no objection (within ideal theory) to the demand that the Difference Principle be so applied. After all, there are people in real life who cannot even bring themselves to accept the Difference Principle as applied to their own society and some who can not bring themselves to accept any moral principles at all, yet this does not count against the correctness of these principles.

This brings out an important distinction that can and should be made between what is morally required of us as free and equal moral beings and what policies and programmes a particular population will find acceptable at any particular time. Although the international application of Rawls' Difference Principle may require large transfers of wealth from the First (and Second?) to the Third World, it is a practical political question as to how rapidly or to what degree such a programme could be implemented, given a particular population in a particular developed society at a particular time. Although Rawls does not delve into this issue, since he does not spend much time on 'partial compliance theory', as a practical political matter it may be necessary to implement such policies and programmes more or less gradually and to do so in conjunction with extensive educational campaigns.

To anticipate another objection, although Rawls stipulates that the Difference Principle is to be applied only within 'cooperative schemes for mutual advantage', the way that he defines these schemes makes it clear that they include any system of economic transactions. Since there now exists what is essentially a world economy, it seems obvious that in Rawls' theory the parties in the original position would choose to have the Difference Principle apply internationally. So, unless there is some other very strong moral reason for not applying it, it must be so applied. But Rawls has so far refused to commit himself to this view.⁷ Now perhaps part of Rawls' reticence to allow the international application of the Difference Principle is that the demand for its application is usually not explicitly accompanied by a *ceteris paribus* ('all things being equal') proviso. But Rawls' own theory already makes clear that this principle *cannot* be applied to the detriment of either the Maximum Equal Basic Liberties Principle or his Fair Equality of Opportunity Principle. Thus, there is certainly no case for transfers of this sort from wealthier to poorer countries in cases in which doing so would support or strengthen autocratic or totalitarian regimes that are, for example, violating people's security or subsistence rights.⁸ Finally, it should also be noted that this argument provides a somewhat weaker justification for massive transfers from the developed to the developing nations at least in the sense that (presumably) fewer persons will find Rawls' Difference Principle acceptable than will find the Duty of Mutual Aid (or a Basic Rights Principle) acceptable or even the Equality of Resources Principle.

The fourth basis for such transfers is that of compensatory justice. To quote Manuel Velasquez:

Compensatory justice concerns the justice of restoring to a person what the person lost when he or she was wronged by someone else. We generally hold that when one person wrongfully harms the interests of another person, the wrongdoer has a moral duty to provide some form of restitution to the person he or she wronged. If, for example, I destroy someone's property or injure him bodily, I will be held morally responsible for paying him damages.

(Velasquez 1982: 89)

Traditional moralists have argued that a person has a moral obligation to compensate an injured party only if three conditions are present: (1) The action that inflicted the injury was wrong or negligent . . . (2) The person's action was the real cause of the injury . . . (3) The person inflicted the injury voluntarily.

(Velasquez 1982: 90)

The principle of compensatory justice would presumably also hold in cases of coercive or unfair economic practices. Then, *if* it could be shown that the

economic practices of various transnational (or at least international) corporations and the governments that supported them were coercive and/or unfair to various developing nations (and/or some or most of their inhabitants) and that their economic (or other) interests were damaged by these practices, there would exist a strong prima facie case that the developed world (or some individuals or groups within it) owed the developing world (or some individuals or groups within it) massive reparations. And this, of course, is precisely what many economists and others – both Marxist and non-Marxist – hold to be true. Some of the larger difficulties that such an attempt would run into, however, are: (1) delimiting the individuals or groups (e.g. corporations) responsible for the purported wrongdoing, (2) delimiting the individuals or groups (in the developing societies) that have been harmed by this wrongdoing, (3) deciding whether reparations for the wealth which was (presumably) unfairly extracted from developing societies (or from individuals or groups within those societies) in the past is now owed to the present government or to the descendants of those who were harmed in the past or to some other party, and (4) determining the amount of the damages involved.⁹

Although on rather plausible empirical assumptions truly incredible transfers of wealth from the developed to the developing nations might be justified, it must be admitted that this may be the weakest of the four arguments for such transfers since the correct principles of compensatory justice are perhaps more problematic than the other principles of justice discussed and since there would probably be considerable dispute over whether or not the present case fell under these principles: for example, whether or not the economic transactions involved were truly coercive or in some other way unfair and whether they constituted an actual injury to the interests of the developing societies. (Some might argue, for example, that the people in the developing societies would have been worse off without these economic transactions and, thus, that they have not been harmed or injured by them.¹⁰) Moreover, there are bound to be vehement disputes over the truth of the other empirical claims at issue as well.

But perhaps, in the final analysis, it is not very important whether this argument works. The fact is that at the practical level – at the level of what Rawls calls nonideal and, more specifically, partial compliance theory – it will be difficult enough to convince the people that will be disadvantaged by transfers of wealth from the developed to the developing world to accept even the amount of transfers advocated by the Basic Rights Principle, the Equality of Resources Principle, and/or the international application of the Difference Principle. It is arguable, however, that in terms of a well-functioning global economy, as well as political stability, even the generalized self-interest of the governments and peoples of the developed nations dictates that substantial transfers take place. But regardless of this fact, if we are to conform to the dictates of morality and justice, relatively massive transfers are necessary.

Carbon-credit schemes and planetary management authorities

A properly formulated 'carbon rights' or 'carbon credit' scheme can function both as a scheme to save the environment and a way to achieve world justice. Moreover, it provides a strong theoretical and pedagogical basis for arguing for a new global order in which both wealth and power are transferred from North to South and in which extreme poverty is eliminated everywhere in the world. According to the scenario outlined by James Burke in his video *After the Warming, Episode Two* – which serves as a working hypothesis – the goal now is to keep the earth from warming more than eight degrees Celsius at the equator and stabilize it at that temperature by the year 2050. To accomplish this goal the world-wide emission of greenhouse gases for the next 100 years must be cut in half (from 6 billion tons per year to 3 billion tons per year). According to Burke's fascinating, yet not fantastical, hypothetical history covering 1990 to 2050, to accomplish *this* goal the world's nations band together in 1997 to form the PMA (planetary management authority) headquartered in Japan and then – in the year 2000 – adopt a carbon-credit plan. This plan specifies that one-half of the total three hundred billion-ton carbon budget for the next century be allocated to the industrialized countries (including the former Eastern-bloc) and the other half to the developing countries. Then each country in the North and South respectively receives a specific share proportional to their populations at the time the plan goes into effect. For example, since the industrialized nations (including the 'Four Tigers' in Asia) have approximately 1.5 billion people, an allocation of 1.5 billion tons of greenhouse gases per year means that each country gets allocated one ton per person (of their present populations) for the century. Thus, with approximately 250 million people, the US would receive an allocation of 250 million tons for the century, while Japan (with a population of approximately 125 million) would receive 125 million tons of carbon rights for the century.

At first glance this distribution may seem terribly unfair to the developing countries since they receive only 1.5 billion tons of carbon credits for their present population of 3.5 to 4 billion, while the industrialized countries receive the same amount of carbon credits for their present population of approximately 1.5 billion. (In addition, of course, the former's population is growing at a much faster rate than the latter's.) But, on the other hand, given current rates of greenhouse gas emissions, the industrialized nations of the North will use up all of their carbon credits well before the end of the twenty-first century. The most energy-efficient countries of the North (e.g., Japan) may have up to 80 years of greenhouse emissions available at current rates of use, whereas the least energy efficient (e.g., Luxembourg or Canada or the United States) may have only 10 or 15 years before they run out. At their current rates of emission, of course, the developing countries will not use their allocations up for, say, 200 to 300 years. From this perspective it may well be

people in the North who are tempted to label the scheme unjust. But, of course, the whole point of this sort of carbon credit scheme is that, as a matter of justice, the North must bear the brunt of the environmental clean-up since it has disproportionately fouled (and continues to foul) the natural environment. And I take it that Burke's suggested allocation of carbon credits is arrived at by a rough estimate of what the populations of both the North and South can be expected willingly to accede to under real world circumstances.

Justice comes into play in this scheme because of the fact that the industrialized nations must 'buy' – actually barter for – carbon credits from the developing nations by transferring to them massive developmental aid for infrastructural improvements, clean energy technology, reforestation and agroforestry, telecommunication systems, educational resources, etc. Thus, for holding back on immediate industrial development by means of the less expensive 'dirty' industrial technology (now much used in the North) and for conserving their internationally important natural resources (e.g., their rain forests) the developing countries receive a much larger share of the world's income, wealth, and decision-making power than they enjoy under current arrangements.

Another essential component of this general approach is that it allows the South to leapfrog over the dirty industrial technology period that the North went through to an era of 'clean' energy technology and genuinely sustainable ecodevelopment. In the meantime, the North is provided incentives to convert to clean and efficient energy technology through a combination of: (1) considerations of competition and efficiency, (2) government tax incentives, and (3) a 6 per cent surtax on all fossil fuel consumption in the North (which provides the bulk of the money to run the Planetary Management Authority which administers the carbon credit programme and related international programmes and policies).

On the basis of this programme Burke projected that we would be able to save the earth's essential natural resources (including the remaining rain forests) and halt the earth's warming by 2050. In addition, family planning programmes promoted and funded by the PMA accelerates the demographic transition so that the earth's population stabilizes at 9 billion at mid-century and begins slowly to decline thereafter. Finally, Burke avers that decentralized, micro-scale energy systems – particularly, solar energy panels and small hydroelectric dams – together with the universal provision of computers and telecommunications technology (and, thus, educational opportunities) encourages people to remain in their traditional villages or areas in the developing countries and, in fact, encourages people all over the world to move out of the overcrowded cities to live in smaller communities. In this way some of the major problems of the overburdened urban areas can also be alleviated.

Now for an assessment of Burke's carbon credit scheme and similar proposals. First, it is important to note that not all such carbon credit or carbon rights schemes have equity considerations built into them. There are

examples of both national and international carbon credit schemes that, as their critics contend, are little more than ideological justifications for unabated atmospheric pollution which unfairly benefits the corporations, governments, and nations of the industrialized North. This is precisely why we should promote carbon credit schemes that will, in fact, strive toward an equalization of material wealth and decision-making power between the North and South (as well as between classes within societies in both the North and South).¹¹

It is also important to note that Burke's carbon credit proposal (which he says is based on a 1989 Dutch government report) is only the bare bones of a scheme for which many important details need to be discussed and worked out. For example, there is a debate over whether such a scheme should be based on a schedule of carbon emission rights or on taxes on carbon emissions (or a combination of the two). And if a tax is accepted, there is the further issue over whether this tax should be only on fossil fuel consumption or on all forms of energy consumption and, further, whether this should occur only in the North or in both the North and South. (Burke's proposal is that the 6 per cent energy tax apply only to fossil fuel energy consumption and only in the North.)

Moreover, while Burke proposes a barter system between North and South wherein the latter can only barter for clean (i.e. environmentally sound) technology, telecommunication equipment, educational resources, etc., most other proposals are based on the sale of carbon credits by the South to the North in which no provisions are made as to what the developing nations can buy with the proceeds. Another complication concerns the issue of whether there should be any time constraints on the developing nations' sale of carbon credits. One of the main worries here is that contemporary elites in the Third World may – at the encouragement of the multinationals – sell the farm (so to speak) for sake of their own aggrandizement, even though the credits may be much more valuable later on. Although Burke is not clear about this, one interpretation of his presentation is that nations could only sell off – or barter away – their 'excess' carbon credits for the present year (and accumulated credits, if any, that weren't sold off or bartered away in previous years). Economists such as Elmar Altvater and Alain Lipietz also feel strongly that the developing countries should not be allowed to sell off all or most of their carbon emission rights at the beginning of the period covered since such a shortsighted policy may have dire economic and ecological consequences over the long run.¹²

Moreover, despite my agreement with most of Burke's analysis and suggestions, I do have a few criticisms. First, he seems to think that such industrialized countries as the US can more or less maintain their present standard of living into the future and do so simply by becoming more efficient, whereas I think that a genuine reduction in consumption will be necessary as well. Second, Burke ignores class-based inequalities within societies, whereas I think we can expect the poorest segments in industrialized

countries to accede to massive transfers of wealth from North to South *only if* they are assured a minimally decent standard of living and can see that the wealthiest segments of society (both in the North and the South) are willing to sacrifice proportionately in order to create a just society on both a national and international level. (Whether this is possible within present-day institutions is, of course, another question – albeit one of the most important ones. I do not believe that this is possible within a world capitalist system.)

Nevertheless, I have found Burke's carbon credit scheme an invaluable tool in raising people's global social and environmental consciousness. Its appeal to both long-term, enlightened self-interest and (implicitly) to considerations of social justice makes it a powerful pedagogical device. Burke's carbon credit or carbon rights scheme is an excellent example of an 'intermediate' institution or policy of this sort that we need to explore seriously. (By 'intermediate' here I mean intermediate between the current system which is largely based on the particular decisions of particular countries – and their good will in signing and abiding by essentially unenforceable international treaties and agreements – and a world government which, by definition, would be able to enforce its policies world-wide.) Burke's scheme is, in reality, both a programme for saving the environment and a scheme of international economic justice in that it would effectively redistribute wealth on an international scale in accordance with the ideal of reciprocity or a fair sharing of burdens. For these reasons I think that such schemes can and should become a focal point for debates over saving the environment and achieving sustainable development. I also believe that it is one of the most promising tools for motivating people toward favouring such policies even though their adoption would probably mean a somewhat lower standard of living for most people in the industrialized countries. This last point is one that Burke goes out of his way *not* to stress (presumably because he doesn't want to alienate his target audience in the industrialized countries before they hear him out and reflect on his proposals), but the massive emergency and development aid to the Third World, the steep taxes on fossil fuels in the North, and the necessary retooling of industry in the industrialized countries make this all but inevitable.

Another strong point of Burke's analysis is that his vision of the possibilities of international cooperation toward these ends avoids the false dichotomy between the so-called political 'realists' who see the international arena as a Hobbesian war of all against all with no possibility of significant cooperation between nations and the so-called 'idealists' who see world government as a panacea which is just around the corner. For the near and medium future Burke's hypothetical Planetary Management Authority – which has greater powers than the present United Nations but much less than even a federative world government would have – seems within the realm of plausibility, whereas an actual world government does not. It seems to me that as scholars and teachers we need to think seriously about such 'intermediate' international institutions and encourage others to start thinking about them as well.

Notes

- 1 James Burke, *After the Warming: Episode Two* (Ambrose Video Publishing, Inc., 1290 Avenue of the Americas, Suite 2245, New York 10104). 'Episode One' of Burke's video concerns the long-term history of the earth's climate, but the second episode can profitably be viewed by itself. The second episode also explains a Dutch government proposal for a Carbon-Rights Scheme and an associated Planetary Management Authority aimed at achieving economic justice between North and South as well as saving the world's natural environment.
- 2 Some scientists project considerably lower figures. Nevertheless, significant endangerment and displacement of populations due to major disruptions in the geographic pattern of agricultural productivity and to a rise in sea-level resulting from a partial melting of the polar icecaps remain part of the scenario.
For other estimates of the extent of global warming and its probable consequences, however, see: Harold Coward and Thomas Hurka (eds) (1993) *Ethics and Climate Change: The Greenhouse Effect*, Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press; Lydia Dotto (1993) *Ethical Choices and Global Greenhouse Warming*, Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press; and Wilfred Beckerman (1992) 'Global Warming and International Action: An Economic Perspective', in Andrew Hurrell and Benedict Kingsbury (eds) *The International Politics of the Environment: Actors, Interests, and Institutions*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 253-89.
The Editors: A more recent consensus in the scientific community is to anticipate a range of increases of 1.5 to 4.5 degrees centigrade.
- 3 See 'Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order', Resolution 3, 201 (S-VI), 1 May 1974, in *Official Records: Sixth Special Session*, Supp. No. 1 (A/9, 559), New York, p. 3. See also Paul B. Thompson (1992) *The Ethics of Aid and Trade: US Food Policy, Foreign Competition, and the Social Contract*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- 4 But even if it is true that economic growth is necessary for a 'healthy investment climate' and if it is also true - as it seems to be - that owners of large amounts of capital will generally not invest in the absence of such a 'healthy' climate, there may still be a cogent argument for having public control over capital investments, if not outright ownership of capital and large-scale productive property. Obviously, however, this depends upon a great many other factors which we cannot consider here. But this does seem to be a point at which the socialist and environmentalist movements tend to converge. I have, in fact, defended the view that only a worldwide federation of democratic, self-managing socialist societies (with market socialist economies) can solve the world's major problems and achieve global justice. One of the most important focal points for this ongoing debate is the journal *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* which regularly has articles on the so-called Second Contradiction of Capitalism (i.e., the contradiction between capitalism and the environment), the discussion of which began with Editor-in-Chief James O'Connor's seminal article by that title, now available in *Conference Papers*, Santa Cruz, CA: CES/CNS Pamphlet 1.
However, since not all people of good will agree on the empirical views underlying this assessment, I think it is important to leave this general institutional question initially open when discussing global justice and saving the environment. Once the general policies and measures needed are specified then, as a second matter, one can argue over whether a reformed capitalism or a democratic form of socialism can best meet these demands.
- 5 See also pp. 418-33 for a comparison of my theory of social justice to those of John Rawls and Kai Nielsen. I also compare and contrast my theory and Rawls'

- theory in (1990) 'Marxism, Moral Theory, and Moral Truisms: Response to Kai Nielsen', *Radical Philosophy*, no. 60, Great Britain. For John Rawls' assessment of my modification of his theory see his (1993) *Political Liberalism*, Columbia University Press, p. 7, where he endorses all of my principles with the exception of 3(b). An updated version of my theory can be found in 'Towards a More Adequate Rawlsian Theory of Social Justice', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, Special Double Issue: John Rawls' *Political Liberalism*, 75 (3&4) Sept/Dec 1994, pp. 251-71.
- 6 For present purposes I shall ignore the differences between my modified version of Rawls' theory and his original version. Thus, when I speak of the Difference Principle, for example, I will not distinguish Rawls' original formulation of it (which lacks the last clause concerning equal worth of liberty and the good of self-respect) and my version of it since at the (literally) global level we are concerned with in the present essay these differences probably do not add up to much; i.e. both versions of the Difference Principle are extremely egalitarian.
 - 7 For arguments that the Difference Principle should be applied internationally see: Beitz, op. cit., pp. 125-76; Brian Barry, *The Liberal Theory of Justice*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 129-33; Thomas W. Pogge (1989) *Realizing Rawls*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, pp. 196-280; and my *MMSJ*, pp. 404-12. Rawls' arguments for his position that the Difference Principle should *not* be applied internationally - which I have not yet had time to absorb and evaluate - are contained in his 'Law of the Peoples' in *On Human Rights*. Stephen Shute and Susan Hurley (eds) New York: Basic Books, 1993. See also Darrel Moellendorf (1996) 'Constructing the law of peoples', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 77, and 'Liberal values and socialist models', *Theoria*, June 1997.
 - 8 This, of course, is precisely the justification that the US has traditionally given for economically boycotting Cuba, Nicaragua under the Sandinista government, and, previously, China. But since the US at the same time has not only failed to boycott but has economically supported many governments of capitalist Third World countries which have far worse records on security rights violations, this justification can only be judged a cynical ruse.
 - 9 According to Edward S. Greenberg:

the well-being of the United States is dependent upon the extraction of wealth from less-developed areas. In modern capitalism, this extraction is accomplished through a complex international economic network of trade, finance, and direct investment under the direction of American multinational corporations . . .

The elaborate structure of the world capitalist system which ties together core and periphery nations in relations of superordination and subordination is reflected in regularized and predictable social and economic distortions in the latter . . . the overall relationship between core and periphery is defined by the significant net transfer of value from the latter to the former While estimates of the dimensions of this transfer are a matter of some dispute, there is no gainsaying its impressive scale. Estimates range from ratios of two to one all the way to four to one. That is to say, the total of expatriated profits, trade imbalances, licensing fees, royalty payments, and the like, have been, on average, from two to four times greater than the total of invested capital, foreign aid, and public and private loans from the United States.

Taken from 'In Order to Save It, We Had to Destroy It: Reflections on the

United States and International Human Rights', in Patricia H. Werhane *et al.* (eds) (1986) *Philosophical Issues in Human Rights*, New York: Random House.

See also Noam Chomsky (1985) *Turning the Tide: US Intervention in Central America and the Struggle for Peace*, Boston, MA: South End Press, and the volumes in *The Political Economy of Human Rights* series by Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman including (1979) *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism*, Boston, MA: South End Press, and (1979) *After the Cataclysm: Post War Indochina and the Reconstruction of Imperial Ideology*, Boston, MA: South End Press.

- 10 Conservatives often cite P.T. Bauer's (1981) *Equality, the Third World, and Economic Dehusion*, Harvard University Press, as evidence to the contrary. While Bauer never goes so far as to deny that the developed capitalist nations take more value out of the developing world than they put into it, he does make the incredible claim that the poverty and underdevelopment of the Third World is not (even partially) caused by these economic relations and, thus, that the West bears no moral responsibility in this regard.
- 11 Here the New International Economic Order promoted in the United Nations in the 1970s is a good starting point, as are such major international reports as the Brandt Report, the Brundtland Report, and the Rio Earth Summit proclamations. The Brandt Report is formally known as the Report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues (1980) *North-South: A Programme for Survival*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (See also Teresa Hayter (1981) *The Creation of World Poverty: An Alternative View to the Brandt Report*, London: Pluto Press.) The Brundtland Report is actually the World Commission on Environment and Development's (1987) *Our Common Future*, New York: Oxford University Press. For the Rio proclamations see Daniel Sitarz (ed.) (1993) *Agenda 21: The Earth Summit Strategy to Save Our Planet*, Boulder, CO: Earthpress. On the reduction of inequalities within developing societies, see Paul Streeten *et al.* (1981) *First Things First: Meeting Basic Human Needs in Developing Countries*, New York: Oxford University Press, and Denis Goulet (1989) *Incentives for Development: The Key to Equity*, New York: New Horizons Press.
- 12 See Altwater's contribution to the present volume as well as Lipietz's 'Enclosing the Global Commons', in V. Bhaskar and A. Glyn (eds) (1995) *The North, the South and the Environment: Ecological Constraints and the Global Economy*, New York: St Martin's Press.

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GLOBAL CLIMATIC CHANGE

Mark W. Lutes

Of all the stories told these days of impending environmental destruction, few have aroused such grand rhetoric and powerful images as global warming.¹ For *New Yorker* writer Bill McKibbin (1989), global warming means that 'we are at the end of nature'. Respectable scientific conferences report that the 'ultimate consequences could be second only to a global nuclear war'.² The popular literature on global warming is rife with fictionalized futures of drought, famines, floods, wars, locusts and the general collapse of civilization. Such rhetorical flourishes can be easily justified in the interests of motivating a jaded public and recalcitrant political apparatus to action. Such overtly literary and exhortatory techniques might also, it would seem, be easily distinguished from the hard scientific, economic and policy analyses and theories from which they derived their 'factual' basis. However, the distinction between fact and fiction, between scientific theories and journalistic stories, is not so sharply drawn, and whatever the nature of their difference, there is much traffic between them. This chapter examines some more pedestrian stories, or constructions, of the global warming issue in 'serious' scientific, economic and policy circles. It explores the influence of scientific, economic and policy discourses on the construction of the issue of global warming, and problematizes aspects of the currently dominant construction.

Since the issue of global climate change was propelled to the top of policy agendas in the late 1980s, powerful forces have been struggling to control the dominant definition of the issue, and construct it in ways that protect and promote their own interests. In the complex political and ethical dynamics surrounding global warming, there is a considerable danger of exacerbating social inequalities, advancing dangerous technologies and promoting a 'green globalism' reinforcing the hegemony of neo-liberal ideology and the intrusion of market mechanisms into more and more areas of social life (Lohmann 1993). Underlying particular policy choices (e.g., nuclear versus renewable options), or allocations of national reduction targets, are fundamental assumptions and concepts that structure our understanding of the issue. The key concepts on which the global warming debate now turns – uncertainty, competitiveness, efficiency, and the 'global' nature of the issue – should not be